

Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing

June 27 to July 4, 2026

The Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing is a weekly governance intelligence product curated by BoldPath Consulting from Wisconsin local journalism, public-sector think tanks, and credible regional media. Source collection is automated; editorial selection, summarization, and topic assignment are overseen by Patrick Glynn. Source links accompany every item so readers can verify the underlying reporting. The briefing is offered as an informational service and does not constitute legal, financial, or policy advice.

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Budgets and Finance

Madison leaders urge more state aid as mayor requests budget cuts

Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway issued a June 2026 directive requiring all city departments to propose 2 percent reductions in operating spending requests for the 2027 budget cycle to maintain a balanced operating budget without a voter-approved levy referendum. The directive applies to operating funds drawn from property taxes, fees, and state and federal aid, and excludes capital budgets, which totaled \$286 million in 2026 and are financed through bonds and special assessments. City Budget Director Dave Schmiedicke reported that debt service in the roughly \$450 million annual budget totals \$72 million, the second-highest operating expense behind public safety at \$186 million, while the city holds an AAA bond rating and remains under one-third of its state-mandated debt ceiling. City Council President Sabrina Madison and Alderpersons John Guequierre and Regina Vidaver participated in a north side town hall on debt, housing affordability, and transportation funding. Department budget submissions continue.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-leaders-urge-more-state-aid-as-mayor-requests-budget-cuts/article_a8f36813-ca2e-4b1f-a37c-9a9156d86a2f.html

Marinette County Board rejects \$6M borrowing plan

The Marinette County Board rejected a resolution on July 1, 2026, to borrow up to \$6 million in general obligation notes for highway construction projects over three years, with the measure receiving 21 votes against the 23-vote, 75 percent supermajority required under state law. Board Chairman John Guarisco announced the failed tally after more than an hour of debate. County Administrator Kevin Solway and Highway Commissioner Eric Burmeister had advocated for the borrowing, estimating a first-year debt service impact of 27 cents per \$1,000 of equalized value. No alternative funding plan was adopted. Solway stated he will prepare alternative scenarios for the 2027 budget, including the potential use of fund balance reserves, reductions in highway projects, a vehicle registration fee, or shifting capital costs to the operating levy. Department budget requests are due in July, with the 2027 road funding structure to be set during the full budget process.

Source: EagleHerald (Northeastern) | https://www.ehextra.com/news/marinette-county-board-rejects-6m-borrowing-plan/article_799a2e3e-e0f7-4377-aa05-61e729b8b1ec.html

New sales premier resort area tax targeting tourists takes effect in Sturgeon Bay

The City of Sturgeon Bay's Premier Resort Area Tax, a 0.5 percent sales tax on tourism-related purchases excluding groceries and gasoline, took effect July 1, 2026, following authorization by the Sturgeon Bay Common Council. Mayor David Ward confirmed in December 2025 that the tax had been incorporated into the city's budget framework. The city projected approximately \$400,000 in revenue from six months of collections under the new levy, with proceeds directed toward road maintenance costs attributable to seasonal tourism traffic. The tax applies to all purchasers of covered items, including local residents. Sturgeon Bay joins seven other Wisconsin municipalities operating under the state's premier resort area tax statute. No further legislative steps were reported; the tax is currently being collected as of the effective date.

Source: WTAQ 1360 AM / 97.5 FM Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://wtaq.com/2026/07/02/new-sales-premier-resort-area-tax-targeting-tourists-takes-effect-in-sturgeon-bay/>

Walworth County issues final round of ARPA grants

Walworth County completed the seventh and final round of American Rescue Plan Act grant disbursements, awarding funds to 38 local nonprofit organizations in amounts ranging from \$1,000 to \$9,000. The county's ARPA grant program, administered in partnership with the United Way of Walworth County under Executive Director Brian Holt, has distributed approximately \$865,000 to 51 area nonprofits since the program began in 2021. Final-round recipients include Habitat for Humanity in Walworth County, the Lake Geneva Food Pantry, the Walworth County Emergency Homeless Shelter, and the Walworth County Literacy Council, among 34 others. Grant funds may be used for technical assistance, consulting, or business planning services. The disbursement closes out the county's ARPA-funded nonprofit support program, with no additional funding rounds anticipated.

Source: Lake Geneva Regional News (Southeastern) | https://lakegenevanews.net/news/local/article_6a6731f6-a72d-4699-99af-4874317263c6.html

Announcement

Public-sector collective bargaining training set for August 17-18 at WCTC

A note from the editor: I will be co-teaching Wisconsin Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining for the Public-Sector Supervisor with Attorney Kyle Gulya of von Briesen and Roper on August 17-18, 2026, at Waukesha County Technical College, 800 Main Street, Pewaukee. The 12-hour program runs 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Day 1 and 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Day 2, with registration at \$385 per participant. The curriculum covers Wisconsin collective bargaining law, negotiation preparation through interest arbitration, contract administration, grievance processing, past practices and prohibited practices, and leverage dynamics, delivered through instruction, scenarios, and hands-on grievance and bargaining exercises. The session is designed for administrators, human resources, finance, public safety supervisors, transit supervisors, and school district administrators. Registration is at www.wctc.edu/cjtraining under Specialized Training.

Workforce and Labor

Chippewa Falls opts not to hire either finalist for city administrator role

The Chippewa Falls City Council voted in closed session at its June 29, 2026, meeting to extend no offer of employment to either finalist for the vacant city administrator position, following a roughly six-month search that cost \$18,500. The two finalists were Jerry Gabrielatos, former city manager of Beloit, and Laura Stelzner, current city administrator of Chetek. The council directed hiring firm Public Administrator Associates to continue the candidate search on the city's behalf. The city administrator position has been vacant since 2009, when Ron Singel was the last to hold the role, and it has not been officially eliminated. No timeline or budget figure for the continued search was reported. Public Administrator Associates will resume recruitment efforts as the next step.

Source: Volume One (Western) | <https://volumeone.org/articles/2026/06/30/394279-city-of-chippewa-falls-opts-not-to-hire-either-finalist-for-city-administrator-role>

Infrastructure and Utilities

State begins resurfacing WIS 77 from Mellen to Iron County line

Governor Tony Evers signed a \$3.59 million contract awarding a resurfacing project on WIS 77 in Ashland County to Northwoods Paving Co. of Ashland as prime contractor. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation project covers the highway segment from WIS 13 in Mellen to the Iron County line, with construction scheduled to begin July 6, 2026, and completion targeted for late September. The scope includes milling and replacing existing pavement, installing centerline rumble strips, replacing storm sewer, overlaying the deck on the Devil's Creek Bridge in Mellen, cleaning and replacing culverts and end walls, replacing or removing guardrail, and placing new pavement markings. WIS 77 will remain open during construction, with single-lane closures controlled by flagging for paving and culvert operations and temporary signals for the bridge deck overlay in Mellen.

Source: Ashland Daily Press (Central/Northern) | https://apg-wi.com/ashland_daily_press/paywall/state-begins-resurfacing-wis-77-from-mellen-to-iron-county-line/article_1b522faa-91d8-4c48-a469-ddd85307273e.html

Public Safety

UW-Madison ends contract with Flock over privacy concerns, conflict with city policy

The UW-Madison Police Department allowed its annual contract with Flock Safety, an automated license plate reader vendor, to expire on June 26, 2026, without renewal, citing privacy objections and conflicts with the City of Madison's property-use policies. Chief Brent Plisch announced the decision by press release, stating the department seeks a vendor that better addresses campus concerns while maintaining license plate reader capability. The department had installed eight Flock cameras on campus. Separately, the Dane County Board voted in April 2026 to terminate the Dane County Sheriff's Office contract with Flock, effective May 31, 2026, and to redirect the \$80,000 annual contract value toward a replacement system with additional safeguards. The municipalities of Verona, Fitchburg, Monona, and McFarland have also ended or declined Flock contracts since November 2025. UW-Madison Police stated it is evaluating alternative vendors and plans community engagement before selecting a replacement.

Source: WiscNews (South Central) | https://wiscnews.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_cfdde13e-266f-5870-97c8-f230436f7ff1.html

Waunakee Fire District moves forward with asset valuation

The Waunakee Fire District Board unanimously approved contracts for asset valuation services at its June 29-30, 2026, meeting, selecting Reliant Fire Apparatus Inc. of Slinger to appraise the district's fire apparatuses and Marc Lindquist of Jefferson Fire and Safety of Middleton to appraise remaining equipment. Apparatus valuation for a fleet of six to 25 vehicles is estimated at approximately \$48,500 through Reliant, while Lindquist will conduct the non-apparatus assessment at roughly \$50 per hour. Both approvals were made contingent on confirmation of no conflicts of interest, a condition requested by Town of Westport representative Joe Pichette. Board Chair Gary Endres led vendor identification. The valuation is a prerequisite for dissolution proceedings following the Village of Waunakee's announced withdrawal effective January 1, 2027.

Results will determine asset ownership shares owed among the Village of Waunakee and the Towns of Westport, Vienna, and Springfield before year-end.

Source: Lodi Enterprise (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/tribune_enterprise/news/local/waunakee-fire-district-moves-forward-with-asset-valuation/article_f11f1ece-7539-4ff2-8c42-583229cfa6e2.html

City, town of Beloit to consider fire department consolidation

The City of Beloit and the Town of Beloit will consider a formal proposal to fully consolidate their fire and emergency medical services departments, according to a report updated July 1, 2026. Officials from both jurisdictions are the named parties to the proposal. No vote count, dollar figures, ordinance identifiers, or specific meeting date were reported in the available text. The next step, as reported, is official consideration of the consolidation proposal by both governing bodies. The specific body, agenda date, and terms of any intergovernmental agreement have not been disclosed in the published content.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | <https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/local-news/>

Madison shooting victim's family seeks \$4 million from city

The family of Christine Jones, killed in a Madison parking garage in March 2026, filed a claim seeking more than \$4 million in damages from the City of Madison, alleging that Madison Police Department officers failed to properly investigate an attempted shooting in January 2026 involving Diamond Wallace, the same individual later charged with Jones' first-degree intentional homicide. The claim asserts that officers responded to a January 13 incident in which Wallace allegedly discharged a firearm, recovered a fired casing, but did not arrest Wallace or confiscate the weapon despite her status as a convicted felon prohibited from possessing firearms. Deputy City Attorney Patricia Lauten confirmed the claim is under investigation by the city's insurance company. No named officers are on administrative leave, and no formal legal action has been filed in court as of publication.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-shooting-victim-s-family-seeks-4-million-from-city/article_9e23d836-43a7-47db-9d62-d542d7312952.html

Land Use and Development

Rhinelanders City Council approves new senior living center

The Rhinelanders City Council voted unanimously on June 30, 2026, to approve an agreement for the Riverview Senior Living project, a 48-unit senior apartment complex at 903 Boyce Drive. The project has a total cost of \$10.5 million and will include single- and double-bedroom units. The city incurs no debt; developer Crown Court Properties will finance construction up front and receive tax increment financing payments through an existing TIF district. Crown Court assumed the project from the original developer, Dalmark Development Group of Kansas, which withdrew after a \$1 million shortfall in its WHEDA tax credit application. Tony Pharo, Executive Director of the Oneida County Economic Development Organization, negotiated the developer transition, allowing Crown Court to use Dalmark's existing tax credits. Mayor Kris Hanus stated construction is expected to begin in summer 2026 with completion anticipated in 2027.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelanders (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/rhinelanders-city-council-approves-new-senior-living-center/article_fa40cd3e-f82b-4dd9-bbae-c69e7359fdb3.html

City of Janesville: City 'not proceeding with a purchase agreement' for Viridian data center

The Janesville City Council voted on June 22, 2026, to allow the expiration of a letter of interest signed in November 2025 with Viridian Partners, ending negotiations for the developer's proposed 800-megawatt hyperscale data center on the 240-acre former General Motors and JATCO sites on the city's south side. Economic Development Director Jimsi Kuborn confirmed in a written statement that the letter's expiration concludes the negotiation period and that the city is not proceeding with a purchase and sales agreement, leaving no active proposals for the property. The city retains full ownership of the site. Redevelopment planning will continue through the GM/JATCO Redevelopment Advisory Committee's master planning process with consultant Stantec, and city staff are developing a companion zoning ordinance establishing data center land-use standards applicable citywide.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/city-of-janesville-city-not-proceeding-with-a-purchase-agreement-for-viridian-data-center/article_18e152f2-caf9-4ced-aa0e-3665eb78446d.html

Evansville, CHS extend soybean crushing plant agreement

The City of Evansville amended its development agreement with Minnesota-based agricultural cooperative CHS, Inc., to accommodate a proposed 300-acre soybean crushing plant, rather than allowing the original deal to expire in July 2026. Under the amended terms, CHS is required to pay the city \$20,000 annually by August 1 in 2029, 2030, and 2031, and \$50,000 in 2032 and 2033 for holding the land for development; if construction has not commenced by July 1, 2034, the agreement automatically terminates. The project, initially valued at \$700 million in 2024, has not broken ground despite an original operational target of late 2026. City Administrator Jason Sergeant administers the agreement, and CHS continues to report quarterly to the Evansville Common Council. The site sits on land previously annexed from the Town of Union and zoned industrial, within a tax increment finance district established for the development.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/evansville-chs-extend-soybean-crushing-plant-agreement/article_3ca50e80-893e-4b1d-a073-5422d2389ab0.html

Truck repair shop owner defends plan for Vienna location

The Dane County Zoning and Land Resources Committee delayed action on a rezoning application submitted by Madison Spring owner James Wendt to reclassify a 40-acre parcel on Patton Road in the Town of Vienna from farmland preservation to heavy commercial designation. The Town of Vienna Board previously unanimously approved the truck repair shop proposal. Committee members conducted a site visit in mid-June 2026 following public opposition from residents, environmentalists, and birding enthusiasts, and the delay came after an earlier postponement in May following opposition testimony. The application is scheduled for consideration at the committee's July 14 meeting. The proposed facility, adjacent to property owned by Dane County and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is projected to employ 30 to 50 workers. No tax incentives have been requested by the applicant.

Source: Sun Prairie Star (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/the_star/local_news/truck-repair-shop-owner-defends-plan-for-vienna-location/article_bdf973ec-7ac8-4e09-913a-b753d4097f09.html

Madison's two new area plans would require state cooperation

The Madison City Council unanimously approved two area plans, one covering the southeast and one covering the southwest, that guide decisions on growth, development, infrastructure, and investment for those portions of the city. The southeast plan contains two alternative land-use frameworks contingent on the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's ongoing Stoughton Road study; the city's preferred outcome would redesign the highway as an urban boulevard between Buckeye Road and Tompkins Drive, with 35-mph speed limits and potential bus rapid transit infrastructure. The southwest plan's implementation is similarly contingent on pending DOT decisions regarding possible Beltline expansion along Highways 12/18 between Middleton and Verona Road. Planner and co-project manager Rebecca Cnare noted that the boulevard scenario could generate hundreds of millions of dollars in economic development. Madison has completed area plans for four of its 12 planning districts, with downtown planning underway.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-s-two-new-area-plans-would-require-state-cooperation/article_8f38d787-51ef-4720-a32f-eb9dad05f1bf.html

Menomonie city leaders and GROWW celebrate new rental ordinance

The Menomonie City Council passed the SHIELD rental ordinance on February 2, 2026, with the measure taking effect July 1, 2026. The ordinance establishes a proactive rental property inspection program requiring landlords to correct dangerous conditions identified during inspections; failure to do so may entitle tenants on the affected property to reduced rent payments. The ordinance also includes tenant protections against landlord retaliation for filing complaints. Mayor Matthew Crowe and City Council President Cody Gentz marked the effective date at a public gathering with renters and representatives of GrassRoots Organizing Western Wisconsin, which supported the ordinance's passage. No vote count was reported. Gentz stated that he will continue working on housing improvements in Menomonie, though no specific next steps were identified.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/01/menomonie-city-leaders-groww-celebrate-new-rental-ordinance/>

Governance and Elections

Both Green Bay duplicate ballot incidents to be discussed; WEC staff finds law violated

The Wisconsin Elections Commission will convene July 9, 2026, to consider two incidents in which Green Bay City Clerk Celestine Jeffreys' office sent duplicate absentee ballots. Commission staff issued a six-page probable cause finding on the first incident, in which 152 duplicate absentee ballots were sent during the Spring Election, determining that a violation of state law occurred. The staff letter orders Jeffreys to implement procedures preventing duplicate ballot issuance and to submit a written description of those procedures to the Commission by July 24, 2026. A second incident, involving an undisclosed number of ballots sent for the upcoming primary, was added to the July 9 agenda at the urging of the Republican Party of Brown County, whose chair Doug Reich has called for Jeffreys' removal. The six-member Commission will decide whether to adopt staff recommendations or pursue additional action, including potential removal. The meeting includes a public comment period.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://fox11online.com/news/local/both-green-bay-duplicate-ballot-incidents-to-be-discussed-wec-staff-finds-law-violated>

Human Services

Added position likely for Family Recovery Court

The Barron County Board Health and Human Services Committee voted on June 29, 2026, to recommend converting the Family Recovery Court coordinator position from limited-term to full-time permanent status, advancing the motion to the County Board Executive Committee for a decision at its July meeting. The position, currently held by Heidi Erickson and previously funded through grants over seven years, would be financed through the county's Opioid Settlement Fund, estimated at approximately \$700,000. County Administrator Jeff French confirmed the funding source to Supervisor Patti Anderson. Committee member Nancy Keeler made the motion following a letter of support from Barron County Circuit Court Judge James C. Babler. The Opioid Settlement Fund, subject to federal spending guidelines, is projected to yield more than \$2 million in total payments to Barron County by 2038. No locally generated revenue would fund the position.

Source: Barron News-Shield (Western) | https://news-shield.com/news/free_news/article_a90b784e-cfca-4975-a6c4-62159f6bb122.html

\$250,000 WEDC grant to turn vacant Grand Chute building into child care facility

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation awarded a \$250,000 grant to support the conversion of a vacant building in the Town of Grand Chute into a child care facility, part of a total project cost of approximately \$2.5 million. Outagamie County, acting through County Executive Tom Nelson, is contributing approximately \$2 million toward the renovation, with the YMCA of the Fox Cities providing additional support. WEDC Secretary and CEO John W. Miller authorized the grant. The facility will be operated by the YMCA Fox Cities, is designed to serve 100 children, and is expected to require approximately 20 staff. The site is located across from the Brewster Village Campus nursing home and is intended to serve county employees among other families. Renovation is expected to begin in the near term, with the facility projected to open in fall 2027.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://fox11online.com/news/local/250000-wedc-grant-to-turn-vacant-grand-chute-building-into-child-care-facility>

School Districts

Superintendent Brandon Munson attends last school board meeting

The North Crawford School Board tabled a vote on a 2.63 percent cost-of-living salary increase for all district employees after the board lacked a quorum to proceed, as several members present are married to district employees and chose to abstain. The salary adjustment, recommended by outgoing Superintendent Brandon Munson, would have applied to all salary cells and individual contracts, with year-round employees receiving the new rate effective July 1, 2025. Munson also presented a preliminary budget reflecting an estimated \$118,000 deficit, with \$120,000 preliminarily allocated from the capital fund for bus replacement, potentially funding two used buses or one new bus. Final state aid figures will not be available until October 1, and open

enrollment numbers will be finalized September 1. Incoming Superintendent Scott Uppena assumes the role July 1, 2026. The salary vote will return to a future agenda once a quorum is achievable.

Source: SW News Group (Western) | <https://www.swnews4u.com/local/education/superintendent-brandon-munson-attends-last-school-board-meeting/>

Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education approves preliminary budget for 2026-27

The Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education approved a preliminary budget for the 2026-27 school year reflecting a projected \$7 million reduction in state funding compared to 2025-26. The preliminary budget includes a 2.35 percent projected increase in the district's property tax levy, amounting to approximately \$311.82 annually for the average Madison homeowner with a home valued at \$500,300. Deputy Superintendent TJ McCray and Assistant Superintendent of Financial Services Bob Soldner addressed the budget's conditions, noting the stabilizing role of the November 2024 voter-approved four-year, \$100 million operating referendum, which allocates \$20 million for 2026-27 toward staffing, student programming, and educational services. The preliminary budget is not final; the district will revise it in the fall once the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction certifies state aid amounts, enrollment figures, and revenue limits.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/07/02/madison-metropolitan-school-district-board-education-approves-preliminary-budget-2026-27/>

New superintendents take over at Beloit, Hononegah and Clinton

The School District of Beloit Board approved Leah Gordon as interim superintendent under a two-year contract effective July 1, 2026. Gordon, who has served in the district since 1998 and was elevated to assistant superintendent in February 2026, succeeded Wayne Anderson, who retired at the end of June. Glenda Butterfield-Boldig simultaneously began as superintendent of Clinton Community Schools in Rock County, and Ehren Jarrett began as superintendent of the Hononegah Community High School District in Rockton, Illinois, on the same date. The Beloit School Board also approved a preliminary 2026-2027 budget that includes closing Cunningham School, with relocation of its programs to other district buildings required by mid-August 2026. Gordon identified a next step of presenting further budget cuts to the public by approximately January 2027 to allow community planning time.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/education/new-superintendents-take-over-at-beloit-hononegah-and-clinton/article_572dfd15-0eef-4711-b490-a8a0ace22ab5.html

Janesville School District eyeing November referendum

The School District of Janesville's Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee is scheduled to consider recommending that the full school board direct administration to draft two operational referendum resolutions: one to exceed the state revenue cap and one to place a question on the November 3 ballot. The committee action is procedural; the school board must adopt a resolution specifying the ballot question no later than August 25, 2026, to meet the statutory deadline, and the board holds regular meetings July 14 and August 11 at which the resolutions could be approved. A 2024 voter-approved two-year, \$14.5 million non-recurring operational referendum expires June 2027. District CFO Dan McCrea indicated administration would likely present a

scaled-back proposal smaller than the \$102 million, four-year figure tested in a community survey. Any new referendum, if approved, would take effect July 2027.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-school-district-eyeing-november-referendum/article_b2632c26-60dc-4d80-9cad-065544c54c35.html

Janesville school principal retired after 'physical handling' investigation

The Janesville School District placed Madison Elementary School Principal Stephanie Filter on paid administrative leave effective May 21, 2026, following an internal investigation into reports of inappropriate physical handling of a student. Human Resources Director Carrie Mickelson issued the leave notice after an anonymous complaint prompted a review of hallway security camera footage. A May 29 internal memo, involving Superintendent Mark Holzman and Director of Learning and Innovation Allison DeGraaf, documented that Filter had previously received a formal discussion on September 9, 2025, regarding physical-handling expectations, and a September 12, 2025, directive requiring corrective action in a student-discipline situation. Filter retired in June after 18 years at Madison Elementary. Washington Elementary Principal Matt Peerenboom has been named her replacement at Madison Elementary for the coming school year, where he will also oversee approximately 200 displaced Washington Elementary students.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-school-principal-retired-after-physical-handling-investigation/article_7093e489-2520-4c43-9bb3-7298fac8e440.html

Board passes second amendment in pool discussion

The Antigo School Board approved a second amendment to its pool operations resolution during a special meeting, reducing the required revenue threshold from \$250,000 to \$100,000 by striking a provision that had mandated the district receive \$250,000 by July 1, 2026, to sustain Fund 80 operations at the Clara R. McKenna Aquatic Center through the 2026-2027 school year. Board member Myers moved the amendment, arguing the original deadline was unrealistic for the Antigo School District Foundation given the compressed timeline. The remaining resolution directs the administration to execute a contract outsourcing general pool operations to the Woodson YMCA and requires the district to receive \$75,000 in donations or other revenue by June 30, 2026, to eliminate the 2025-2026 Fund 80 deficit. District attorney Davis Runde advised that without sufficient 2026-2027 revenue, the pool must cease operations under law, and converting operations to Fund 10 could require terminating approximately 11 teaching positions.

Source: Antigo Daily Journal (Central/Northern) | https://www.antigojournal.com/news/board-passes-second-amendment-in-pool-discussion/article_ddcd4796-3408-4b99-93f1-06776f6b7aa9.html

Why not raise revenues forever? School officials avoid recurring referendums

Sauk Prairie School District voters on April 7, 2026, rejected a recurring operating referendum of \$3.232 million, the district's first such measure, which would have permanently raised its revenue floor. In the same cycle, Portage voters rejected a three-year, \$11.1 million operating referendum that would have continued funding from an expired five-year, \$18.5 million measure, and Wisconsin Dells voters rejected a three-year, \$7.2 million operating referendum. The Portage and Wisconsin Dells operating referendums expired June 30, 2026. As a consequence, three elementary schools closed following the 2025-26 school year: Lake Delton in the Wisconsin Dells district and Endeavor and Lewiston in the Portage district. Mauston School District had previously passed a four-year, \$7 million operating referendum in February 2025. Districts cite a pending

school funding lawsuit against the state Legislature as a factor that could reduce future referendum needs.

Source: WiscNews (South Central) | https://wiscnews.com/news/local/education/article_a1bb0561-5f7f-427a-83d8-251809f88a93.html

State-Local Interface

President Trump approves federal disaster assistance in Wisconsin

President Donald Trump approved a federal major disaster declaration for Wisconsin on or before July 2, 2026, authorizing Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance following severe storms that struck the state in April 2026. The declaration designates Juneau, Rock, and Sauk counties as eligible for individual assistance, making available grants for temporary housing and home repairs as well as low-cost U.S. Small Business Administration loans for uninsured property losses. Federal funding is additionally available to state, tribal, and eligible local governments and qualifying private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency protective work and repair or replacement of damaged public facilities. State officials reported the declaration carries \$22.6 million in assistance. No specific dollar ceiling for individual assistance was reported. Affected individuals are directed to file insurance claims, then apply for FEMA assistance at DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling 1-800-621-3362.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Statewide) | https://www.news8000.com/news/politics/national-politics/president-trump-approves-federal-disaster-assistance-in-wisconsin/article_463cb9a1-ca4d-5ebd-9f06-43da06566e1d.html

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction released its annual estimates for general school aids

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction released its annual estimates for general school aids for the 2026-27 fiscal year on July 1, 2026, as required by state law. The general aid appropriation remains flat at \$5.58 billion for the third consecutive year under the 2025-27 biennial budget. Using the established equalization aid formula, DPI projects that 252 districts, or 59.9 percent, will receive less general aid in 2026-27 than in 2025-26, while 160 districts are estimated to receive increases and nine will see no change. Of the districts facing reductions, 92 are projected to reach the maximum 15 percent decrease permitted under the state's hold harmless provision. Per-pupil categorical aid remains set at \$742 per student and will be paid in March 2027. DPI will certify final general school aid amounts on October 15, 2026, based on actual 2025-26 school year data.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (Statewide) | <https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/07/02/wisconsin-department-of-public-instruction-released-its-annual-estimates-for-general-school-aids>

DSPS distributes money to fire departments

The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services distributed \$38,181,592 in Fire Dues Program payments to fire departments statewide, a nearly 6 percent increase over the 2025 distribution. DSPS Secretary Dan Hereth authorized the disbursement under the Wisconsin 2 percent Fire Dues Program, which requires insurers to remit 2 percent of fire-insurance premiums to the state; the Wisconsin Office of the Commissioner of Insurance collects the funds before DSPS distributes them according to a prescribed statutory formula. Recipient departments,

spanning professional, volunteer, and hybrid agencies, may apply the funds toward equipment purchases and replacement, firefighter training, and fire prevention programming. As one example of local allocations, Langlade County departments received a combined \$109,927.29, ranging from \$788.46 to the Town of Parrish to \$27,063.04 to the City of Antigo. A detailed accounting of the 2026 distribution is available on the DSPS website.

Source: Antigo Daily Journal (Statewide) | https://www.antigojournal.com/news/dsps-distributes-money-to-fire-departments/article_a04127a4-908c-4233-a543-6c456277ca65.html

Data center tenant Oracle unhappy with PSC's financial requirement

Oracle America filed a petition for judicial review in Ozaukee County Circuit Court on June 19, 2026, challenging a Wisconsin Public Service Commission ruling issued in April 2026 that modified financial security requirements applicable to Oracle's service under two new Wisconsin Electric rate tariffs, the Very Large Customer Tariff and the Bespoke Resources Tariff. Oracle, a tenant at the approximately \$15 billion Lighthouse Data Center Campus in Port Washington, contends the modifications lack a rational basis and could cost the company more than \$100 million annually, citing its BBB credit rating as the trigger for posting financial guarantees. Oracle asks the court to compel the Commission to reopen the proceeding, approve a graduated security table, and permit Oracle to satisfy 90 percent of its security obligation through a parent guaranty and 10 percent through a letter of credit or cash deposit. As of filing, the Commission had not responded to Oracle's petition for rehearing.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Statewide) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/business/oracle-lawsuit-lighthouse-campus/article_55af50bb-ae42-5769-9e99-8603fb42e0df.html

Assessment a win for data center power line foes

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, through its Agricultural Impact Statement Program managed by Kirsten Biefeld, recommended that the Public Service Commission select the south alternative route for American Transmission Co.'s proposed transmission line extension serving the Vantage Data Center Lighthouse Campus in Port Washington. The agricultural impact statement, released under Docket 137-CE-221, found the south alternative would affect 1,018 acres of agricultural land compared to 1,207 acres under ATC's preferred route, with lesser impacts on prime farmland and agricultural conservation programs. The Commission retains final authority over route selection. Department staff will testify at Commission public hearings scheduled for August 18 at Fredonia Village Hall and August 19 at the Kiel Community Center. Intervenor evidence is due to the Commission by July 17, and public written comments must be submitted by August 28. A Commission environmental impact statement is also pending.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Statewide) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/assessment-win-data-center-power-line-foes>

Wisconsin law firm sues Department of Public Instruction over public records

The Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty filed a lawsuit against the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction seeking a court order to compel the release of public records related to educator license denials. WILL attorney Lauren Greuel submitted the open records request in August 2025, seeking data on how many educators were denied licenses for failing to complete a DPI-approved preparation program. DPI identified 1,381 denied applications but, in an April 17

email from General Counsel Kyle Olsen, estimated manual retrieval costs at \$34,014, based on 30 minutes per application at \$49.26 per hour. The lawsuit characterizes the fee as unlawful under Wisconsin's open records statutes. DPI spokesperson Alison Parkins stated the agency cannot comment in detail due to pending litigation but that the fee estimate complies with state law. The case proceeds to judicial review for a ruling on the compulsion of records.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/wisconsin-law-firm-sues-department-of-public-instruction-over-public-records>

Wisconsin regulators respond to drilling fluid spill on Enbridge's Line 5 reroute

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has issued two formal notices of noncompliance to Enbridge Energy since March 2026 under the waterway and wetland permit the DNR issued in 2024 for the \$450 million Line 5 reroute project in Iron County, neither of which covers a June 28 spill of 1,500 to 1,900 gallons of bentonite clay drilling fluid into a forested wetland near Vaughn Creek in the Town of Gurney. DNR Northern Region Spill Coordinator Elizabeth Romfoe confirmed approximately 5 to 8 gallons entered Vaughn Creek before crews removed the clay within about one hour. Enbridge's contractor Michels Pipeline Inc. deployed sandbags and silt fencing under preapproved response plans. The 2024 permit's 250 conditions prohibit discharge of drilling mud into wetlands or waterways. Bad River Tribal Chairwoman Liz Arbuckle has requested DNR enforcement action and a construction freeze, while the tribe and Midwest Environmental Advocates continue to litigate state permits in Iron County Circuit Court.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/wisconsin-regulators-respond-drilling-fluid-spill-enbridges-line-5-reroute>

This briefing is a work in progress, and it gets sharper with each edition. I review every item before it goes out and correct or cut anything that looks off, but I do not fact-check each underlying article line by line, and the summaries are drawn from the original reporting. A few Wisconsin outlets block automated access, so any gaps in a given week reflect what I could reach rather than everything that happened. If you spot an error, know of a governance story worth including, or have a suggestion, I want to hear it. If a colleague in Wisconsin local government would find this useful, please pass it along. Reach me at patrick@boldpathconsulting.com or (920) 522-2413.
