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Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing

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The Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing is a weekly governance intelligence product curated by BoldPath Consulting from Wisconsin local journalism, public policy research organizations, and credible regional media. Source collection is automated, and AI tools prepare first-draft summaries; Patrick Glynn reviews selection, summaries, and topic assignment before publication, and a source link accompanies every item so readers can verify the underlying reporting. Items are selected for governance relevance, not political leaning. The briefing includes stories that meet its editorial standards regardless of direction, and it reports contested or uncomfortable decisions rather than avoiding them. The briefing is offered as an informational service and does not constitute legal, financial, or policy advice.

BUDGETS AND FINANCE 5

Appleton expected to lose $310K in state aid after missing audit deadline 5
City of Eau Claire Closes $2M Deficit In Proposed Budget 5
City of Milton may adjust cost of living as insurance costs appear to skyrocket 5
Beloit to put casino revenue in 2027 towards new police station project 6
Fort Atkinson cemeteries receive full stormwater fee exemption 6
Sun Prairie City Council creates Ad-hoc Referendum Taskforce 6

WORKFORCE AND LABOR 6

Marinette's incoming administrator plans a listening first start 6
County hires new administrative coordinator 7
Kenosha Police Chief Patrick Patton approved as next city administrator 7
Debate sparks at meeting over a potential increase to the mayor's salary 7
Stevens Point Common Council votes on proposed mayoral salary increase 7
Superior council to weigh modest salary increase in 2028 8
The importance of keeping Act 10 and right-to-work, and how to create additional opportunity for workers 8
As data centers test Wisconsin's electrical grid, job opportunities flourish 60 feet in the air 8
Three Stanley officers turn in resignations 9

INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES 9

Concerned Wisconsinites push candidates on PFAS regulations 9
Winnebago County budget proposes $3.5 million to fight PFAS at landfill 9
PFAS grants coming to Stella, but many still without clean water 10
Wisconsin allocates $102 million to replace 15,028 lead water lines 10
How a UW tool helps Milwaukee decide which lead pipes to replace first 10
DNR awards more than $250K for recycling electronics 10
Tank Creek Bridge replacement moving forward, with Great River Trail reopening eyed for 2027 11
UW-Madison's plan to build 2 new dorms is moving fast. Here's the latest 11
Drivers share safety concerns about a Sheboygan County intersection on State Highway 23 11
Two Manitowoc County Communities Getting Agricultural Road Repair Funding 12
Storage structure to permanently hold Milwaukee's contaminated sediment complete 12
$55 million highway department facility approved in Marathon County 12
Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary plans 564-acre habitat restoration, construction eyed in 2028 12

Chippewa Falls library looking to double in size in $10M expansion project 13
Milwaukee Earns LEED Gold For Citywide Sustainability Efforts 13
Progress on park bluff project at last 13
Superior council approves revised water utility question 14
Plover tests new ways to cut road salt use ahead of winter 14

TECHNOLOGY AND AI GOVERNANCE 14

A rural school district lost nearly $100K in 'cybercrime,' 1 of dozens of attacks on Wisconsin schools this year 14
Ava irks some but AI system works, sheriff's office says 15

PUBLIC SAFETY 15

Bayfield County Sheriff's Committee reverses Flock license plate reader vote 15
Dodge County Board blocks effort to defund Flock cameras 15
La Crosse drops Flock cameras over 'accountability' concerns 16
Ending Flock camera funding amendment added to La Crosse agenda 16
La Crosse police ending Flock Safety camera contract 16
Baraboo-area municipalities double funding to save fire, EMS district 16
Oshkosh, Town of Algoma explore fire department merger as report deems it feasible 17
Editorial: Let's keep Fennimore's EMS local 17
Siren weighs ambulance options ahead of countywide contract talks 17
Dane County is jailing fewer kids. Authorities remain concerned. 17
Door County Jail declares staffing emergency as staff shortages drive overtime and low morale 18
Changes regarding inmate communication, mail services implemented at Lincoln County Jail 18
DOJ to investigate officer involved with fatal crash in Peshtigo 18
Shawano County deputy will not face charges in March shooting death 19
Janesville police chief: E-bike and e-scooter ordinance coming in spring 2027 19
Wausau police crack down on reckless behavior on e-bikes, e-motos 19
Recall effort underway in Elk Mound 19
Former Elk Mound police department volunteer announces run for village board president 20
Construction Blazes Ahead on New Brownsville Fire Station 20

SITING AND MORATORIA 20

County hits the brakes on data centers; Barron Electric: 'We have an obligation to serve' 20
County Board considers data center rules 21
Rock County Board OKs panelists for new data center advisory panel despite some supervisors' heartburn over process 21
This local data center backs Milwaukee's data center moratorium 21
RF Council floats idea of data center moratorium 22
Wisconsin Rapids Common Council Votes to Reject Conditional Use Permit for Data Center 22
Local organization thrilled with council's decision to deny proposal for Rapids data center 22
Modular reactors proposed to return nuclear energy to La Crosse area 23
Dairyland Power evaluating bringing back nuclear power to Genoa site 23
Rock County Board approves resolution opposing transmission line 23
Vernon County Board unanimously calls for moratorium on 765-kV transmission lines in Wisconsin 23

HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT 24

Janesville City Council will get first looks at two mixed-use housing proposals for 2400 Beloit Ave. 24
Janesville launches street improvements to prepare for McCormick Crossing development 24
Ground Broken for Scholar's Ridge Development in Plymouth 24
Dodge County considers $134,000 partnership for economic and community development 25
Green Bay Council gets earful on managing eyesore properties 25
City offers financial help for home repairs, accessibility upgrades 25

56-HOME MIXED-INCOME NEIGHBORHOOD COMING TO FOX CROSSING 26

LAND USE AND ZONING 26

MADISON REZONES 4,000 PROPERTIES TO HELP HOME PROJECTS, CUT PAPERWORK 26
MADISON APPROVES WEST SIDE HOUSING PROJECT DESPITE NEIGHBOR CONCERNS 26
DOUGLAS COUNTY ADOPTS NEW FLOODPLAIN, SAFETY ORDINANCES 26
DUNN COUNTY LONG-RANGE PLAN WOULD STEER NEW DEVELOPMENT AWAY FROM FARMLAND, TOWARD EXISTING COMMUNITIES 27
ONEIDA COUNTY BOARD APPROVES UPDATED SHORELINE PROTECTION ORDINANCE 27
SHORT-TERM RENTAL MARKET EYED BY CITY 27
JOURNEY21 EXPANSION GETS SUPPORT 28
EAST TROY APARTMENT COMMUNITY UPSET ABOUT POSSIBLE PET FOOD PLANT PLANNED ACROSS HIGHWAY 120 28

GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS 28

POLITICAL VIOLENCE ON THE RISE AT LOCAL LEVEL 28
RHODES-CONWAY REVERSES COURSE, WON'T SEEK A THIRD TERM 28
MADISON MAYORAL CANDIDATES REACT TO RHODES-CONWAY DROPPING OUT OF RACE 29
CITY COUNCIL FIRES MADISON'S INDEPENDENT POLICE MONITOR, DRAWS SHOUTS OF 'SHAME' 29
MADISON COUNCIL VOTES TO FIRE POLICE MONITOR DURING 12-HOUR MEETING 29
DA SAYS SHE CAN'T FIND AN AGENCY TO INVESTIGATE TREVOR JUNG COMPLAINT AS REPUBLICANS SAY HE'S UNDER 30
CITY FINDS NO VIOLATION IN TREVOR JUNG'S TIME RECORDS; SHERIFF CITES CONFLICT IN DECLINING CASE | RACINE 30
LONE 75TH ASSEMBLY DEBATE HELD 30
COLUMBIA COUNTY WILL START BROADCASTING MEETINGS ONLINE 31
WOERTZ SEEN IN COURT MONDAY 31
MONROE CO SHERIFF UNRETIRES TO OPPOSE EX-EMPLOYEE HE SAYS IS UNQUALIFIED 31
POLK COMMITTEE SENDS REVISED RULES FOR DEVICES AND DECORUM TO FULL COUNTY BOARD 32
COMPLAINT SEEKS INVESTIGATION OF GROW JANESVILLE RESPONSIBLY'S REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN 32

ELECTIONS AND ELECTION ADMINISTRATION 32

IN-PERSON ABSENTEE VOTING SURGES ACROSS WISCONSIN 32
IN WISCONSIN, VOTERS CAST EARLY IN-PERSON BALLOTS AS DISTRUST IN THE MAIL GROWS 33
DANE COUNTY SEES MORE THAN 43,000 BALLOTS CAST AS EARLY VOTING SURGES STATEWIDE 33
WEC FINDS COUNTY CLERK IMPROPERLY SHARED VOTER'S RECORD, REFERS CASE TO DA 33
DA, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR REACT TO COUNTY CLERK DOLSON ACTIONS 33
AFTER SUMMER MIXUP, ELECTION COMMISSION APPROVES NEW POLL WORKER INSTRUCTIONS 34
MILWAUKEE ELECTION OFFICIALS TEST VOTING MACHINES TO PREVENT ERRORS AHEAD OF GENERAL ELECTION 34
CAN UNARMED ICE AGENTS WATCH VOTING? IN WISCONSIN THAT DEPENDS ON WHO YOU ASK 34
POLL CHAPLAINS AIM TO BRING A CALMING PRESENCE TO SWING STATES ON ELECTION DAY 35
JUDGE ISSUES WARRANT AFTER GREEN BAY BALLOT BOX SUSPECT MISSES COURT HEARING 35
POLL OBSERVER ALREADY A STEADY PRESENCE AT CITY HALL 35

HUMAN SERVICES 35

WISCONSIN NO LONGER REPORTS WHO OWNS THE STATE'S NURSING HOMES 35
WISCONSIN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DEATHS DOWN SLIGHTLY AFTER RECORD HIGHS 36
DIRECT HOUSING ASSISTANCE RETURNS TO NORTHEAST WISCONSIN AFTER NEWCAP CLOSURE 36
HUNDREDS OF IMMIGRANTS, REFUGEES AWAIT ENGLISH EDUCATION AS LITERACY GREEN BAY WEATHERS FEDERAL CUTS: PART II 36
ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES REFERRALS MORE THAN DOUBLE AS SCAMS TARGET RESIDENTS 37
ADRC URGES MEDICARE RECIPIENTS TO REVIEW COVERAGE DURING OPEN ENROLLMENT 37
KENOSHA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH TO PURCHASE $80K IN NEW MEDICAL EQUIPMENT 37
WOOD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT ADDRESSES CRITICAL CHILD SAFETY ISSUE IN THE COUNTY 37
CHIPPEWA VALLEY HEALTH COOPERATIVE TO FULLY OPEN HOSPITAL IN AUGUST 2027 38
CITY OF SUN PRAIRIE FRONTS HALF OF 2027 FUNDING FOR COLONIAL CLUB 38

SCHOOL DISTRICTS **38**

AMERY SCHOOL DISTRICT ADOPTS 2026-27 BUDGET, LOWERS TAX RATE TO $7.13 38
POSITIVE OPEN ENROLLMENT NUMBERS AID ELMWOOD DISTRICT'S BUDGET 39
MILL AND TAX LEVY RATES SET FOR APPROVAL 39
GILMAN SCHOOL TAX RATE TUMBLES 39
MILTON SCHOOL DISTRICT'S YEARS-LONG DECREASE IN TAX RATE MAY BE SLOWING 39
VOUCHER COST FOR DISTRICT'S 108 PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENTS NOW NEARLY $1.3M 40
NEW TAXPAYER HAS BIG IMPACT ON PW-S SCHOOL SPENDING PLAN 40
DISTRICT BUDGET HEARING SET FOR OCT. 26 40
BROWN DEER, ELMBROOK AND OCONOMOWOC SCHOOL REFERENDA: WHAT TO KNOW AHEAD OF NOV. 3 VOTE 40
BLACK RIVER FALLS ASKING VOTERS FOR AN OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM 41
MHLT GOES TO OPERATING REFERENDUM FOR FIRST TIME IN 20 YEARS AMONG RISING COSTS 41
WAUNAKEE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT PROPOSES TWO REFERENDUMS, INCLUDING $97.5M FOR FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS 41
ANTIGO SCHOOL BOARD HAS NEW LOOK 42
MAJOR CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP ON THE ANTIGO SCHOOL BOARD 42
SURVEY SENT BACK TO COMMITTEE FOR THE SECOND TIME 42
TERRITORY DISPUTE: COMMITTEE DISCUSSES POSSIBLE HUSTISFORD ABSORPTION 42
ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS: DISTRICT COULD LOSE OVER 400 STUDENTS BY 2032 43
SIX FILE FOR TWO OPEN SEATS ON CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL BOARD 43
MILTON SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER JENNIFER JOHNS TO STEP DOWN 43
MANY NEW STAFF, SAME OLD CLASS SIZE 43
TRIBAL LITERACY PROGRAM IN NORTHEAST WISCONSIN RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD 44
GIBRALTAR SCHOOL DISTRICT SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM RECEIVES TRANSITION READINESS GRANT 44
MADISON SCHOOL DISTRICT WILL REBUILD TWO SCHOOLS RATHER THAN RENOVATE 44

STATE-LOCAL INTERFACE **45**

JUDGE UPHOLDS TIF DISTRICT REFERENDUM LAW 45
JUDGE DISMISSES SUIT OPPOSING PORT WASHINGTON RESIDENTS' NEW POWER 45
SIERRA CLUB SETTLES LAWSUIT OVER PORT DATA CENTER 45
FEDERAL DISASTER LOANS NOW AVAILABLE FOR JULY TORNADO RECOVERY IN THE FOX VALLEY 46
WISCONSIN STORMS, TORNADOES ALLOWS TAX EXTENSION FOR RESIDENTS IN FOUR COUNTIES, INCLUDING FOREST, VILAS 46
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF JANESVILLE GRANTED $645 THOUSAND IN PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FUNDING 46
FEDERAL JUDGE ORDERS TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TO HALT NONCITIZEN VOTING INVESTIGATION IN WISCONSIN, OTHER STATES 47
WISCONSIN OFFICIALS CALL FOR PROMPT BALLOT RETURN AFTER COURT RULES AGAINST PROPOSED BACKUP PLAN 47
EVERS, PSC AWARD $11.5 MILLION FOR CLEAN ENERGY GRANTS 47
WISCONSIN LAUNCHES TWO NEW GRANT PROGRAMS FOR PFAS WATER TESTING 47
EPA PROPOSES SHIFTING OVERSIGHT OF COAL ASH LANDFILLS IN WISCONSIN TO STATE REGULATORS 48
UPDATES TO THE WISCONSIN HISTORIC TAX CREDIT PROGRAM 48
ELIMINATING STATE INCOME TAX ON TIPS, OVERTIME COULD COST WISCONSIN $2.7B OVER A DECADE 48
NEXT WISCONSIN GOVERNOR COULD REPLACE SCORES OF UNCONFIRMED APPOINTEES 49
IS TONY EVERS BLOCKING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR WISCONSIN STUDENTS BY REFUSING TO JOIN A TAX CREDIT PROGRAM? 49
WISCONSIN DOJ JOINS LAWSUIT TO BLOCK PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT MERGER 49
BARRON COUNTY POULTRY FLOCK DEPOPULATED 50
CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE FOUND IN WILD DEER NEAR PESHTIGO 50

Appleton expected to lose $310K in state aid after missing audit deadline

Appleton will forfeit an estimated $310,489 in 2027 state general transportation aid, a 10 percent statutory penalty, after missing the summer filing deadline for its annual audit. Mayor Jake Woodford attributed the delay to outdated computer systems and institutional knowledge lost when Finance Director Jennifer Messerschmidt assumed her position in March. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation confirmed there is no statutory appeal avenue. The city's proposed 2027 budget, totaling more than $212 million in expenditures, proposes closing the gap with one-time strategies; Woodford told the finance committee Oct. 12 that bonding to backfill the loss would compound the penalty through interest costs. The audit remained pending as of late October, with Woodford saying the city is "very close" to filing with the Department of Revenue.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Northeastern) | https://www.wpr.org/news/appleton-expected-to-lose-310k-state-aid-after-missing-audit-deadline

City of Eau Claire Closes $2M Deficit In Proposed Budget

Eau Claire's proposed 2027 operating budget totals $198.3 million, closing a projected deficit exceeding $2 million through a strategy that includes leaving 10 vacant positions unfilled, among them a building inspector, fiscal associate, and deputy city manager. The General Fund is proposed at $103 million, up from $100 million in 2026. The Economic Development Fund would rise 23.6 percent to just over $580,000. Downtown Eau Claire Inc. requested $85,000 in city funding but was allocated $50,000 in the draft. Finance Director Kitzie Winters said no further position eliminations are planned, though emergency services staffing increases are anticipated within five years. City Council approval is expected in November.

Source: Volume One (Western) | https://volumeone.org/articles/2026/10/19/406064-city-of-eau-claire-closes-2-million-dollar-deficit-in-proposed-operating-2027-budget

City of Milton may adjust cost of living as insurance costs appear to skyrocket

Milton's proposed 2027 budget includes a 3.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment for all employees alongside a 12.9 percent increase in employee insurance costs, rising to a budgeted $581,800 from $463,000 in 2026. City Administrator Paul Hensch said no cuts were required to absorb the increase, partly due to $45 million in assessed value shifting to the general fund from the closure of Tax Increment District 6. The proposed city-only tax rate is $5.79 per $100,000 of taxable value, down from $7.28 in 2026, with a proposed levy of just under $4.3 million. Budget adoption is scheduled for Nov. 17.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/city-of-milton-may-adjust-cost-of-living-as-insurance-costs-appear-to-skyrocket/article_efbd92d4-f4eb-4fb6-8cd2-1d5fb0e17cca.html

Beloit to put casino revenue in 2027 towards new police station project

Beloit City Manager Daniel Ortiz Hernandez announced the city expects to receive $1 million to $2 million in 2027 from Ho-Chunk Gaming Beloit under an intergovernmental agreement requiring the tribe to pay 2 percent of net win proceeds (70 percent to Beloit, 30 percent to Rock County). The city plans to use the first-year revenue for site assessments and design work on a proposed 65,000- to 70,000-square-foot police station at the 2300 block of Springbrook Court. A 2024 needs assessment put the station's cost at $43.1 million, with material costs up 10 percent to 15 percent since then. Design could take 12 to 18 months, with construction potentially beginning in 2028.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/local-news/beloit-to-put-casino-revenue-in-2027-towards-new-police-station-project/article_d344cd85-3cb8-4043-b4e0-451d1f8f2f24.html

Fort Atkinson cemeteries receive full stormwater fee exemption

The Fort Atkinson City Council voted 3-2 to grant a full exemption from stormwater utility charges for city cemeteries, over the objection of city staff and two alders. Director of Public Works Zach Navin advised against the exemption, citing a negative impact on the utility's fiscal health. The exemption will result in foregone revenue of approximately $6,400 in 2027 and $6,700 in 2028, each below 5 percent of the utility's budget. A two-year sunset clause added during the first reading was removed before final passage. Alders Davin Lescohier and Jena Price voted against. The council may revisit the ordinance amendment at a future date.

Source: Daily Jefferson County Union (South Central) | https://www.dailyunion.com/news/local/fort-atkinson-cemeteries-receive-full-stormwater-fee-exemption/article_bcebdd26-15be-4bc0-a0d0-203bb3d8909b.html

Sun Prairie City Council creates Ad-hoc Referendum Taskforce

The Sun Prairie City Council voted 6 to 2 on Oct. 20 to create a 15-member Ad-hoc Referendum Taskforce (ART), co-chaired by Mayor Steve Stocker and City Council President Rex Owens, with members nominated by the mayor and confirmed by the council. ART will assess the failed spring 2026 referendum, which sought a $3.95 million levy increase for 2027-2029, and consider whether to plan a future referendum. The city projects a deficit of $51,399 in 2028 growing to $2.35 million by 2030. ART is set to begin meeting in Dec. 2026 and complete its work by Aug. 2027. Alders Bill Baker and Santiago Rosas voted against creation.

Source: Sun Prairie Star (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/the_star/local_news/sun-prairie-city-council-creates-ad-hoc-referendum-taskforce/article_631b1424-a1a4-481f-a51c-ef721768a6c9.html

Workforce and Labor

Marinette's incoming administrator plans a listening first start

Marinette County selected Brian Chapman as its new county administrator, with a start date of Nov. 2. Chapman previously held management roles in Sault Ste. Marie and Vassar, Michigan, and holds graduate and undergraduate degrees in public administration from Northern Michigan

University. He will inherit a county that has eliminated 42 positions since 2024 and faces an estimated $14.5 million highway maintenance backlog. Chapman said he plans to spend his first days meeting department heads and supervisors and intends to contact outgoing Administrator Kevin Solway, who remained through the budget process.

Source: EagleHerald (Northeastern) | https://www.ehextra.com/news/marinettes-incoming-administrator-plans-a-listening-first-start/article_268cfffd-2f1b-45fa-ac9d-f19793ae6b63.html

County hires new administrative coordinator

The Rusk County Board unanimously approved the appointment of Rebecca Plantz as county administrative coordinator at a salary of $125,000 plus benefits, effective Nov. 2. Plantz has more than 25 years of executive leadership experience with organizations including PayPal, American Express, and the Wisconsin DATCP, and holds an MBA from Keller Graduate School. The county worked with Innovative Public Advisors to conduct the search after Ashley Heath resigned Sept. 1; eight applicants were screened, two were interviewed, and Plantz was named the finalist.

Source: Ladysmith News (Western) | https://ladysmithnews.com/news/article_53ab28a3-1785-44b2-ad68-035e0903bc5b.html

Kenosha Police Chief Patrick Patton approved as next city administrator

The Kenosha Common Council unanimously approved Mayor David Bogdala's appointment of Police Chief Patrick Patton as city administrator on Oct. 19. Patton, who has served as police chief since 2023, will assume the administrator role Jan. 1, 2027, succeeding John Morrissey, who is retiring. The release did not identify a process or timeline for filling the police chief vacancy Patton's transition will create.

Source: WITI FOX6 Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.fox6now.com/news/kenosha-police-chief-patrick-patton-approved-next-city-administrator

Debate sparks at meeting over a potential increase to the mayor's salary

Stevens Point's Personnel Committee took no action Oct. 13 on a proposal by Mayor Mike Wiza to raise the mayor's salary 16.5 percent, from $77,057 to $90,023 beginning April 2027, with 2 percent annual increases reaching $95,533 by 2030. A 2024 Baker Tilly study cited by Wiza put the average comparable-city mayoral salary at $88,617. Alderperson Olson declined to vote without full benefit-package comparisons, and Alderperson Kneebone noted the city's median household income is $58,031. The item will next appear before the full Common Council.

Source: Stevens Point Gazette (Central/Northern) | https://stevenspointgazette.com/stories/debate-sparks-at-meeting-over-a-potential-increase-to-the-mayors-salary,359764

Stevens Point Common Council votes on proposed mayoral salary increase

The Stevens Point Common Council passed an amendment raising the mayoral salary from $77,000 to approximately $83,000, effective after the April mayoral election. The salary will then increase 2.5 percent annually through 2031. Mayor Mike Wiza had proposed an increase to

$90,000. The salary had been frozen for five years following action by then-Council President Meleesa Johnson.

Source: WAOW ABC9 Wausau (Central/Northern) | https://www.waow.com/news/stevens-point-common-council-votes-on-proposed-mayoral-salary-increase/article_05381147-e6cb-4c8b-845a-93b96fb328c7.html

Superior council to weigh modest salary increase in 2028

Superior's Human Resources Committee voted Oct. 19 to recommend a $500 annual increase in councilor pay, raising the salary from $7,245 to $7,745 effective after the April 2028 election, along with a $75 monthly differential for the council president and an annual review mechanism. Councilor Garner Moffat had proposed setting pay at 20 percent of Superior's median household income, approximately $13,000, but that proposal failed. Moffat voted against the $500 compromise. The full Superior City Council will consider the recommendations at its Nov. 10 meeting.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/superior-council-to-weigh-modest-salary-increase-in-2028

The importance of keeping Act 10 and right-to-work, and how to create additional opportunity for workers

A Badger Institute policy chapter finds roughly 20 percent of Wisconsin workers hold licensed occupations, ranking the state seventh nationally with 135 licensed fields, and that Wisconsin lacks sunrise or sunset review processes and has not adopted a universal licensing recognition law, which 28 other states have done. The report credits Act 10 with increasing new teacher salaries relative to senior teachers and with an approximately 20 percent increase in teaching degrees awarded compared to peer states. Private-sector union membership declined from about 8 percent to 6 percent following the 2015 right-to-work law, a drop of roughly 30,000 members. Six recommendations include sunrise and sunset licensing reviews, interstate license reciprocity, retaining Act 10 and right-to-work, no minimum wage increase, and portable benefit plans for gig workers modeled on Utah's approach. The article's language is partly advocacy-oriented.

Source: Badger Institute (Statewide) | https://www.badgerinstitute.org/the-importance-of-keeping-act-10-and-right-to-work-and-how-to-create-additional-opportunity-for-workers-mandate26/

As data centers test Wisconsin's electrical grid, job opportunities flourish 60 feet in the air

Northcentral Technical College in Wausau runs a nine-month Electrical Power Distribution Program enrolling 14 students annually, one of seven such programs across Wisconsin's technical college system that together enrolled 265 students in 2025. Median salary for electrical line work exceeds $95,000. Wisconsin's line worker ranks are projected to grow nearly 14 percent from 2024 to 2034, with about 240 openings projected annually, driven partly by hyperscale data centers opening in Mount Pleasant, Beaver Dam, and Port Washington. IBEW Local 2150 reports

membership at an all-time high. Apprenticeships pay more than $34 per hour and include union pension benefits. The program consistently carries a waitlist.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/wisconsin-power-line-worker-data-centers-electrical-grid-job-opportunities-technical-college/

Three Stanley officers turn in resignations

The Stanley Common Council on Oct. 19 accepted resignations from three Stanley Police Department officers: part-time Officer Andrew Johnson effective Oct. 18, and part-time Officer Melissa McDonough and full-time Officer Tyler Lewien (15-year veteran) effective Oct. 31, leaving the department with five full-time and two part-time officers. The council approved wage increases effective Dec. 28, including 50 cents per hour for most staff, 75 cents per hour for two department heads, a 4.3 percent raise for Police Chief Lance Weiland to $90,741, and council meeting pay raised from $15 to $25. The council also approved a $433,882.05 payment to Market and Johnson Inc. for the Central Water Treatment Plant and a $96,973.53 final payment to Haas Sons Inc. for the West Business Park project.

Source: Stanley Republican (Western) | https://stanleyrepublican.com/stories/untitled,210751

Infrastructure and Utilities

Concerned Wisconsinites push candidates on PFAS regulations

The village of Pulaski's board voted to purchase drinking water from the city of Green Bay after determining that constructing new deep wells and adding treatment to existing ones would be costly and unreliable; water rates for Pulaski residents could rise by as much as 230 percent. Gov. Tony Evers signed two PFAS statutes in April creating a state PFAS trust fund with approximately $133 million in grants for remediation. The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board is expected this year to revisit groundwater standards for PFAS, with proposed limits similar to Illinois and lower than Michigan's. In Marinette County, contamination linked to Johnson Controls' fire training facility has expanded as PFAS-bearing biosolids spread to additional lands and waterways feeding Green Bay. The article's language is partly advocacy-oriented.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Northeastern) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/wisconsin-pfas-groundwater-contamination-regulations-forever-chemicals-election-candidates/

Winnebago County budget proposes $3.5 million to fight PFAS at landfill

Winnebago County Executive Gordon Hintz's proposed 2027 budget includes $3.5 million to upgrade PFAS treatment capacity at the Sunnyview Landfill, funded through the solid waste fund rather than property taxes. The county currently operates three on-site treatment facilities and is acting ahead of a state-mandated 2032 deadline for such facilities. A public hearing on the budget was scheduled for Thursday evening at Vinland Town Hall at 6 p.m.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/oshkosh/winnebago-county-budget-proposes-3-5-million-to-fight-pfas-at-landfill

PFAS grants coming to Stella, but many still without clean water

Wisconsin DNR, EPA, and Oneida County Health Department officials announced two new state grant programs at a Stella community meeting Tuesday. The first covers most of the cost of testing private wells, schools, and wastewater plants; the second funds well replacement with no income cap, unlike a prior program. Of 28 wells replaced in Stella, eight new wells still tested above federal PFAS limits. The EPA has not yet determined whether Stella qualifies as a federal Superfund site, and fish consumption advisories on Snowden Lake and the Moen Chain remain in effect.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/pfas-grants-coming-to-stella-but-many-still-without-clean-water/article_5c258d39-5866-4482-aa65-53c752c62a76.html

Wisconsin allocates $102 million to replace 15,028 lead water lines

Gov. Tony Evers and the Wisconsin DNR announced more than $102 million for lead service line replacements in 12 municipalities under the federal Safe Drinking Water Loan Program, funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The allocation is expected to remove an estimated 15,028 private lead service lines. Individual awards include more than $10.6 million for Wausau, more than $1.9 million for Neenah (249 lines in low-income census tracts, with $1,451,363 as principal forgiveness), and more than $773,000 for Mellen (70 lines, all principal forgiveness). Since 2019, the state has allocated nearly $500 million to replace 86,094 lead service lines. The Joint Finance Committee previously rejected Gov. Evers' proposed additional $200 million for lead service line replacement in the 2025-27 budget.

Source: WDIO ABC10 Duluth (Statewide) | https://www.wdio.com/top-stories/wisconsin-allocates-102-million-to-replace-15028-lead-water-lines/

How a UW tool helps Milwaukee decide which lead pipes to replace first

Milwaukee Water Works is using the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Area Deprivation Index, originally developed to study neighborhood health disparities, as the primary factor, weighted at 70 percent, in a scoring system that prioritizes which of the city's remaining 55,000-plus lead service lines to replace first toward a 2037 EPA deadline. The scoring also incorporates the percentage of local children testing positive for lead poisoning (25 percent) and lead service line density (5 percent). The city has replaced nearly 15,000 pipelines since 2017 and accelerated to roughly 5,000 per year after federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding became available. A priority equity program launched in 2024 offers free replacements to eligible residents. Another 27,000 properties still have unidentified pipe materials. Property scores are updated every two years.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Southeastern) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/milwaukee-lead-water-pipe-replacement-university-of-wisconsin-tool-neighborhood-health/

DNR awards more than $250K for recycling electronics

The Wisconsin DNR awarded just over $250,000 in E-Cycle Wisconsin Electronics Collection Grants for 39 projects in 35 counties covering Oct. 2026 through Dec. 2027. Grants fund two

permanent collection sites and up to 55 one-day events. Green County Landfill is among recipients, receiving funding for three collection events. Priority was given to counties lacking a permanent E-Cycle site open to all residents.

Source: Monroe Times (Statewide) | https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/dnr-awards-more-than-250k-for-recycling-electronics/

Tank Creek Bridge replacement moving forward, with Great River Trail reopening eyed for 2027

The Wisconsin State Building Commission approved $3.8 million to replace the arson-destroyed Tank Creek Bridge and three other deteriorated pedestrian bridges on the Great River State Trail in the Town of Caledonia. The project includes a $2.35 million federal grant through the FHWA, with additional funding potentially available through the Federal Lands Access Program pending congressional reauthorization. The state previously approved $364,000 in Oct. 2025 for preliminary plans. Bids are scheduled to open in March 2027, construction to begin in May 2027, with substantial completion targeted for Nov. 2027 and final completion in Nov. 2028. State Sen. Brad Pfaff and Assembly Reps. Jill Billings and Doyle serve on the eight-member commission that approved the funding.

Source: WIZM 1410 AM La Crosse (Western) | https://www.wizmnews.com/2026/10/22/tank-creek-bridge-construction-moving-forward/

UW-Madison's plan to build 2 new dorms is moving fast. Here's the latest

Wisconsin's Building Commission unanimously approved a proposal for two new UW-Madison residence halls after the UW Board of Regents approved the plan at a special Monday meeting. The pair of dorms, to be built on state-owned sites at 917-921 W. Dayton St. and 115 N. Mills St. through a public-private partnership with developer Mortenson and architect The Lawrence Group, would add approximately 1,700 beds and a dining hall by fall 2029, the first new on-campus housing since Leopold Hall in 2013. Under the 62-year agreement, developers would build and lease the facilities to the state for $29.7 million annually for 30 years, with a state purchase option after 10 years; total construction cost is approximately $338 million, with an estimated $55 million in savings over a traditional state budget approach. Construction is targeted to begin June 1.

Source: WiscNews (South Central) | https://wiscnews.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_58ae47fe-594e-56ef-a645-0d5fb8d925c0.html

Drivers share safety concerns about a Sheboygan County intersection on State Highway 23

State data show 43 crashes at the intersection of State Highway 23 and Sheboygan County Road TT between 2014 and 2024, with more than 10 people killed or injured. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation plans to construct a restricted crossing U-turn (J-turn) at the intersection, replacing an earlier overpass concept. WisDOT project development supervisor Scott Ebel cited the need to act sooner; construction is expected next year.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Southeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/lakeshore/drivers-share-safety-concerns-about-a-sheboygan-county-intersection-on-state-highway-23

Two Manitowoc County Communities Getting Agricultural Road Repair Funding

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation awarded Agricultural Road Improvement Program grants to two Manitowoc County communities. The Village of Reedsville received approximately $381,000, covering 90 percent of project cost, for improvements to North 6th Street. The Town of Liberty received approximately $1.62 million for repairs to Marken Road. The awards were part of a statewide round totaling close to $70 million.

Source: Seehafer News (Northeastern) | https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/10/23/two-manitowoc-county-communities-getting-agricultural-road-repair-funding/

Storage structure to permanently hold Milwaukee's contaminated sediment complete

The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District completed construction of the Dredged Material Management Facility, a 42-acre structure along the Milwaukee lakefront north of the Lake Express Ferry terminal designed to permanently contain contaminated sediment from the city's rivers and estuary. MMSD Executive Director Kevin Shafer said construction finished ahead of schedule and under budget. The EPA and Wisconsin DNR are now in the design phase for dredging operations. MMSD estimates the facility will reach capacity in 20 to 25 years; disposition of the site afterward will be determined by a future generation.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Southeastern) | https://www.wuwm.com/storage-structure-to-permanently-hold-milwaukees-contaminated-sediment-complete

$55 million highway department facility approved in Marathon County

Marathon County approved a $55 million highway department facility to be built in Kronenwetter, replacing a nearly 100-year-old building in Wausau. Funding combines $30 million set aside by the county in 2025 with $25 million in repayments from North Central Health Care for financing of the Lake View Campus, avoiding new borrowing. Construction begins in spring 2027 with completion expected by summer 2028. Once operational, the county will close its Mosinee plow garage, reducing the number of facilities the department must maintain.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | https://www.wsaw.com/2026/10/22/55-million-highway-department-facility-approved-marathon-county/

Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary plans 564-acre habitat restoration, construction eyed in 2028

Green Bay's Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary is planning a habitat restoration project covering more than 550 acres, including forest, grassland, wetlands, and shoreline improvements, funded in part by a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant secured by the city and the DNR. Design is 60 percent complete, with GEI Consultants producing renderings. A full cost estimate is expected by

end of calendar year 2026, with construction targeted for early 2028 and a three-year completion timeline. The project is one of 12 Area of Concern initiatives in Green Bay.

Source: WTAQ 1360 AM / 97.5 FM Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://wtaq.com/2026/10/23/bay-beach-wildlife-sanctuary-plans-564-acre-habitat-restoration-construction-eyed-in-2028/

Chippewa Falls library looking to double in size in $10M expansion project

The Chippewa Falls Committee of the Whole, comprising the full City Council and mayor, voted unanimously to authorize $30,000 for a feasibility study and commit $1 million in city funds toward a proposed $10 million expansion of the Chippewa Falls Public Library, which has not undergone major renovation since opening in 1969. The project would nearly double the building's current 18,000-square-foot footprint, expanding westward into the existing parking lot. Mayor Jason Hiess indicated the city would likely bond for its share, with the balance sought from donations. Library Director Joe Niese said the goal is a spring 2028 groundbreaking.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/daily-updates/chippewa-falls-library-looking-to-double-in-size-in-10m-expansion-project/article_cd6f75e9-78e6-44d4-aa40-048e37ca7f3c.html

Milwaukee Earns LEED Gold For Citywide Sustainability Efforts

Milwaukee earned LEED Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, announced Oct. 21, scoring 65 against the 60 points required for Gold status. The citywide certification, distinct from building-level LEED ratings, evaluates water, transportation, energy, land use and quality of life. Environmental Collaboration Office Director Erick Shambarger said the city plans to work with VISIT Milwaukee to use the designation in tourism and convention recruitment, particularly for sustainability-focused organizations. The city fell short of Platinum, which requires 80 points, partly because its energy benchmarking ordinance applies only to buildings of 50,000 square feet or larger.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/10/23/milwaukee-earns-leed-gold-for-citywide-sustainability-efforts/

Progress on park bluff project at last

Port Washington's Common Council voted 4-1 to award a $297,000 contract to Advance Construction for drain line installation on the north bluff of Upper Lake Park, the third bid cycle after receiving no bids the first time and one unacceptably high bid the second. The approved contract is nearly three times the $100,000 budgeted three years ago. The city simultaneously awarded Advance Construction a $4.5 million utility extension contract to serve the Vantage Data Centers Lighthouse Campus; the bluff work will be coordinated around that project. Tax incremental financing will help fund the bluff work. Work cannot begin on the utility project until the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin grants approval, expected in January. Ald. Michael Beaster cast the lone dissenting vote, objecting to the use of TIF financing.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/progress-park-bluff-project-last

Superior council approves revised water utility question

The Superior City Council unanimously approved amended referendum language for an April 6 ballot question asking voters whether the city should acquire the water utility operated by Superior Water, Light and Power if its value, as determined by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission, falls within the city's financial means. Councilor Tylor Elm proposed the amendment to identify SWL&P by name and replace the word "transition" with "acquire." The original question was approved Sept. 1. A "yes" vote would direct city officials to seek a PSC valuation of the utility.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/superior-council-approves-revised-water-utility-question

Plover tests new ways to cut road salt use ahead of winter

The Village of Plover hosted a winter maintenance equipment open house Oct. 22, drawing public works crews from Portage County, Mauston, Marshfield, Waupaca, Biron and other municipalities. Plover Public Works Manager Scott Klemm is testing Ice Slicer RS, a mineral-based deicer applied at roughly 100 pounds per lane mile compared to 300 to 500 pounds for conventional salt. Road salt costs municipalities an average of $105 per ton under Wisconsin DOT bids, with each ton causing an estimated $3,000 or more in infrastructure and vehicle damage. Plover maintains just more than 100 lane miles and recently purchased its first liquid deicer truck. Portage County, which maintains about 440 miles of county highways, has used liquid deicers for nearly 20 years and is close to equipping all salt trucks with prewetting capability.

Source: Stevens Point Metro Wire (Central/Northern) | https://spmetrowire.com/plover-tests-new-ways-to-cut-road-salt-use-ahead-of-winter/

Technology and AI Governance

A rural school district lost nearly $100K in 'cybercrime,' 1 of dozens of attacks on Wisconsin schools this year

The Adams-Friendship Area School District informed parents that hackers apparently stole approximately $92,000, with the district's bank flagging an unusual third-party payment request first noticed in August. The district placed its business manager on administrative leave Oct. 16 pending investigation, while also engaging law enforcement, an attorney, and its insurance provider; a claim is being processed. The incident is one of more than 40 cyberattacks reported against Wisconsin K-12 schools so far this year, according to the Department of Public Instruction, which recently issued a warning to districts. Nationally, the U.S. Department of Education reports schools average five cyber incidents per week, with AI enabling more sophisticated attacks against chronically understaffed institutions.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Central/Northern) | https://www.wpr.org/news/cybercrime-attacks-on-wisconsin-schools

Ava irks some but AI system works, sheriff's office says

The Ozaukee County Sheriff's Office has operated its AI nonemergency phone system, Ava, since April as part of a larger dispatch center upgrade costing approximately $70,000, largely covered by federal grant funds. The system handles nonemergency calls while 911 calls continue to reach human dispatchers directly; the county Communications Center handled 113,538 nonemergency and 17,612 emergency calls in 2025, with 911 calls up 17 percent so far in 2026. Undersheriff Marshall Hermann confirmed Ava remains functional but still generates caller frustration, as users often treat it like a phone tree rather than a conversational system. Sheriff Christy Knowles stated Ava will not reduce staffing levels. No estimate of staff hours saved has been produced yet, though dispatchers report improved capacity to focus on priority calls.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/ava-irks-some-ai-system-works-sheriff%E2%80%99s-office-says

Public Safety

Bayfield County Sheriff's Committee reverses Flock license plate reader vote

The Bayfield County Sheriff's Committee on Oct. 19 unanimously reversed a 3-2 vote from Sept. 28 that had recommended a countywide policy on Flock automated license plate readers potentially including a ban. Under the new motion, Deputy Administrator Kelly Westlund will compile all county surveillance-technology policies for committee review before any recommendation goes to the full county board. The reversal removes a Flock recommendation from the Oct. 27 board meeting agenda. The sheriff's office operates six Flock cameras; Sheriff Tony Williams has asserted that he, not the county board, holds authority to set departmental policy. About 350 residents had signed a petition opposing the cameras.

Source: Ashland Daily Press (Central/Northern) | https://apg-wi.com/ashland_daily_press/news/local/bayfield-county-sheriff-s-committee-reverses-flock-license-plate-reader-vote/article_98893090-5752-45e9-8307-048ba52cae82.html

Dodge County Board blocks effort to defund Flock cameras

The Dodge County Board on Tuesday rejected 22 to 10 a motion to cut Flock Safety automatic license plate reader funding from the 2027 budget. The county spent $34,000 on the cameras in 2026 and is requesting $42,000 for 2027. Dodge County has 18 installed cameras and Beaver Dam has 12. Supervisor Daniel Siegmann of Rubicon voted for the cut, citing public trust concerns, while Supervisor Christine Churchill of Mayville, a retired sheriff's office employee, defended the cameras as a law enforcement tool. The 2027 budget is pending board approval in November.

Source: WiscNews (South Central) | https://wiscnews.com/news/community/bdc/article_b47b480f-ced1-46de-97b2-211cc1b6b2ee.html

La Crosse drops Flock cameras over 'accountability' concerns

La Crosse city officials announced termination of the city's contract with Flock Safety for AI-powered surveillance cameras, citing what Police Chief Shawn Kudron called a lack of robust accountability and oversight guarantees for outside agencies sharing the network. The contract had been set to run through 2027; a city spokesperson said financial obligations have been satisfied. The La Crosse Police Department shared Flock data with local law enforcement agencies investigating significant crimes but not with federal agencies. The decision followed weeks of public protest and a community-driven effort to cut Flock funding, and comes as other Wisconsin law enforcement agencies have also ended Flock contracts.

Source: La Crosse Tribune (Western) | https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/government-politics/article_92791cec-7355-4dd0-9a17-7731e4d74a4f.html

Ending Flock camera funding amendment added to La Crosse agenda

La Crosse City Council member Jennifer Trost added an amendment to the city's 2027 operating budget proposing an $8,000 reduction in the IT department's allocation for Flock Safety camera services. Separately, the Board of Estimates voted earlier this month to recommend raising property taxes by $13.60 per $100,000 of assessed value to address a $681,000 2027 budget shortfall.

Source: WIZM 1410 AM La Crosse (Western) | https://www.wizmnews.com/2026/10/22/flock-amendment-la-crosse-budget/

La Crosse police ending Flock Safety camera contract

The La Crosse Police Department announced it is ending its contract with Flock Safety after months of internal review, citing concern that other law enforcement agencies on the shared Flock network do not follow the same oversight policies La Crosse uses. Police Chief Shawn Kudron and Mayor Shaundel Washington-Spivey both backed the decision. The city joins Clark County, Sun Prairie, Jefferson County, and West Salem in recently discontinuing Flock contracts in Wisconsin; no end date for the La Crosse contract was specified in the release.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Western) | https://www.news8000.com/news/local-news/la-crosse/la-crosse-police-ending-flock-safety-camera-contract/article_522640ae-9ed7-427f-94f1-0afb7ca65cc3.html

Baraboo-area municipalities double funding to save fire, EMS district

Representatives of Baraboo, West Baraboo and the towns of Baraboo, Greenfield and Fairfield voted in a commission meeting to raise their collective contributions to the Baraboo Area Fire and EMS District from roughly 18 percent to 37 percent of the district's 2027 budget, addressing an approximately $2.2 million shortfall driven by inadequate Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements. Total municipal contributions will increase from $1,871,397 to $3,140,930. Baraboo alone will contribute $2,226,843, up from $1,301,061, funded partly through $910,000 in short-term borrowing that will raise taxes on a $300,000 city home by $181.50 in 2027. EMS service costs are rising from $791,162 to $1,794,839. Contract negotiations with IAFF Local 5428 are pending, and district officials said hospital billing projections are expected to worsen.

Source: WiscNews (South Central) | https://wiscnews.com/news/local/article_c30164e6-2020-4d30-b353-959dcd6348eb.html

Oshkosh, Town of Algoma explore fire department merger as report deems it feasible

A feasibility report commissioned by Oshkosh and the Town of Algoma concludes that merging their fire departments over several years is viable. Oshkosh City Manager Rebecca Grill and Algoma Town Chair Joel Rasmussen both cited budget pressures and a state innovation grant as motivators. Oshkosh operates six stations with about 115 full-time staff serving 67,000 residents; Algoma has one volunteer station serving roughly 7,000. Officials say no annexation is planned, and discussions on whether to proceed now begin.

Source: WTAQ 1360 AM / 97.5 FM Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://wtaq.com/2026/10/23/oshkosh-town-of-algoma-explore-fire-department-merger-as-report-deems-it-feasible/

Editorial: Let's keep Fennimore's EMS local

The Fennimore Area EMS, a self-funded volunteer squad receiving no local tax support, currently covers only 224 of the 1,344 monthly hours needed for 24/7 service, using its own funds to pay two volunteers part-time. The squad held a public informational meeting, with discussions between the EMS and the Fennimore City Council resuming at the prior month's council meeting. The editorial notes that contracting an outside service would add up to 45 minutes to response times and cost an estimated $600,000 annually in wages and benefits for six full-time employees, compared to local response times of five to ten minutes.

Source: SW News Group (portal) (Western) | https://www.swnews4u.com/local/editorial-lets-keep-fennimores-ems-local/

Siren weighs ambulance options ahead of countywide contract talks

The Siren Village Board discussed but took no action Oct. 14 on two countywide ambulance contract options, placing the item on the November agenda. Under the status quo of three ambulance units, the estimated 2028 cost for Siren is approximately $70,754, or $82.85 per person. Adding a fourth basic life support "power truck" would raise that to approximately $92,531, or $108.35 per person. Proposed contract terms include a 10-year agreement with subsidy increases negotiated every two years, a 7.5 percent annual increase cap, a 360-day out clause, and a 15-minute countywide average response time standard. The committee also suggested municipalities consider forming an ambulance association district to list costs separately on the tax roll, and hopes to settle on a direction by early next year.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/siren-weighs-ambulance-options-ahead-of-countywide-contract-talks/article_5ccbf80c-2bc5-4672-808b-40275ba2a7e8.html

Dane County is jailing fewer kids. Authorities remain concerned.

Youth admissions to the Dane County Juvenile Detention Center fell to 171 last year from more than double that in 2019, with intake assessments at the reception center dropping from roughly 683 a decade ago to just more than 350 last year. About two-thirds of youth referred to the

Juvenile Court Program are now placed outside the jail or released. The program's latest annual report shows Black youth represent approximately 70 percent of detention referrals while comprising about 6 percent of Dane County's population, and fewer Black youth are released immediately or placed under home supervision. Judge Everett Mitchell said case severity is increasing even as volume falls.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/dane-county-is-jailing-fewer-kids-authorities-remain-concerned/article_04984150-2cc0-4f66-8fc5-9fe1b76ebd43.html

Door County Jail declares staffing emergency as staff shortages drive overtime and low morale

Door County Sheriff Tammy Sternard declared a staffing emergency effective Oct. 8 at the Door County Jail, where 16 employees are working against a minimum safe requirement of 22, out of 26 authorized positions. The emergency allows the sheriff to assign overtime outside normal bargaining unit contract rules, including allowing non-security deputies to work jail shifts. From Jan. 2023 through Sept. 30, 2026, jail staff logged 14,937.75 overtime hours costing $737,192.35; 29 security deputies departed in that period, with 12 citing excessive overtime and 13 citing shift hours and family time. The Door County Deputy Sheriff's Association voted no confidence in Sternard in June, citing staffing shortages, excessive overtime, and a two-male minimum staffing policy among its concerns. The jail has not been fully staffed since 2019.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Northeastern) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/wisconsin-door-county-jail-staffing-emergency-shortages-overtime-low-morale/

Changes regarding inmate communication, mail services implemented at Lincoln County Jail

The Lincoln County Jail implemented two policy changes effective Oct. 20 at no cost to taxpayers. Non-legal inmate mail is now routed to an off-site processing center in Longview, Texas, where it is scanned and delivered electronically via facility tablets and kiosks; legal mail continues to be sent directly to the jail at 1104 E 1st St., Merrill. The jail also introduced video visitation and electronic messaging through NCIC Correctional Services. The Sheriff's Office cited contraband reduction and improved facility safety as the rationale.

Source: Tomahawk Leader (Central/Northern) | https://www.tomahawkleader.com/stories/changes-regarding-inmate-communication-mail-services-implemented-at-lincoln-county-jail,360137

DOJ to investigate officer involved with fatal crash in Peshtigo

The Wisconsin DOJ Division of Criminal Investigation is investigating an Oct. 22 officer-involved critical incident in the Town of Peshtigo, Marinette County, in which a Marinette County Sheriff's Office deputy initiated a pursuit at approximately 6:38 p.m. that ended when the fleeing vehicle struck another car, killing both occupants of the second vehicle. The two subjects in the pursued vehicle sustained severe injuries and were transported to Milwaukee-area facilities. The involved deputy was placed on administrative duty per agency policy, and DCI will turn over investigative reports to the Marinette County District Attorney upon completion.

Source: EagleHerald (Northeastern) | https://www.ehextra.com/news/doj-to-investigate-officer-involved-with-fatal-crash-in-peshtigo/article_44603354-1f3c-4158-8299-d3c0b4403503.html

Shawano County deputy will not face charges in March shooting death

Shawano County District Attorney Gregory Parker decided Wednesday not to file criminal charges against Deputy Cole Vande Hei, who fatally shot 38-year-old Jonathan L. Lupe Sr. on March 10 during a disturbance call at a home on the 2300 block of State Highway 22 in the Town of Green Valley. Deputies used less-lethal force first; Lupe then advanced toward them with what proved to be a .177 caliber pellet gun.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/news/local-news/shawano-county-deputy-will-not-face-charges-in-march-shooting-death

Janesville police chief: E-bike and e-scooter ordinance coming in spring 2027

Janesville Police Chief Chad Pearson announced the department will spend the winter researching e-bike and e-scooter regulations and expects to present a draft ordinance to the City Council by spring 2027. One option under consideration would restrict riders under 16 to sidewalks and require riders 16 and older to use roads and bike lanes. Pearson briefed the council on the issue in July, noting state law classifies e-bikes in three classes with maximum speeds of 20 to 28 mph and sets no minimum age for Class 1 or 2 bikes. Wisconsin DOT data analyzed by the Dane County Traffic Safety Commission show e-bike crashes involving motor vehicles rose 194 percent and injuries 171 percent between 2022 and 2025; e-scooter crashes rose 260 percent and injuries 240 percent over the same period. Milton and Fort Atkinson have already enacted ordinances addressing related safety concerns.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-police-chief-e-bike-and-e-scooter-ordinance-coming-in-spring-2027/article_a17f180a-3edb-45e9-9a26-a4fc63f588f8.html

Wausau police crack down on reckless behavior on e-bikes, e-motos

Wausau Police Captain Nathan Cihlar confirmed the department is making enforcement of illegal e-moto operation a point of emphasis after receiving weekly complaints about reckless riding downtown, including one juvenile apprehended on an e-moto earlier this month. E-motos, described as pedal-less electric motorcycles, are generally not street legal and remain undefined under Wisconsin state law, according to the city of Madison website. Cihlar said operators without a license should expect to be stopped; the department is urging parents to review what vehicles their children have access to at home.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/wausau-police-cracks-down-on-reckless-behavior-on-e-bikes-e-motos/article_f227857a-b43c-402e-bfa2-1aa531a19251.html

Recall effort underway in Elk Mound

John Fellenz submitted recall paperwork to the Elk Mound Village Board on Oct. 20 targeting Village President Tim Benjamin, following the board's 6-1 vote on Oct. 6 to disband the police department and contract with the Dunn County Sheriff's Department using a four-year grant.

Fellenz has 60 days to collect approximately 90 signatures to force a special election, the cost of which falls to the village. Benjamin's term ends in April, but a recall election would likely occur before then. Fellenz contends that 79 emails obtained through an open records request show discussions with Dunn County began in May, suggesting the decision predated the public process.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/daily-updates/recall-effort-underway-in-elk-mound/article_0288138b-accd-4caf-9f44-ed457a260668.html

Former Elk Mound police department volunteer announces run for village board president

John Fellenz, a former Elk Mound Police Department volunteer, announced a run for village board president and filed a recall petition against sitting Board President Timothy Benjamin following the board's Oct. 5 vote to disband the Elk Mound Police Department and contract with Dunn County. Fellenz resigned his volunteer position by email to Police Chief Chad Weinberger to avoid a conflict of interest. To force a recall election, Fellenz must collect approximately 90 signatures within 60 days after the clerk and village attorney approve his paperwork. Dunn County Sheriff Kevin Bygd confirmed Elk Mound approached the county first and that the village is paying for a full-time dedicated deputy plus equipment.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/10/22/former-elk-mound-police-department-volunteer-announces-run-village-board-president/

Construction Blazes Ahead on New Brownsville Fire Station

The Brownsville Fire Company's new 14,000-square-foot fire station is on schedule for late Jan. 2027 completion, with exterior walls complete and windows and doors expected before Thanksgiving. The $3.8 million project was funded entirely through fundraising, with no additional taxes levied. Pat and Marysue Michels donated the three-acre site at 840 Oaklane Road. The station will house five apparatus and include a decontamination room, a 75-person training area, a community storm shelter, and space for fundraising events. Construction began in June 2026; planning began in 2017.

Source: Mayville Dodge County Pioneer (South Central) | https://www.dodgecountypionier.com/stories/construction-blazes-ahead-on-new-brownsville-fire-station,358945

Siting and Moratoria

County hits the brakes on data centers; Barron Electric: 'We have an obligation to serve'

The Barron County Board of Supervisors passed a moratorium Oct. 19 on new data center applications, building permits, conditional use permits, and zoning approvals, effective until Jan. 1, 2028, or until permanent data center zoning regulations are adopted. The moratorium applies only to zoned county towns and not to eight unzoned towns or to municipalities. In other

business, the board approved annexation of 3.8 acres from the Town of Barron into the City of Barron (owned by Graf Enterprises), adopted a new Farmland Preservation Plan map for the Town of Stanfold, and set a public hearing on the 2027 draft budget for Nov. 2 at 9 a.m.

Source: Barron News-Shield (Western) | https://news-shield.com/news/top_stories/article_14a5aa92-bed1-4f60-b7b4-dc009f70c613.html

County Board considers data center rules

The Burnett County Board unanimously approved a new I-2 "Energy Industrial District" floating zoning designation to regulate data centers and large-scale energy projects including solar and wind. Land Services Department Director Jason Towne said the designation can be applied to any parcel in the county where county zoning applies, though four municipalities and incorporated villages with their own zoning are not covered unless they opt in. The new rules require a community development agreement on a case-by-case basis, which may include costs for emergency responder training or road maintenance. Board Chairman Don Taylor noted that a rezoning, unlike a conditional use permit, gives the full county board legislative discretion to deny proposals below the state size threshold.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/county-board-considers-data-center-rules/article_5c0a00ef-6abf-4bac-9a10-29f3e9a78297.html

Rock County Board OKs panelists for new data center advisory panel despite some supervisors' heartburn over process

The Rock County Board approved a 13-member data center advisory panel at its Oct. 23 meeting, over objections from supervisors including Phil Gorman and Willow Wallis, who criticized Board Chairman Kevin Levy for selecting all panelists without a public application process and for refusing to disclose who assisted him or to detail individual appointees' qualifications. Gorman also raised unresolved conflict-of-interest concerns, questioning whether one nominee had financial ties to the Port Washington data center. Levy argued his authority over ad hoc appointments was proper under a resolution requiring the panel be seated within 60 days, with a first meeting and public hearing scheduled for November.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/rock-county-board-oks-panelists-for-new-data-center-advisory-panel-despite-some-supervisors-heartburn/article_8a50dd49-9657-4ddd-b3a6-0a6327c09de9.html

This local data center backs Milwaukee's data center moratorium

The City of Milwaukee enacted a one-year moratorium on new data centers, with dozens of residents speaking in favor at city meetings. Ryan Brooks, chief technology officer and general manager of Data Holdings, a Potawatomi tribe-owned 46,000-square-foot co-location facility in Milwaukee that hosts 55 Wisconsin state departments and agencies, publicly supported the moratorium and data center regulations. Brooks said hyperscale data centers exploit communities and rely on environmentally costly water cooling, contrasting them with Data

Holdings' glycol-based system that uses less water than a typical house. The State of Wisconsin contracts with the tribe-owned facility to maintain server uptime across state agencies.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Southeastern) | https://www.wuwm.com/local-data-center-backs-milwaukees-data-center-moratorium

RF Council floats idea of data center moratorium

At a packed Oct. 13 River Falls City Council meeting, City Administrator Scot Simpson presented options for a temporary moratorium on data center development, requested by Alderperson Scott Downing and backed by Alderpersons Mei Mei Abdouch and Michael Page. No moratorium was presented for adoption; the item directed staff to outline next steps. Simpson noted the city-owned Mann Valley site, comprising 195 acres, is the only feasible location for a hyperscale data center given zoning and utility constraints. A 2023 feasibility study from Project Badger cited a $24 million land price, a $500 million equipment investment, 315 MW of electricity use at full buildout, and 850,000 to 2,000,000 gallons of water use per day. Staff did not support granting the water volumes requested and the project did not advance to site submittal. Simpson said a moratorium draft could be completed by year-end if council directs staff to proceed.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/rf-council-floats-idea-of-data-center-moratorium,210356

Wisconsin Rapids Common Council Votes to Reject Conditional Use Permit for Data Center

The Wisconsin Rapids Common Council voted 7-0 on Tuesday to reject a conditional use permit for a hyper-scale data center proposed by the PNK Group at the former paper mill site. Mayor Matt Zacher said the city wants to ensure any future data center is built correctly. On Oct. 9, the council adopted a one-year moratorium on data centers, with an option to extend it to 18 months, during which the city will reevaluate its ordinance.

Source: WDLB 1450 AM Marshfield (Central/Northern) | https://wdlbam.com/2026/10/24/24065/

Local organization thrilled with council's decision to deny proposal for Rapids data center

The Wisconsin Rapids Common Council voted unanimously Tuesday to deny developer PNK Group's proposal to build a data center on the former Rapids mill site. The city entered a data center moratorium Oct. 9; PNK Group was grandfathered for council action because its proposal predated the moratorium, but the company may not submit a new proposal for council action until the moratorium expires. Mayor Matt Zacher said PNK Group could pursue legal action. The city will use the moratorium period to tighten data center ordinances.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/local-organization-thrilled-with-councils-decision-to-deny-proposal-for-rapids-data-center/article_7388a004-aff0-4a80-9555-80a35c4f4264.html

Modular reactors proposed to return nuclear energy to La Crosse area

Dairyland Power Cooperative and Applied Atomics, Inc. signed a letter of intent to evaluate the feasibility of siting a small modular reactor at the former nuclear plant location in Genoa, which hosted a nuclear facility from 1969 to 1987 and a coal plant retired in 2021. Applied Atomics holds an exclusive land-based license to commercialize the mPower pressurized light water reactor designed by BWXT. The Genoa site's existing nuclear waste storage capacity and certified status are cited as advantages. Dairyland President and CEO Brent Ridge characterized the agreement as an evaluation of whether the technology complements the cooperative's generation portfolio. No construction commitment or regulatory filing has been announced.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Western) | https://chippewa.com/news/local/article_8c752df8-bb46-51ac-8e0d-8db7ac505140.html

Dairyland Power evaluating bringing back nuclear power to Genoa site

Dairyland Power Cooperative signed a letter of intent with Applied Atomics to evaluate placement of small modular reactors (SMRs) at its Genoa site. Each SMR unit produces 100 megawatts, double the output of the 50 MW nuclear plant Dairyland operated at the site from 1969 to 1987. The Genoa site also housed a 345 MW coal plant shut down in 2021 and currently holds an NRC-licensed Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation. Applied Atomics cited deployment potential in the early 2030s, with each unit projected to have a 60-plus year operating life.

Source: WIZM 1410 AM La Crosse (Western) | https://www.wizmnews.com/2026/10/22/dairyland-power-evaluating-bringing-back-nuclear-power-to-genoa-site/

Rock County Board approves resolution opposing transmission line

The Rock County Board of Supervisors approved Resolution R-2026-139 on Thursday, opposing the routing and construction of the proposed BECI 765-kilovolt high-voltage transmission line through Rock County. The 190-mile line would run from Crawford County to Walworth County. The board also raised concern about the proposed Guyed-Y tower design, citing risks of obstacles in agricultural fields that could increase collision risks for farmers. Supervisor Ron Woodman sponsored the resolution.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/10/23/rock-county-board-approves-resolution-opposing-transmission-line/

Vernon County Board unanimously calls for moratorium on 765-kV transmission lines in Wisconsin

The Vernon County Board unanimously passed a resolution on Oct. 23 calling on Gov. Tony Evers and the Wisconsin Legislature to immediately halt consideration or approval of any 765-kilovolt transmission lines until a special legislative committee convenes to make recommendations on electricity planning, Public Service Commission reform, and transmission policy. County Board Chair Lorn Goede said the resolution targets the adequacy of the PSC's approval process, not just

a specific project, and calls for decisions that are independent, evidence-based, transparent, and responsive to affected communities.

Source: WXOW ABC19 La Crosse (Western) | https://www.wxow.com/news/coulee/vernon-county-board-unanimously-calls-for-moratorium-on-765-kv-transmission-lines-in-wisconsin/article_ca6d966f-c8b0-44ce-9398-dadb04b43e34.html

Housing and Development

Janesville City Council will get first looks at two mixed-use housing proposals for 2400 Beloit Ave.

The Janesville City Council will review two mixed-use housing development proposals for the city-owned 55-acre parcel at 2400 Beloit Ave. at its Oct. 26 meeting, including a potential closed session with developers. The city received four total proposals after soliciting interest earlier this year. Approximately 39 acres are suitable for development; the two refined concepts propose between roughly 237 and 283 housing units at densities up to 5.1 units per acre, combining single-family homes, duplexes, townhomes, cottage-style homes, and multi-family apartments. The city has owned the land since 1999 and currently leases it for agricultural use.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-city-council-will-get-first-looks-at-two-mixed-use-housing-proposals-for-2400/article_600ad50b-fb55-4f2d-8c94-2e794f7d24c9.html

Janesville launches street improvements to prepare for McCormick Crossing development

The Janesville City Council will consider a memorandum of understanding with DK Partnership, LLP, for public infrastructure extensions at McCormick Drive and Huntinghorne Drive to support the McCormick Crossing development. Under the agreement, the developer would hire a licensed civil engineer and city-approved contractors, reimburse the city for engineering services, and bear construction costs, with no out-of-pocket municipal spending required. Plans include a roundabout at the McCormick and Huntinghorne intersection. The broader McCormick Crossing concept envisions up to 600 housing units and 26,000 square feet of retail space over the next decade.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-launches-street-improvements-to-prepare-for-mccormick-crossing-development/article_ab032335-4bc1-4910-9bb7-0cdc31532544.html

Ground Broken for Scholar's Ridge Development in Plymouth

A groundbreaking was held for Scholar's Ridge, a 102-unit single-family residential development in Plymouth on South Pleasant View Road. Sheboygan County's Forward Fund public-private partnership contributed to the project, with four founding business partners each contributing $2 million. Sheboygan County committed $2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding, the City of

Plymouth added additional support, and WHEDA awarded a $3.4 million Infrastructure Access Loan, the first time that loan program supported a single-family development.

Source: WHBL 1330 AM Sheboygan (Southeastern) | https://whbl.com/2026/10/23/ground-broken-for-scholars-ridge-development-in-plymouth/

Dodge County considers $134,000 partnership for economic and community development

Dodge County is reviewing a proposed $134,000 line item in its draft 2027 budget to fund a regional economic development partnership involving the Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation and Thrive ED, equating to approximately $1.50 per resident. County Administrator Cameron Clapper said the arrangement would supplement, not replace, the county's existing two-person community development staff. Thrive ED cited more than $2 billion in business investment and a $12.8 million revolving loan fund from work in Jefferson County. The Dodge County Board will continue budget review before taking final action.

Source: WBEV 1430 AM Beaver Dam (South Central) | https://dailydodge.com/dodge-county-considers-134000-partnership-for-economic-and-community-development/

Green Bay Council gets earful on managing eyesore properties

The Green Bay Common Council voted 5 to 7 on Oct. 20 to defeat an amended ordinance that would have required vacant commercial properties to be registered with the city and charged annual fees of $500 for properties vacant 12 months, rising to $4,000 for those vacant four or more years. A separate motion by Alder Melinda Eck to kill the ordinance entirely also failed 5 to 7. The council sent the draft back to the Protection and Policy Committee for a possible rewrite following more than 90 minutes of debate that included public testimony from property owners, realtors, and nonprofit representatives.

Source: The Press Times (Green Bay) (Northeastern) | https://gopresstimes.com/stories/green-bay-council-gets-earful-on-managing-eyesore-properties,360204

City offers financial help for home repairs, accessibility upgrades

The Stevens Point Redevelopment Authority expanded its Neighbor Helping Neighbor Grant Program on Oct. 21 to include accessibility improvements for older residents and people with disabilities. Grants cover 50 percent of approved project costs up to $5,000, requiring a dwelling assessed value below $202,000 and household income limits ranging from $44,650 for a single person to $84,250 for a household of eight. The city partnered with Midstate Independent Living Choices to conduct free phone assessments and in-home evaluations costing $500, which can be included in the grant. Applications are reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis; homeowners may receive one grant every three years.

Source: Stevens Point Metro Wire (Central/Northern) | https://spmetrowire.com/city-offers-financial-help-for-home-repairs-accessibility-upgrades/

56-home mixed-income neighborhood coming to Fox Crossing

Greater Fox Cities Area Habitat for Humanity broke ground on Horizon Crossing, a 56-home mixed-income development in Fox Crossing located south of U.S. Highway 10 between Clayton Avenue and Irish Road. The project includes 39 market-rate homes by Tom McHugh Construction and 17 Habitat homes offered through zero-interest, income-based mortgages. The 39 market-rate homes are expected to be completed in 2027 and the 17 Habitat homes in 2028. About half of the Habitat families have already been selected.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/fox-cities/56-home-mixed-income-neighborhood-coming-to-fox-crossing

Land Use and Zoning

Madison rezones 4,000 properties to help home projects, cut paperwork

The Madison City Council unanimously rezoned approximately 4,000 single- and two-family properties in planned development districts across 16 of the city's 20 council districts, streamlining permitting and extending accessory dwelling unit and duplex rights to those parcels under the city's Housing Forward agenda. Properties are distributed mostly on the far east and far west sides and were placed into "low" or "low medium" designations. Homeowner association covenants remain enforceable by private parties. The change had been under discussion since spring 2026.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-rezones-4-000-properties-to-help-home-projects-cut-paperwork/article_6cc9e32a-9607-4995-9555-6170a49752bd.html

Madison approves west side housing project despite neighbor concerns

Madison's Plan Commission unanimously rezoned 301 S. Westfield Road and approved plans for Canada-based developer RFA to build 578 apartments across four buildings of four to five stories, with approximately 2,000 square feet of commercial space and about 750 parking spaces, more than 500 of which would be underground. The project requires demolition of an existing UW Health administrative office building whose lease expires next August. Neighboring Tamarack Trails Community Services Association, representing owners of more than 300 homes, sought a delay for additional setback, height, and drainage review. A traffic study for the residential area to the north remains pending.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-approves-west-side-housing-project-despite-neighbor-concerns/article_00315b20-885f-432b-a6d2-d3050a4e3283.html

Douglas County adopts new floodplain, safety ordinances

The Douglas County Board repealed and recreated its floodplains ordinance on Oct. 15, following DNR-approved studies. The ordinance, based on a DNR model ordinance developed with Northwest Regional Planning, establishes five floodplain districts with distinct restrictions on

permitted uses and development. Interim land services director Robin Haasis presented the measure to the zoning committee.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/douglas-county-adopts-new-floodplain-safety-ordinances

Dunn County long-range plan would steer new development away from farmland, toward existing communities

The Dunn County Board of Supervisors gave the 2027-2047 Dunn County Comprehensive Plan its first reading on Wednesday, with a final vote scheduled for Nov. 10. The plan directs higher-density development toward cities, villages, and infrastructure-served areas to preserve farmland and reduce development costs. It includes an updated Farmland Preservation Plan, expanded groundwater monitoring recommendations, and guidance on additional housing types such as duplexes and accessory dwelling units. The plan does not alter existing zoning regulations but serves as a required policy guide for future land use ordinances under Wisconsin law.

Source: WQOW ABC18 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.wqow.com/news/chippewa-valley/dunn-county-long-range-plan-would-steer-new-development-away-from-farmland-toward-existing-communities/article_bc811afe-5e15-4d25-9879-76d19988f306.html

Oneida County Board approves updated shoreline protection ordinance

The Oneida County Board of Supervisors approved an updated shoreline protection ordinance allowing lake homeowners to clear up to 35 percent of vegetation along the shoreline for an access and viewing corridor. The board rejected an amendment, backed by the Oneida County Lakes and River Association and others, that would have required selective cutting and mandated that at least half of trees six inches or more in diameter remain. The ordinance passed without the selective cutting language; any future amendment must restart the submission process.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wxpr.org/energy-environment/2026-10-23/oneida-county-board-approves-updated-shoreline-protection-ordinance

Short-term rental market eyed by city

Monroe's Plan Commission voted in favor of drafting a zoning ordinance to regulate short-term rentals, with City Administrator Brittney Rindy confirming a draft will go to the commission for consideration in coming months. Consultants Vandewalle and Associates advised that state law changes in 2017 and subsequent case law prevent communities from prohibiting short-term rentals in legal residences and make the current conditional-use permit approach legally risky. The proposed change would make short-term rentals a permitted use by right in all residential districts, potentially with a small fee or licensing requirement. The action would also give the city a complete inventory of where short-term rentals operate.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/short-term-rental-market-eyed-by-city/

Journey21 expansion gets support

Oconomowoc's Plan Commission on Oct. 7 unanimously recommended that the Common Council approve an ordinance amendment to the Journey21 Planned Development at 1669 and 1671 Old Schoolhouse Road in Pabst Farms, allowing the nonprofit to expand beyond its originally approved residential units for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities. The original 2021 approval included a 27,000-square-foot Lodge with 16 units, 12 single-person cottages, and a 10,000-square-foot Enrichment Center. The commission also agreed that reducing parking stalls had merit given the intended occupants. The amendment goes to the Common Council for potential action.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/business/journey21-pabst-farms-expansion/article_cdd3e7b3-9c8c-51fe-86c5-1f3345696264.html

East Troy apartment community upset about possible pet food plant planned across Highway 120

An unnamed company presented a proposal to East Troy's Plan Commission for a 187,000-square-foot pet food processing and distribution facility on Highway 120 just south of Interstate 43, directly across from the Honey Creek Apartments. The application was tabled at the Oct. 12 Plan Commission meeting and placed on hold until the applicant publicly discloses the potential facility operator. Apartment general manager Mark Cummings-Hill cited unresolved odor concerns as the primary resident issue.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/county-reporting/walworth-county/east-troy-apartment-community-upset-about-possible-pet-food-plant-planned-across-highway-120

Governance and Ethics

Political violence on the rise at local level

Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway announced Oct. 23 she would not seek reelection, citing daily concerns about physical safety and escalating threats and harassment directed at her office. A 2024 Brennan Center for Justice report found more than 18 percent of local officeholders experienced threats or attacks in the prior 18 months, and more than two-fifths said abuse made them less willing to seek reelection. The Wisconsin Supreme Court separately requested $3 million for courthouse security after 129 reports of threats to circuit court judges in 2025.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/political-violence-on-the-rise-at-local-level/article_9c147a4f-d7e8-4316-9786-f3807d905f97.html

Rhodes-Conway reverses course, won't seek a third term

Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway, first elected in 2019 and currently in her second term, announced Friday she will not seek a third term, reversing a July declaration that she would run again. She cited escalating credible threats to her safety and that of her family and staff, and

ongoing personal attacks. In an interview with Isthmus she also addressed the Oct. 20 city council vote to fire interim independent police monitor Aeiramique Glass, noting structural problems in an oversight system created without executive branch input and expressing hope for a more collaborative redesign with national experts. Rhodes-Conway has not endorsed any candidate in the open mayoral race and said she wants to see the field develop first. She has approximately six months remaining in her term.

Source: Isthmus (South Central) | https://isthmus.com/news/news/rhodes-conway-reverses-course-will-not-seek-a-third-term/

Madison mayoral candidates react to Rhodes-Conway dropping out of race

Four declared Madison mayoral candidates, Syed Abbas, Brian Benford, Jonny Hinds, and Marcus Robert Johnson, responded publicly after Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway announced Oct. 23 she would not seek reelection, citing threats and personal toll. All four condemned threats against officeholders. The spring primary is scheduled for Feb. 16, 2027, and the general election for April 6, 2027. WMTV noted it reached out to all candidates listed on the City of Madison's 2027 candidate filings page.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/10/23/madison-mayoral-candidates-react-rhodes-conway-dropping-out-race/

City council fires Madison's independent police monitor, draws shouts of 'shame'

The Madison Common Council voted 14-6 in an all-night Oct. 20 session to terminate the extended contract of interim independent police monitor Aeiramique Glass, who had held the role since Dec. 2025. Voting no were Alds. Ellen Zhang, Carmella Glenn, Barbara Harrington-McKinney, Julia Matthews, Davy Mayer, and Devine Nzegwu. The resolution, introduced Oct. 6 by Ald. Will Ochowicz and co-sponsored by eight alders including Council President Sabrina Madison, reverses a June 9 extension that would have kept Glass through March 2027. The resolution places the independent monitor office under Common Council Chief of Staff Karen Kapusta-Pofahl and engages the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement to assist in finding a permanent monitor. Public comment ran eight of the meeting's twelve hours; 318 people registered against the firing, 177 in support. Opponents argued the action violates the 2020 ordinance establishing the monitor's independence from city officials.

Source: Isthmus (South Central) | https://isthmus.com/news/news/city-council-fires-madisons-independent-police-monitor-draws-shouts-of-shame/

Madison council votes to fire police monitor during 12-hour meeting

The Madison City Council voted 14-6 early Wednesday to immediately terminate interim Independent Monitor Aeiramique "Meeka" Glass, following a meeting that began Tuesday night and lasted roughly 12 hours. Resolution sponsor Ald. Will Ochowicz and 13 other council members cited personnel policy violations, including Glass entering contracts with an outside investigator and attorney without authority. Six alders opposed termination. The Police Civilian

Oversight Board, which appointed Glass on an interim basis last fall, had issued a statement saying she performed at a high level across all evaluation categories.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-council-votes-to-fire-police-monitor-during-12-hour-meeting/article_08f4b596-198f-4cab-a985-10dea58b85f5.html

DA says she can't find an agency to investigate Trevor Jung complaint as Republicans say he's under

Racine County District Attorney Patricia Hanson told Racine County Eye on Oct. 14 that a complaint alleging State Senate District 21 Democratic candidate Trevor Jung campaigned on City of Racine time has become "a hot potato," with no law enforcement agency willing to conduct an investigation three weeks after the complaint reached her office on Sept. 23. The Racine County Sheriff's Office declined the case; Hanson said she is waiting for the Sheriff's Office to identify a willing agency. Jung, the city's transit and mobility director, denied the allegations; his campaign said no investigative agency had contacted him. Republican campaign materials and a TV ad from Croft's campaign characterized Jung as "under investigation." Racine County Eye had requested Jung's city time records Oct. 14; they had not been released at publication.

Source: WRJN 1400 AM Racine/Kenosha (Southeastern) | https://wrjn.com/news/2026/10/19/da-says-she-cant-find-an-agency-to-investigate-trevor-jung-complaint-as-republicans-say-hes-under

City finds no violation in Trevor Jung's time records; sheriff cites conflict in declining case | Racine

The City of Racine reviewed State Senate District 21 Democratic candidate Trevor Jung's time logs and payroll records and found no instance of him mixing city work with political activity, Communications Director Shannon Powell wrote Oct. 20. The review rested on a self-maintained calendar Jung kept from Sept. 16, 2025, through Sept. 30, 2026, at the city's direction; city systems record only daily totals, not hour-by-hour activity, and no clock-in or building-access records exist for salaried employees. The Racine County Sheriff's Office separately declined to investigate a complaint against Jung, citing Sheriff Christopher Schmaling's open support for Republican opponent Jim Croft, and notified the state Division of Criminal Investigation. A WMC Issues Mobilization Council television ad citing two dates the city's records show as a vacation day and a sick day continued to air. Jung began unpaid leave Oct. 1 through Election Day.

Source: WRJN 1400 AM Racine/Kenosha (Southeastern) | https://wrjn.com/news/2026/10/20/city-finds-no-violation-in-trevor-jungs-time-records-sheriff-cites-conflict-in-declining-case-racine

Lone 75th Assembly debate held

A referendum on the Burnett County ballot asks voters whether to reduce the size of the county board. Rep. Duke Tucker, who circulated the petition that placed the question on the ballot, said the reduction would save $600 per board meeting and cost about $1,000 to redistrict, shifting the current ratio of roughly one supervisor per 788 residents to approximately one per 1,100. Challenger Keith Mogel opposed the reduction, citing Polk County's experience with board

downsizing. Both candidates stated their positions at their only joint forum in the 75th Assembly District race, held Oct. 20 at Luck High School.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/lone-75th-assembly-debate-held/article_9b0dbc3f-f4c2-4409-87f7-46b624ea7cbc.html

Columbia County will start broadcasting meetings online

The Columbia County Board unanimously approved an ordinance amendment on Wednesday adding audio and video recording of monthly board meetings, with broadcasts to be available on Teams and YouTube channels, possibly starting next month. Recordings will be cleared from Teams after 180 days but retained on YouTube, which the county expects to have operational by Nov. 5. District 18 Supervisor James Stilson said initial meetings will be recorded and published the following day, with a transition to live broadcasts once technical issues are resolved.

Source: WiscNews (South Central) | https://wiscnews.com/news/local/article_6594d617-2320-44aa-aa97-c36ba5bcbf18.html

Woertz seen in court Monday

Langlade County corrections officer Gina Woertz appeared in Langlade County Circuit Court for an adjourned initial appearance on a felony misconduct in public office charge. Judge John Rhode continued the hearing to allow Woertz time to secure counsel, either a public defender or private attorney. The criminal complaint alleges that on July 13, while on duty at the Langlade County Jail, Woertz used department computers to access confidential law enforcement records on her fiance's Lincoln County case, drafted an official report to dispute investigators' findings, and put money in a detective's mailbox. Woertz is free on a $5,000 signature bond; her next court date is Nov. 20.

Source: Antigo Daily Journal (Central/Northern) | https://www.antigojournal.com/news/woertz-seen-in-court-monday/article_0ecd4ec7-e8bd-40da-85a9-583ee9543289.html

Monroe Co Sheriff unretires to oppose ex-employee he says is unqualified

Monroe County Sheriff Wesley Revels is running a write-in campaign for the Nov. 3 general election after his endorsed chief deputy, Chris Weaver, lost the Republican primary to former jail sergeant Mike Krause, who captured 63 percent of the vote, 3,697 to 2,147. Revels cites a 2008 court document in which Krause declared himself independent of the U.S. and alleges Hatch Act violations captured on body camera April 12, when Krause solicited inmate contacts to vote. Following a mid-April investigatory meeting Revels convened, three correctional officers resigned. The Monroe County Clerk previously denied a petition to remove Krause from the ballot. Candidates must file their next campaign finance report Oct. 26.

Source: The Badger Project (Western) | https://thebadgerproject.org/2026/10/20/monroe-co-sheriff-unretires-to-oppose-ex-employee-he-says-is-unqualified/

Polk committee sends revised rules for devices and decorum to full county board

The Polk County Executive Committee voted 3 to 1 on Oct. 8 to send to the full county board a resolution amending county ordinances to prohibit supervisors from using their position to harass, threaten, or intimidate the county administrator or any county employee, and to bar cell phone use by supervisors, staff, and the public during board and committee sessions. Supervisor Pam Garvey authored the resolution, citing instances of supervisor inattention during meetings and concerns about staff feeling threatened by supervisors. Enforcement would proceed through the Executive Committee, with the full board making the final sanction determination; supervisor removal would require compliance with Wis. Stat. ch. 17.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/polk-committee-sends-revised-rules-for-devices-and-decorum-to-full-county-board/article_18efca39-3ed3-43a7-899b-af0e451847dd.html

Complaint seeks investigation of Grow Janesville Responsibly's referendum campaign

Janesville for Responsible Development filed an ethics complaint with the Wisconsin Ethics Commission on Oct. 1, asking it to investigate whether Grow Janesville Responsibly is required to register as a referendum committee under state law given its campaign opposing the GM/JATCO referendum on the Nov. 3 ballot. The referendum asks voters whether developments at the GM/JATCO site exceeding $450 million must receive voter approval. State law requires referendum committees that receive or spend more than $10,000 to register with the state; the Janesville City Clerk's office has received no referendum committee filings from any group. Grow Janesville Responsibly, which filed as a nonprofit, stated it is not required to register because referendum advocacy does not constitute a majority of its spending. The WEC acknowledged the complaint is under preliminary review but has made no determination of wrongdoing.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/complaint-seeks-investigation-of-grow-janesville-responsiblys-referendum-campaign/article_4d31b8a3-6727-4ee3-b121-fdab5da4cd96.html

Elections and Election Administration

In-Person Absentee Voting Surges Across Wisconsin

In-person absentee ballot returns surged 65 percent statewide on the first day of early voting compared to the same point before the 2022 midterm, with Milwaukee County up 63 percent, Dane County up 60 percent, and Kenosha County up 87 percent, according to Wisconsin Elections Commission data. Simultaneously, mail-in ballots received by clerks are down nearly 26 percent statewide from 2022 levels. The Wisconsin Elections Commission sent a letter to U.S. Postmaster General David Steiner in May urging faster deliveries after a clerk survey found 67 percent reported mail problems. A federal judge blocked a USPS rule implementing a Trump executive order restricting mail ballot transmission, and the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the administration's appeal.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Statewide) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/10/22/in-person-absentee-voting-surges-across-wisconsin/

In Wisconsin, voters cast early in-person ballots as distrust in the mail grows

As of Wisconsin's first day of early voting, voters had returned 191,000 absentee ballots statewide, 26 percent fewer than the nearly 259,000 returned at the same point in 2022. Sent-out ballots have dropped about 20 percent, from 466,000 to 372,000, and the return rate fell to 51.5 percent from 55.5 percent in 2022. In 63 of 72 counties, voters have returned a smaller share of their ballots than four years ago. New Berlin Clerk Rubina Medina reported mail ballot requests at 25 to 30 per day, down from 75 to 100 in past elections. A Wisconsin Elections Commission survey found two-thirds of clerks observed mail delivery issues in April. Officials advise voters not to mail ballots with less than two weeks until Election Day and to use drop boxes or direct delivery instead.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/wisconsin-voters-early-in-person-absentee-ballots-mail-distrust-election/

Dane County sees more than 43,000 ballots cast as early voting surges statewide

The Wisconsin Elections Commission reports early voting statewide is up 65 percent compared to the 2022 midterm election. Dane County has recorded more than 43,000 ballots cast, with more than 13,000 cast in person. Sun Prairie and the City of Monona have both extended voting hours beyond standard times to accommodate demand. Sun Prairie election director Elena Hilby said her office is considering adding staff to assist with absentee ballot counting on Election Day.

Source: WKOW ABC27 Madison (South Central) | https://www.wkow.com/news/dane-county-sees-more-than-43-000-ballots-cast-as-early-voting-surges-statewide/article_516937e9-1982-41b5-9d21-2c95d9f9a71c.html

WEC finds county clerk improperly shared voter's record, refers case to DA

The Wisconsin Elections Commission found probable cause that Sheboygan County Clerk Jon Dolson violated state election laws and referred a complaint to the Sheboygan County District Attorney for potential criminal charges. No charges had been filed as of Oct. 23.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/wec-finds-county-clerk-improperly-shared-voters-record-refers-case-to-da/

DA, County Administrator React to County Clerk Dolson Actions

The Wisconsin Elections Commission suspended Sheboygan County Clerk Jon Dolson's access to the elector database after determining on Sept. 10 that he intentionally accessed and shared an elector's unredacted voter record to resolve a neighborhood dispute. The WEC also required Dolson to complete additional training and referred the case to the Sheboygan County District Attorney's Office. DA Joel Urmanski obtained a special prosecutor, who had not yet made a charging decision as of this week. Violation of the relevant statute is a Class I felony carrying up to 3.5 years in prison, a fine of up to $10,000, or both.

Source: WHBL 1330 AM Sheboygan (Southeastern) | https://whbl.com/2026/10/23/da-county-administrator-react-to-county-clerk-dolson-actions/

After Summer Mixup, Election Commission Approves New Poll Worker Instructions

The Milwaukee Election Commission board unanimously approved updated poll worker instructions for downloading election results ahead of the Nov. 3 gubernatorial election, following an August primary incident in which a worker mistakenly downloaded audit logs instead of results from five of nine high-speed tabulators, delaying reporting by more than an hour. Commissioner Doug Haag moved approval. The updated document includes photographs alongside written steps, will be laminated and available to exporting teams on election day, and will be accessible to poll observers and media with passwords redacted. Central Count will be held for the first time at the Italian Community Center, 631 E. Chicago St.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/10/22/after-summer-mixup-election-commission-approves-new-poll-worker-instructions/

Milwaukee election officials test voting machines to prevent errors ahead of general election

Milwaukee Election Commission Executive Director Paulina Gutierrez announced procedural updates following an August primary incident in which workers uploaded audit logs instead of ballot results, delaying reporting until the following morning. Changes include printed visual images on download reports, written step-by-step public procedures distributed on election night, and a "point and call" verbal verification process. Every voting machine in Milwaukee has undergone accuracy testing; machines that fail will not be used. Early in-person voting has already surpassed 2022 midterm levels. Absentee ballots will be counted at the Italian Community Center with locked containers, documented transfers, and police presence.

Source: WISN 12 ABC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.wisn.com/article/milwaukee-election-officials-test-voting-machines-to-prevent-errors-ahead-of-general-election/74238043

Can unarmed ICE agents watch voting? In Wisconsin that depends on who you ask

The Wisconsin Elections Commission finalized guidance less than three weeks before Election Day addressing how local clerks should handle federal law enforcement agents at polling places, instructing that agents who wish to observe must check in like regular observers. Dane County Clerk Scott McDonell and County Attorney David Gault, in an Oct. 15 email to Commission Administrator Meagan Wolfe, argued the guidance is inaccurate and could be read as permitting armed or uniformed ICE agents to observe voting in violation of federal law banning armed federal personnel at polls and prohibiting voter intimidation by those acting under color of law. Commission attorney supervisor Angela O'Brien Sharpe disagreed, saying federal law does not address every circumstance. A Wisconsin Elections Commission survey found two-thirds of clerks observed absentee ballot mail delivery issues in the April election, underscoring the broader local-administration stress heading into the November election.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/wisconsin-unarmed-ice-agents-voting-watch-elections-commission-guidance-dane-county/

Poll chaplains aim to bring a calming presence to swing states on Election Day

The Wisconsin Council of Churches and the Wisconsin Interfaith Voter Engagement Campaign have operated a Poll Chaplains Project since 2020, deploying clergy stationed 100 feet from polling places as a nonpartisan presence during elections. Chaplains are trained by the Bridging Divides Initiative, a research organization focused on mitigating political violence, and are equipped with direct lines to legal hotlines to report voter suppression or intimidation. This cycle, clergy are also receiving training on ICE verification procedures, though organizers instruct chaplains not to engage in dangerous activity and instead to notify on-site election chiefs.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Statewide) | https://www.wuwm.com/poll-chaplains-aim-to-bring-a-calming-presence-on-election-day

Judge issues warrant after Green Bay ballot box suspect misses court hearing

A Brown County judge issued an arrest warrant for Rolex Augustin, 32, after he failed to appear at a status conference Friday. Augustin was charged Sept. 25 with one misdemeanor count of attempted election fraud after surveillance video showed him removing the security seal from a Green Bay City Hall ballot box on Sept. 21 and tugging on the door. He was released from jail Sept. 30 on a signature bond. No ballots were accessed or compromised. A prior ICE detainer on him had been lifted at an unclear date.

Source: WTAQ 1360 AM / 97.5 FM Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://wtaq.com/2026/10/23/1148095/

Poll observer already a steady presence at City Hall

A Republican Party-affiliated poll observer has told Janesville City Clerk Lori Stottler he plans to observe all 10 days of early in-person voting at Janesville City Hall, an arrangement Stottler described as unusual. The observer also intends to attend the public equipment test on Nov. 3. Stottler said the extended presence has allowed her to provide the observer a personal tour of the clerk's office and explain ballot storage and absentee voting procedures.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/poll-observer-already-a-steady-presence-at-city-hall/article_02eb5953-0d05-4280-8ed3-a81742433e70.html

Human Services

Wisconsin no longer reports who owns the state's nursing homes

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services removed nursing home ownership information from its public directory after transitioning to a new data system this year, eliminating for-profit, nonprofit, and government ownership classifications that were previously listed. Advocacy group Small Town and Rural Seniors sent DHS a letter in August demanding restoration of the data, arguing the gap benefits private buyers and hinders residents' ability to evaluate facilities. DHS

Bureau of Nursing Home Care Director Jessica Radtke told organizers the information remains accessible through Medicare's Cost Compare tool, but advocates say Wisconsin-specific data should remain in state records, particularly given uncertainty about federal data availability.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Statewide) | https://www.wpr.org/news/wisconsin-no-longer-reports-who-owns-state-nursing-homes

Wisconsin Domestic Violence Deaths Down Slightly After Record Highs

End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin's 2025 annual homicide report recorded 101 domestic violence-related deaths in Wisconsin, down from 110 in 2024. Brian Randall, co-founder of northeast Wisconsin advocacy nonprofit Kalico Forest, noted the percentage breakdowns remained similar year over year despite the raw decline. Randall's organization operates the Red Signal program, which allows patients in clinical settings to discreetly signal domestic violence via a sticker on a urine specimen cup, prompting provider intervention. Kalico Forest is also hosting a first-of-its-kind Wisconsin Safe Care Summit to train healthcare workers, EMTs, and first responders in identifying and responding to domestic violence and connecting victims to local resources.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Statewide) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/10/24/wisconsin-domestic-violence-deaths-down-slightly-after-record-highs/

Direct housing assistance returns to Northeast Wisconsin after Newcap closure

The Foundation for Rural Housing is serving as interim housing assistance provider for 10 Northeast Wisconsin counties after Newcap closed in March due to financial issues. Approximately $400,000 in grant funding previously held by Newcap will support four types of direct assistance through Dec. 31. The foundation saw 11 clients in its first week and plans to apply for permanent provider status when the application opens.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/greenbay/direct-housing-assistance-returns-to-northeast-wisconsin-after-newcap-closure

Hundreds of immigrants, refugees await English education as Literacy Green Bay weathers federal cuts: Part II

Federal cuts to the Office of Refugee Resettlement reduced Wisconsin Literacy's statewide grant funding from $2,857,703 in 2025 to $737,890 in 2026. Literacy Green Bay's direct federal grant income fell from more than $150,000 in 2024 to $60,000 in 2025, then ended entirely in July. In response, the organization cut English classes from 15 to eight, eliminated free child care, and opened a waitlist now holding 300 people. Staff are supplementing formal instruction with a monthly informal "Coffee, Culture and Conversation" community conversation program.

Source: The Press Times (Green Bay) (Northeastern) | https://gopresstimes.com/stories/hundreds-of-immigrants-refugees-await-english-education-as-literacy-green-bay-weathers-federal,359154

Adult Protective Services referrals more than double as scams target residents

Burnett County Adult Protective Services received 235 referrals from January through Sept. 2026, compared with 110 during the same period in 2025, according to data presented to the Health and Community Services Committee on Oct. 13. September alone saw 30 referrals, including three new guardianship cases and four protective placement reviews. Behavioral Health Supervisor Byron Hopke attributed the increase partly to financial exploitation, including referrals from banks, and noted that two APS staff members serve on a financial abuse specialist team. A committee member said a scam-prevention organization has offered to visit Burnett County, and the idea may be brought to the Aging and Disability Resource Center for possible funding of a community session.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/adult-protective-services-referrals-more-than-double-as-scams-target-residents/article_a99db5a7-483b-4afc-8906-eff3b012ac99.html

ADRC urges Medicare recipients to review coverage during open enrollment

The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Dodge County is urging Medicare recipients to review coverage during the Oct. 15 through Dec. 7 open enrollment period. Wisconsin's available Part D prescription drug plans will decrease from 10 to 8 in 2027, with the Aetna SilverScript Choice and Simply Healthcare Extra plans ending; enrollees in those plans must actively choose a replacement or risk losing coverage. The maximum Part D deductible rises from $615 to $700 and the maximum out-of-pocket cost increases from $2,100 to $2,400. The ADRC will host a Medicare plan comparison computer lab on Oct. 27, with Part D sessions from 9 to 11 a.m. and Medicare Advantage sessions from 1 to 3 p.m.; registration is required.

Source: WBEV 1430 AM Beaver Dam (South Central) | https://dailydodge.com/adrc-urges-medicare-recipients-to-review-coverage-during-open-enrollment/

Kenosha County Public Health to purchase $80K in new medical equipment

The Kenosha County Board of Supervisors authorized on Oct. 20 a $80,000 purchase of medical equipment for the County Public Health division using surplus funds. The purchase includes $60,000 for laboratory clinical instruments from Getinge Autoclave and two medical-grade refrigerators and freezers at $10,000 each to store vaccines, replacing a 23-year-old autoclave no longer in production and two 2020 units damaged by recent power outages. The equipment will be housed in the new 147,000-square-foot Human Services Building at 3500 52nd St., still under construction with a total project cost of approximately $30 million, where move-in will follow completion of exterior envelope repairs.

Source: Lake Geneva Regional News (Southeastern) | https://lakegenevanews.net/news/local/government-politics/article_a20c00fb-c8ff-5608-b5df-4567c9cc7034.html

Wood County Health Department Addresses Critical Child Safety Issue in the County

The Wood County Health Department formed a Safe Sleep Action Group and launched a county-wide Safe Sleep Campaign in October after Child Death Reviews identified infant deaths linked to unsafe sleep environments in Wood County. The department is distributing educational displays

to local libraries and health systems and offering free Pack 'n Play bundles to qualified families through the Cribs for Kids program. Residents can reach the department at 715-421-8911.

Source: WDLB 1450 AM Marshfield (Central/Northern) | https://wdlbam.com/2026/10/23/24060/

Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative to fully open hospital in August 2027

Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative announced it has secured financing to fully reopen the former HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls as a full-service hospital by Aug. 2027. Financing combines more than $14 million in philanthropic gifts and grants from the community with loans from Frandsen Bank and Trust and Northwestern Bank, against a total reopening cost estimated at $30 million. The hospital will feature a 24/7 emergency department, 10 inpatient beds, a surgery department, and full diagnostic and imaging services. Chippewa County's assistance with a loan is no longer needed at this stage, though CVHC said it may revisit that option in 2027 to accelerate labor and delivery and intensive care services. A separate proposed $158 million hospital in Lake Hallie remains under an option agreement only.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/daily-updates/chippewa-valley-health-cooperative-to-fully-open-hospital-in-august-2027/article_19c586a4-bf41-4f5c-a157-c48432c527a6.html

City of Sun Prairie fronts half of 2027 funding for Colonial Club

Sun Prairie alders voted 5 to 3 at their Oct. 20 committee of the whole meeting to award a $130,000 emergency allocation to the Colonial Club senior services nonprofit for the first half of 2027. The amount is half the $260,000 the organization has received annually from the city. Colonial Club Executive Director Melody Riedel said the funds bridge the gap before the city's new nonprofit funding policy, effective in 2027, allows a formal April application. The organization reported 5,731 hours of adult day center services and 8,285 home meals delivered in 2026, with 2025 audited expenses of $1.49 million. Dissenting alders included Santiago Rosas, Casey Drengler, and Bill Baker. The early disbursement reduces the 2027 nonprofit funding pool to $130,000 unless the council amends the budget.

Source: Sun Prairie Star (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/the_star/local_news/city-of-sun-prairie-fronts-half-of-2027-funding-for-colonial-club/article_7b4a63de-f632-43ec-be4f-1b7003794364.html

School Districts

Amery School District adopts 2026-27 budget, lowers tax rate to $7.13

The Amery School Board adopted a balanced 2026-27 budget setting the school tax rate at $7.13 per $1,000 of equalized property value, down 39 cents (5.2 percent) from $7.52 the prior year. The total levy is $14,019,099, a 1.05 percent increase of approximately $145,000 over the prior year's $13,873,765. Equalized property value across the district rose 6.59 percent to roughly $1.97 billion, spreading the levy across a larger base. The revenue limit is $16,521,060, down from $16,923,121, based on a per-student amount of $12,494, with a three-year average enrollment of

1,262. State aid of approximately $5.66 million was subtracted from the limit; debt referendum levies of $2,932,475 and a $230,000 community service levy were added outside the limit.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/amery-school-district-adopts-2026-27-budget-lowers-tax-rate-to-7-13/article_44ac16eb-9d65-4667-a811-4335e4d574fc.html

Positive open enrollment numbers aid Elmwood district's budget

The Elmwood School Board approved the 2026-27 budget with a total levy of $2,104,000 and a mill rate of 6.98, described as the lowest in district history. The levy is $121,000 higher than last year, a 6.15 percent increase. Open enrollment inflows grew from 45 students in 2018 to 88, generating roughly $600,000 in net revenue compared to a $130,000 net loss in 2018. State aid to the district has declined by approximately $350,000 over nine years, and in-district resident enrollment has fallen to its lowest recorded level.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/positive-open-enrollment-numbers-aid-elmwood-districts-budget,210396

Mill and tax levy rates set for approval

The Fennimore Community School District board, at its Oct. 7 meeting, set the 2027 mill rate at $6.72, down from $7.07 in 2026, the sixth consecutive annual decrease, alongside a 2.3 percent increase in the tax levy. Enrollment stands at 768 students, up from 761 the prior year. Final approval of the mill and levy rates is scheduled at the annual board meeting on Oct. 28.

Source: SW News Group (portal) (Western) | https://www.swnews4u.com/local/mill-and-tax-levy-rates-set-for-approval/

Gilman school tax rate tumbles

The Gilman School District board adopted its 2026-2027 budget at an Oct. 19 meeting and set the local tax levy rate at $6.36 per $1,000 of assessed value, a rate lower than the prior year's mill rate. The board also reviewed a recent community housing study.

Source: Medford Star News (Central/Northern) | https://www.centralwinews.com/a-main/2026/10/21/gilman-school-tax-rate-tumbles/?destination=star-news

Milton School District's years-long decrease in tax rate may be slowing

Milton School District Business Services Director Ross MacPherson told the school board that the district's tax rate, which has fallen about 5 percent over five years from above $9 in 2020-21, may rise in 2027-28. The district approved a $21.8 million levy for 2026-27 at its August annual meeting, roughly flat from $21.7 million in 2025-26. A 12 percent property value increase, partly driven by the closure of Tax Increment Finance District 6 in the Crossroads Business Park, is expected to affect future state aid calculations. MacPherson said the 2026-27 tax rate will likely fall between $5.70 and $5.80 per $100,000 of property value.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/milton-school-districts-years-long-decrease-in-tax-rate-may-be-slowing/article_6edf6917-a138-4135-b930-140f374aed61.html

Voucher cost for district's 108 private school students now nearly $1.3M

The Plymouth School District Board of Education approved a 2026-27 tax levy of $15,894,062 at its Annual Meeting and Budget Hearing, an increase of $1,236,443 or 8.4 percent over the prior year. The board attributed the levy increase in part to rising private school voucher costs tied to 108 students, which reduce state aid.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/voucher-cost-for-districts-108-private-school-students-now-nearly-1-3m/

New taxpayer has big impact on PW-S school spending plan

Vantage Data Centers' land purchase is driving a $354.9 million, or 12.1 percent, increase in the Port Washington-Saukville School District's equalized property value for 2026-27, substantially above the statewide average of 7.5 percent and the 2 percent growth the district assumed when voters approved $59.4 million in referendum borrowing. About half the increase is net new growth, largely from the data center. The proposed budget anticipates a $558,689 decrease in state aid while local property taxpayers contribute an additional $893,970, with the proposed tax rate dropping 3.9 percent even as the levy rises $1.6 million, or 7.8 percent. Because the land is now in a TIF district, increment from improvements will not reach the general tax rolls for an estimated 18 years. Enrollment declined by 51 students, and 201 resident students are now open-enrolling out, the largest outbound disparity in at least five years. A public hearing on the 2026-27 budget is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Oct. 26, followed by a board vote.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/new-taxpayer-has-big-impact-pw-s-school-spending-plan

District budget hearing set for Oct. 26

The Stanley-Boyd Area School District will hold a public budget hearing Oct. 26 at 8 p.m. at Stanley-Boyd High School. The proposed 2026-27 levy rate is $5.32 per thousand, down six cents from $5.38 the prior year, seeking to raise $4.165 million locally. Gross total expenditures are $24,757,196.54, with net expenditures of $22,900,030.54.

Source: Stanley Republican (Western) | https://stanleyrepublican.com/stories/district-budget-hearing-set-for-oct-26,210750

Brown Deer, Elmbrook and Oconomowoc school referenda: What to know ahead of Nov. 3 vote

Three Milwaukee-area school districts are among 79 statewide with referendum questions on the Nov. 3 ballot. Brown Deer is asking voters to approve two questions: a $2.8 million annual operating levy for five years, raising the tax rate $10 per $100,000 of property value, and a $35 million facilities bond for asbestos remediation, accessibility upgrades and building repairs, raising the rate $82 per $100,000. Elmbrook is seeking a $100 million bond for renovations to four schools built between 1958 and 1969, adding $11 per $100,000 of property value.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Southeastern) | https://www.wuwm.com/brown-deer-elmbrook-and-oconomowoc-school-referenda-what-to-know

Black River Falls asking voters for an operational referendum

Black River Falls School District is asking voters for $1 million per year over four years in its first-ever operational referendum, appearing on the November ballot. Superintendent Shelly Severson said the district's fund balance has dropped below a safe range due to rising costs and that 79 percent of the budget is staff salaries and benefits, meaning a failed referendum would require staff reductions, larger class sizes, and elimination of student support positions beginning next school year. If approved, the levy would cost property owners $30 per $100,000 of assessed value annually.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/10/21/black-river-falls-asking-voters-an-operational-referendum/

MHLT goes to operating referendum for first time in 20 years among rising costs

The MHLT School District (Minocqua, Hazelhurst, Lake Tomahawk) is asking voters on Nov. 3 to approve a recurring $3.5 million annual referendum to cover operational and maintenance costs, the district's first operating referendum in 20 years. The measure would cost owners of a $200,000 home an additional $132 per year beginning with the 2027-28 school year. District Administrator Robert Smudde cited enrollment decline, vendor cost increases, and deferred building maintenance as primary drivers. The district has already cut 13 positions, eliminated some post-employment benefits, reduced bus routes, and eliminated free breakfasts. Failure, Smudde said, would likely end programs including 3K, tech ed, STEAM, and outdoor education.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wxpr.org/education/2026-10-21/mhlt-goes-to-operating-referendum-for-first-time-in-20-years-among-rising-costs

Waunakee Community School District proposes two referendums, including $97.5M for facility improvements

Waunakee voters will decide Nov. 3 on two referendums. The first is a recurring operational referendum that would grow from $4.2 million annually in 2027-28 to $10.5 million annually from 2030-31 onward, primarily to fund competitive staff salaries. The second authorizes up to $97.5 million in borrowing for facility renovations, including $88.7 million for high school renovations and additions, $4.4 million for South Campus renovations, and $4.4 million for outdoor athletic facilities. Superintendent Dr. Monica Kelsey-Brown cited state revenue limit constraints and inflation as drivers. District officials noted more than 50 students currently travel off-site for Certified Nursing Assistant lab training at a cost of approximately $800 per student.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/10/23/waunakee-voters-weigh-two-school-referendums-including-975m-upgrades/

Antigo School Board has new look

At a special meeting, the Antigo School Board voted 5-3 to remove all existing officers and hold new elections after former board President Danny Pyeatt resigned effective immediately. Mike Parizek was elected president by a 5-3 secret ballot; Jean Adams was elected vice president after three rounds; Danny Nicholson was elected treasurer unanimously; and Melissa Cornelius was elected clerk unanimously. Dissenting members Mattmiller, Mattek-Nelson, and Schreiber cited legal team warnings that the mid-year officer removal exposed the district to legal risk. The board has one vacant seat pending fill.

Source: Antigo Daily Journal (Central/Northern) | https://www.antigojournal.com/news/antigo-school-board-has-new-look/article_74fe7c93-9b99-4ab7-b5f2-8f78922f2bf3.html

Major changes in leadership on the Antigo School Board

The Antigo School Board elected new officers at a special meeting following the resignation of President Danny Pyeatt. Mike Parizek was elected board president, with a vice president, treasurer, and clerk also elected. The board additionally passed a motion affirming that the Antigo School District is responsible for maintaining the McKenna Aquatic Center, which can only be closed with approval of the board or the YMCA on health and safety grounds. Parizek noted immediate maintenance needs at the facility, including a closed slide and drainage issues, remain unresolved.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/major-changes-in-leadership-on-the-antigo-school-board/article_7050fe44-ce10-444e-b0d5-11ee5309f93e.html

Survey sent back to committee for the second time

The Antigo School Board voted for the second consecutive month to return a community survey on the Clara R. McKenna Aquatic Center to the Buildings and Grounds Committee's November meeting. Board Treasurer Daniel Nicholson stated the pool lacks sufficient funding and that the board faces a critical decision at Monday's budget hearing. The survey's three questions address community support for continued operation, preferred Fund 80 levy levels (currently $300,000, with options up to full operating cost coverage), and open-ended feedback. A levy of $300,000 equates to a $15 annual tax on a $100,000 property.

Source: Antigo Daily Journal (Central/Northern) | https://www.antigojournal.com/news/survey-sent-back-to-committee-for-the-second-time/article_ee879b63-b78a-424a-9ebd-346e7a248c1c.html

Territory dispute: Committee discusses possible Hustisford absorption

The State School District Boundary Appeal Board met Oct. 21 in Hustisford to hear input on apportioning territory from the dissolving Hustisford School District. Watertown Unified School District sent a letter opposing any transfer to Watertown, with Director of Business Services Beth Munson citing the primarily agricultural nature of the border land, little student gain and adverse effects under the school finance formula, compounded by Watertown closing the elementary school nearest those borders. Recommendations presented at the meeting would assign territory entirely to Dodgeland or divide it between Horicon and Mayville. Horicon was the only district to

present, advocating for 30 percent of the territory. The boundary board will reconvene in early November for a hearing and initial decisions.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/territory-dispute-committee-discusses-possible-hustisford-absorption/article_cda95c0d-9ebd-4293-9494-a6c80a85ea43.html

Enrollment projections: District could lose over 400 students by 2032

An independent study by MDRoffers Consulting presented at the Oct. 21 Watertown Unified School District Board of Education Fiscal Management Committee projects WUSD enrollment will fall from approximately 2,815 students in 2026 to around 2,368 by 2031-32, a loss of more than 400 students. The district has already lost just under 400 students between 2023 and 2026, averaging 107 students per year at a 3.45 percent annual rate. Director of Business Services Beth Munson noted 418 students are counted in the voucher program attending private schools and 372 are open-enrolling in other districts. The district is currently making decisions to close buildings and right-size operations to account for the decline.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/enrollment-projections-district-could-lose-over-400-students-by-2032/article_045ffa97-ed5f-47c1-b5a9-d115bb547fb5.html

Six file for two open seats on Cambridge School Board

Six candidates applied by the Oct. 16 deadline to fill two Cambridge School Board vacancies created by the resignations of Jim Womble and Annie LaValley, both of whom moved out of the district in September. The board will interview candidates and vote at its 6 p.m. Oct. 26 meeting. Appointees will take office at the Nov. 23 meeting and serve through April 2027, with the option to run in that election. Board members receive $1,500 annually.

Source: Cambridge Enterprise Sentinel (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/leader_independent/news/local/six-file-for-two-open-seats-on-cambridge-school-board/article_bdac3afc-56cb-4401-adeb-2ab157616fce.html

Milton School Board member Jennifer Johns to step down

Milton School Board Clerk Jennifer Johns resigned effective Nov. 1, stepping down to "pursue other projects." Johns was first appointed to fill a vacancy in Sept. 2020, then elected in 2021 to a three-year term. She served as chair of the Instructional, Co-Curricular and Student Services Committee, on the Human Resources Committee, as staff advisory representative, and as the board's CESA 2 delegate. The board plans to outline its process for filling the vacancy at its next meeting Monday.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/milton-school-board-member-jennifer-johns-to-step-down/article_fe6eb318-cae0-44eb-a6f7-ab836501e8b0.html

Many new staff, same old class size

A Badger Institute analysis using National Center for Education Statistics data finds that since 1959, Milwaukee Public Schools and districts nationally have grown non-teaching staff far faster than student enrollment: instructional aides increased 1,476 percent, guidance counselors 779

percent, and principals and assistant principals 210 percent, while student enrollment rose only 47 percent. Teachers fell from 70.3 percent of all school staff in 1949 to 47.5 percent in 2022. The piece attributes the gap between low student-to-staff ratios and persistently large class sizes to this administrative and support-staff expansion, and cites California's 1996 billion-dollar class-size reduction initiative as a case where rapid hiring of 25,000 teachers disproportionately sent inexperienced staff to high-poverty schools. The author recommends reallocating state categorical grants that earmark funding for specific non-teaching positions into the base funding formula, giving principals discretion to hire or raise pay as school needs require.

Source: Badger Institute (Southeastern) | https://www.badgerinstitute.org/milwaukee-public-schools-many-new-staff-same-old-class-size/

Tribal literacy program in northeast Wisconsin receives national award

The Oneida Nation's Oneida Reads literacy initiative, launched in 2024 after state testing showed only 5 percent of Oneida third graders reading at grade level, has been named a 2026 Library of Congress Literacy Award winner. The program works with the Oneida Nation School System and four Brown County public school districts, offering daily reading instruction and summer tutoring. Within its first year, 20 percent of Oneida students in Brown County and 32 percent in Outagamie County reached grade-level reading proficiency. This year the program provided more than 900 tutoring sessions across 111 summer enrollments. The tribe will formally accept the award in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 5.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Northeastern) | https://www.wpr.org/news/tribal-literacy-northeast-wisconsin-national-award

Gibraltar School District special education program receives transition readiness grant

The Gibraltar School District's special education department received a $100,000 transition readiness grant from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Pupil services director Christine Voigtlander, who applied for the grant, said funds will be used to purchase a vehicle for transporting students to job sites and community events and to expand work experience placements within the school and with local businesses. Some students are already working within school departments; placements with local businesses are expected to begin by January.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/doorcounty/gibraltar-school-district-special-education-program-receives-transition-readiness-grant

Madison school district will rebuild two schools rather than renovate

The Madison Metropolitan School District will rebuild Anana Elementary School and Crestwood Elementary School rather than renovate them, a shift made possible by an estimated $24 million in interest earnings from the $507 million facilities referendum voters approved in 2024 and anticipated tax credits for energy-efficient design. Rebuilding extends each building's lifespan to 70 years versus the 25-year extension renovation would have provided, at no additional cost to

taxpayers. Students will remain in existing buildings until new ones are ready; both new buildings will be constructed on the schools' existing sites.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/education/madison-school-district-will-rebuild-two-schools-rather-than-renovate/article_36de0003-ba9e-4e07-96fc-473de3fdf36a.html

State-Local Interface

Judge upholds TIF district referendum law

Ozaukee County Circuit Judge Adam Gerol on Monday dismissed a lawsuit brought by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce and allied business groups challenging a Port Washington ordinance requiring a binding public referendum before any tax incremental financing district exceeding $10 million can be approved. The ordinance was placed on the books after Great Lakes Neighbors United circulated a petition in opposition to the Vantage Data Centers Lighthouse Campus and its associated TIF funding. Gerol held that MMAC demonstrated no actual harm, describing the claimed injury as "all hypothetical," and ruled the ordinance complements rather than conflicts with existing TIF statutes. MMAC said it is confident "further examination in higher courts is warranted." Separately, Gerol scheduled a Nov. 23 hearing for closing arguments in an open-records lawsuit over the city's delayed response to a data-center records request, during which city staff acknowledged open records requests surged from 6 to 12 annually to 40 to 50 in 2025.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Statewide) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/judge-upholds-tif-district-referendum-law

Judge Dismisses Suit Opposing Port Washington Residents' New Power

Ozaukee County Judge Adam Gerol dismissed a lawsuit filed by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce and allied groups challenging a Port Washington ordinance requiring voter referendum approval of any new tax increment district with a project cost or projected base value exceeding $10 million. Voters approved the ordinance in April by 66 percent through a direct legislation process, prompted by city approval of a TID for a $15 billion data center campus. MMAC said it remains "deeply concerned" and indicated the ruling may be appealed to a higher court. A similar referendum requiring voter approval of development plans exceeding $450 million at Janesville's former General Motors site is on the Nov. 3 ballot.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Statewide) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/10/21/judge-dismisses-suit-opposing-port-washington-residents-new-power/

Sierra Club settles lawsuit over Port data center

A settlement filed in Ozaukee County Circuit Court resolves a Sierra Club lawsuit challenging the Wisconsin DNR's decision not to require an environmental impact statement for Vantage Data Centers' Lighthouse Campus in Port Washington. Under the agreement, the DNR must complete a statewide strategic analysis of AI data center impacts by Jan. 31, 2028, covering air quality, water, energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, land use, noise, and wildlife, among other factors.

Vantage will pay for the study but may not control its development. The DNR must hold at least one public hearing and a public comment period. Existing DNR permits for the Lighthouse Campus remain valid and no additional environmental reviews are required for that site. The DNR retains authority to require environmental impact statements for future projects.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Statewide) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/sierra-club-settles-lawsuit-over-port-data-center

Federal disaster loans now available for July tornado recovery in the Fox Valley

Following a Presidential disaster declaration issued Oct. 7, the U.S. Small Business Administration is offering low-interest disaster loans to Wisconsin businesses, nonprofits, and residents affected by severe storms and tornadoes on July 27. Primary eligible counties are Forest, Outagamie, Vilas, and Winnebago; 14 additional Wisconsin counties and two Michigan counties qualify for Economic Injury Disaster Loans only. Businesses and nonprofits may borrow up to $2 million; homeowners may borrow up to $500,000 for primary residence repairs. Interest rates are as low as 2.875 percent for homeowners, with no payments or accruing interest for the first 12 months. The physical damage application deadline is Dec. 7; the economic injury deadline is July 7, 2027.

Source: Kaukauna Community News (Statewide) | https://kaukaunacommunitynews.com/2026/10/22/federal-disaster-loans-now-available-for-july-tornado-recovery-in-the-fox-valley/

Wisconsin storms, tornadoes allows tax extension for residents in four counties, including Forest, Vilas

Following a FEMA disaster assessment tied to 48 tornadoes in Wisconsin this year, more than double the 23-per-year state average, the IRS extended tax filing deadlines for Forest, Vilas, Outagamie, and Winnebago counties. Individuals, employees, and business owners in those counties with deadlines falling on or after July 27 and before Feb. 1, 2027, now have until Feb. 1, 2027, to file. Taxpayers who have moved since the disaster should call IRS Special Services at 1-866-252-5227 to update their address.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Statewide) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/wisconsin-storms-tornadoes-allows-tax-extension-for-residents-in-four-counties-including-forest-vilas/article_38543ea5-37da-4c28-bc5a-a36fbb9e05ac.html

School District of Janesville granted $645 thousand in public assistance funding

FEMA approved more than $645,000 for the Janesville School District for emergency protective measures taken during the April 2026 severe storms and flooding, and more than $253,500 for the Orfordville Fire Protection District for fire station repairs. Washington Elementary School in Janesville has been closed since the April 17 floods and is not expected to reopen until the 2027-28 academic year at the earliest. The district applied for FEMA funding months ago; previous messaging indicated the grant would be necessary but not sufficient for Washington's repair.

Source: Janesville Gazette (Statewide) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/school-district-of-janesville-granted-645-thousand-in-public-assistance-funding/article_0351dffc-6282-440f-a8fa-4382b7b27880.html

Federal judge orders Trump administration to halt noncitizen voting investigation in Wisconsin, other states

U.S. District Court Judge Araceli Martinez-Olguin in Oakland on Oct. 21 ordered the Trump administration to halt noncitizen voter investigations in nine states, including Wisconsin, until polls close Nov. 3. The judge found the government relied on data she described as "voluminous and unreliable" and that the probe was chilling voter assistance and mobilization efforts. The ruling was placed on hold until Oct. 23 to allow for an appeal. The Department of Homeland Security stated it has no plans to investigate people believed to be U.S. citizens. The investigation, known as the "Unlawful Voter Initiative," required agents to complete individual reviews in no more than 12 minutes per person during a surge phase beginning in late August.

Source: PBS Wisconsin WHA21 (Statewide) | https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/federal-judge-orders-trump-administration-to-halt-noncitizen-voting-investigation-in-wisconsin-other-states/

Wisconsin officials call for prompt ballot return after court rules against proposed backup plan

Dane County Circuit Court Judge Rhonda Lanford ruled on Oct. 6 against a temporary injunction that would have allowed Wisconsin voters with late-arriving mail ballots to cast provisional ballots on Election Day, blocking a League of Women Voters lawsuit filed in July. The underlying lawsuit remains pending. Rock County Clerk Lisa Tollefson told reporters that voters should not mail absentee ballots if Election Day is less than two weeks away, advising direct delivery to clerks or use of drop boxes instead. A Wisconsin Elections Commission survey found two-thirds of clerks observed mail delivery problems during the April election. Voters have already returned more than 142,000 ballots; clerks say late returns remain the primary concern.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/wisconsin-officials-call-for-prompt-ballot-return-after-court-rules-against-proposed-backup-plan/

Evers, PSC award $11.5 million for clean energy grants

Gov. Tony Evers and the Public Service Commission awarded $11.5 million through the Energy Innovation Grant Program to 36 projects across school districts, nonprofit organizations, local and tribal governments, manufacturers and higher education institutions statewide. The round drew 89 applications requesting nearly $35 million. Since the program's 2017 inception the PSC has awarded $51.5 million across 205 projects. PSC Chairperson Summer Strand said this sixth round is likely the last unless the Legislature authorizes additional funding; Evers' proposed $20 million continuation was removed by the Republican-controlled budget committee.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Statewide) | https://chippewa.com/news/community/article_85d10459-6d8b-529d-bad8-43ca7ba2c421.html

Wisconsin Launches Two New Grant Programs for PFAS Water Testing

Gov. Evers and the Wisconsin DNR announced the PFAS Community Grants Sampling Program and the Wisconsin PFAS Private Well Testing Program (WisPPWT), both funded through the $125

million PFAS Trust Fund released under 2025 Wisconsin Acts 200 and 201. The community program, backed by $79 million, is open to municipalities broadly defined to include counties, cities, villages, towns, tribal governing bodies, utility districts, lake protection districts, and technical college districts; Cycle A applications will be accepted for approximately six months. The WisPPWT, funded at $10 million, ships home sample kits from the Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene to private well owners outside participating municipalities. Acts 200 and 201 also added $35 million to the Well Compensation Grant Program. Additional programs covering irrigation wells, agriculture, landfill leachate, and public airports are expected in 2027.

Source: DrydenWire (Statewide) | https://drydenwire.com/news/wisconsin-launches-two-new-grant-programs-for-pfas-water-testing/

EPA proposes shifting oversight of coal ash landfills in Wisconsin to state regulators

The U.S. EPA is proposing to transfer regulatory authority over Wisconsin's six coal ash landfills, owned by Dairyland Power Cooperative, Alliant Energy, Wisconsin Public Service, and We Energies, from federal to state DNR oversight after Wisconsin sought approval of its program in February. The DNR's rules, updated in 2022 to incorporate 2015 Obama-era standards, must be at least as stringent as federal requirements. The EPA would retain oversight of coal ash ponds. Groundwater contamination has been documented at multiple sites, including the closed Cedar Sauk Ash Landfill in Ozaukee County, where the DNR has ordered We Energies to address boron and sulfate contamination. A virtual public hearing on the proposal is scheduled for Nov. 9.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/wisconsin-coal-ash-landfills-epa-oversight-regulators-environment-power-plant-energy/

Updates to the Wisconsin historic tax credit program

Gov. Tony Evers signed 2025 Wisconsin Act 238 on April 9, modifying the Wisconsin State Historic Tax Credit Program in two ways. The act eliminates the adjusted-basis test for minimum expenditures, reducing the qualifying threshold to a flat $50,000 in rehabilitation spending, which opens eligibility to smaller and rural projects previously excluded. The $3.5 million per-project credit cap is unchanged. Projects may now reapply for additional credits after 15 years, enabling financing of subsequent repairs on previously awarded historic properties.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Statewide) | https://dailyreporter.com/2026/10/23/updates-wisconsin-historic-tax-credit-program-expands-eligibility/

Eliminating state income tax on tips, overtime could cost Wisconsin $2.7B over a decade

A Forward Analytics report, produced by the research arm of the Wisconsin Counties Association, projects that eliminating state income taxes on tips and overtime would reduce Wisconsin state revenue by $2.76 billion between 2028 and 2037, with an equal benefit to eligible workers over the same period. The report finds the tax benefit would vary by income level, with workers earning $85,000 to $132,000 annually receiving the largest benefit, and that the savings would appear at tax filing rather than in weekly paychecks. Both gubernatorial candidates, Republican Tom Tiffany

and Democrat David Crowley, have said they would sign such a bill. Gov. Tony Evers vetoed a prior no-tax-on-tips proposal in April over its 2028 expiration date, and a permanent version failed in a bipartisan budget bill in May.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Statewide) | https://www.wpr.org/news/eliminating-state-income-tax-on-tips-overtime-cost-wisconsin

Next Wisconsin governor could replace scores of unconfirmed appointees

The Wisconsin Senate confirmed none of Gov. Tony Evers' approximately 375 appointees during the 2025-2026 legislative session, a departure from prior sessions in which hundreds were confirmed. The Senate could vote down all unconfirmed appointees in the 2027-2028 session, clearing the way for a new governor to install replacements on boards including the Public Service Commission and Natural Resources Board. Republican candidate Tom Tiffany has pledged to replace unconfirmed PSC members, citing rate increases and two contested power line projects. Democrat David Crowley said he would focus PSC appointments on qualifications and merit. Past confirmation battles included a 2021 Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling allowing board members to hold seats past term expiration until a Senate-confirmed replacement is seated.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Statewide) | https://chippewa.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_99bcc54c-d273-5322-a5d2-ac684215429e.html

Is Tony Evers blocking scholarships for Wisconsin students by refusing to join a tax credit program?

Gov. Tony Evers vetoed Republican legislation that would have required Wisconsin to join a federal scholarship tax credit program launching Jan. 1, which provides donors tax credits up to $1,700 for contributions to scholarship-granting organizations. By declining to participate, Wisconsin students in both public and private schools are excluded from the program. The American Federation for Children estimates that 10 percent participation by eligible Wisconsin taxpayers could generate roughly $514.3 million annually in scholarship funding, though actual amounts depend on donor behavior.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/wisconsin-evers-blocking-scholarships-students-public-private-schools-tax-credit-program/

Wisconsin DOJ joins lawsuit to block playground equipment merger

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul joined the Federal Trade Commission and attorneys general from other states in a lawsuit seeking to block PlayPower's acquisition of BCI Burke. The complaint alleges the five largest commercial playground equipment manufacturers, including PlayPower and Burke, already control 85 to 90 percent of the U.S. market. It further alleges the merger would reduce competition, raise prices and harm independent sales representatives. Schools, parks, churches and recreation departments are identified as buyers at risk from the reduced competition.

Source: WBEV 1430 AM Beaver Dam (Statewide) | https://dailydodge.com/wisconsin-doj-joins-lawsuit-to-block-playground-equipment-merger/

Barron County poultry flock depopulated

Wisconsin DATCP and the USDA confirmed a case of highly pathogenic avian influenza in a commercial Barron County poultry flock discovered Oct. 19, resulting in the depopulation of more than 41,000 birds. A 10-kilometer control area restricting poultry movement has been established around the affected premises. This is the second local HPAI outbreak this fall; a Sept. 14 incident affected a flock of 79,088 birds. Officials placed the premises under strict quarantine and confirmed no affected birds will enter the food supply.

Source: Barron News-Shield (Statewide) | https://news-shield.com/news/top_stories/article_e0ff7f08-3fde-467d-8e19-def00c6bd2c0.html

Chronic Wasting Disease found in wild deer near Peshtigo

The Wisconsin DNR confirmed a chronic wasting disease detection in a 3-year-old buck near Peshtigo in Marinette County. As a result, the existing feeding and baiting ban in Marinette County will be extended for three additional years, with the possibility of further extension if additional cases are detected.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Statewide) | https://www.nbc26.com/news/local-news/chronic-wasting-disease-found-in-wild-deer-near-peshtigo

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