

Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing

April 11 to April 20, 2026

This briefing is generated with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools and reviewed for accuracy by BoldPath Consulting. Source links are provided for each item so readers can verify reporting directly. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy and completeness, this publication is offered as an informational service and does not constitute legal, financial, or policy advice. Thank you for your continued readership and support.

Table of Contents

Budgets and Finance.....	2
Workforce and Labor.....	2
Council appoints Superior's new public works director.....	2
Controversial Madison Department of Civil Rights leader to retire	2
Infrastructure and Utilities	3
Valley Creek project will bring stream to park.....	3
Huge project, big traffic changes	3
Superior council gears up for harbor projects.....	3
Wausau's Metro Ride works to modernize buses.....	4
City of Green Lake will burn yard waste, not chip it.....	4
Public Safety.....	4
Dane County Board votes to remove funding for Flock system	5
Land Use and Development.....	5
Countdown begins for potential multi-million dollar wakesurfing lawsuit	5
New Berlin board allows neighbors to move forward with appeal of proposed recovery center	5
Some Woodruff residents concerned about proposed gas station near small lake.....	6
Port Washington residents urge DNR to deny air quality permits for data center	6
Future of the Lake Mills golf course in question after development rejected.....	6
Governance and Elections	7
Wisconsin GOP advised officials not to count late-arriving ballots, raising possibility of legal challenge.....	7
Canvassers' recount changes O'Leary to winner of Rock County Board District 8 race	7
Close county board race results unchanged after Portage County recount	7
La Crosse park board advances e-bike, e-scooter ordinance changes.....	8
Emergency homeless shelter to open in Appleton this winter	8
School Districts.....	8
Siren School Board reviews options after failed referendum	8
Despite growing opposition to property tax hikes, Wisconsin voters show increased support for school referendums	9
Staff cuts: Despite referendum passage, WUSD still making reductions	9
Hustisford residents react to district's failed referendum.....	9
Augusta schools prepare for cuts after failed referendum.....	10

Milwaukee Public Schools plans to add 150 staff to classrooms.....	10
State-Local Interface.....	10
As construction continues, judge weighs whether to halt Enbridge Line 5 reroute	10
Habitat for Humanity helps get Assembly Bill 545 passed	11
DOA dismisses Town of Washington's petition to incorporate into a village	11
Governor declares State of Emergency due to impacts of severe weather.....	11

Budgets and Finance

Rock County working out how to pay for possible 10.9% hike to insurance premium costs

Rock County's ad hoc Health Insurance Committee is developing recommendations to address a projected 10.9 percent health insurance premium increase against a depleted insurance fund balance that has fallen from \$10 million to \$2.8 million. Finance Director Kristen Vander Kooi reported that the county board authorized two non-standard draws from the fund during the 2026 budget process: a \$2.2 million transfer to offset road construction costs and approximately \$460,000 for employee pay increases, the first use of the fund outside premium-offset purposes in the county's history. The county spends approximately \$25 million annually on total insurance costs. The committee is examining a combination of property tax increases, higher employee premium contributions, and possible return to a fully self-funded insurance model. The county expects its final rate figure by July 2026, at which point the committee will transmit formal recommendations to the Rock County Board.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/rock-county-working-out-how-to-pay-for-possible-10-9-hike-to-insurance-premium/article_1f27cae1-2ea9-47ea-9563-c7ef879751af.html

Workforce and Labor

Council appoints Superior's new public works director

The Superior City Council confirmed Chris Carlson as public works director by unanimous consent at its April 14, 2026 meeting, filling the vacancy created by Todd Janigo's retirement on April 6, 2026. The position carries administrative authority over streets, environmental services, parks, recreation and forestry, building inspection, the landfill, and the airport. Carlson has served as assistant public works director since 2015 and was selected from three candidates, advancing as one of two finalists. He began his city career as an engineering technician and subsequently served three years as collection system engineering and operations manager for the Environmental Services Division. No salary figure was disclosed. The council's confirmation constitutes the final governance action completing the appointment.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/council-appoints-superiors-new-public-works-director>

Controversial Madison Department of Civil Rights leader to retire

Madison Department of Civil Rights Director Norman Davis announced his retirement in a March email to Deputy Mayor Linda Vakunta and Human Resources Director Erin Hillson, with Davis stating he plans to remain in the role through development of the 2027 budget and a transition period. Davis was appointed to the directorship in 2016 by then-Mayor Paul Soglin and confirmed by the City Council; his current five-year appointment expired this month. His departure follows a city investigation into a joint discrimination complaint filed by ten department employees that cleared Davis of violating city policies while acknowledging a negative workplace culture. Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway confirmed a national search for Davis's successor is underway. The incoming director will serve a five-year term subject to City Council confirmation, with a salary range of \$124,000 to \$168,000.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/controversial-madison-department-of-civil-rights-leader-to-retire/article_f6ef0f3d-a954-4ab6-b223-2c4e113863be.html

Infrastructure and Utilities

Valley Creek project will bring stream to park

The Port Washington Common Council voted to modify the Valley Creek restoration and flood mitigation project plan, approving elimination of a planned box culvert north of the Van Ells-Schanen American Legion Hall in favor of routing Valley Creek overland through Veterans Memorial Park to Lake Michigan. The modification, requested by Ald. Mike Gasper, is part of the broader \$20 million restoration effort. Funding secured to date totals approximately \$12.6 million: \$10 million from Tax Incremental Financing District 5, a \$2.4 million donation from Vantage Data Centers, a \$218,000 runoff management grant, and a \$100,000 recreational trails grant. Pending applications include a \$4 million Congressional allocation and a \$6.35 million National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant. Engineering firm Stantec is leading design, currently 60 percent complete, with 90 percent completion expected by end of May; phased construction may proceed depending on final funding outcomes.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeeexpress.com/content/valley-creek-project-will-bring-stream-park>

Huge project, big traffic changes

The Port Washington Common Council received a formal presentation from engineering firm Graef on temporary traffic infrastructure modifications required to accommodate construction of the Vantage Data Centers Lighthouse Campus. Engineer Alex Motl presented plans including installation of coordinated traffic signals at the I-43 northside ramps, widened ramp lanes, added turn lanes and wider turning radii at the Highland Lane and Highland Drive, Highland Lane and Highway LL, and Lake Drive at highways KW and LL intersections, and a pedestrian-cyclist flashing beacon on the Ozaukee Interurban Trail crossing. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation granted conceptual approval, and Graef submitted final permit applications to the DOT earlier this month. City Administrator Melissa Gossett confirmed the Ozaukee County Highway Department will perform most roadwork, with a contractor handling ramp and signal work. All modifications are designated as temporary, to be removed upon data center completion in 2028.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeeexpress.com/content/huge-project-big-traffic-changes>

Superior council gears up for harbor projects

The Superior City Council approved the 2027-2029 harbor development statement of intentions at its April 14, 2026 meeting, authorizing city staff to submit port infrastructure priorities to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for Harbor Assistance Program grant applications on behalf of local port operators. Economic Development, Port and Planning Director Jason Serck noted the statement does not legally obligate the city or port operators to complete the listed projects, and that the DOT maintains flexibility on project timelines. The Harbor Assistance Program, established by the Wisconsin Legislature in 1979, has awarded 166 grants totaling more than \$238.5 million to 29 Wisconsin ports. Superior has received approximately \$28.3 million in program funding to date for port development, maintenance, and shipyard projects. The next step is submission of the statement of intentions to the Wisconsin DOT.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/superior-council-gears-up-for-harbor-projects>

Wausau's Metro Ride works to modernize buses

The Wausau City Council finance committee was scheduled to meet April 14, 2026 to consider a \$47,000 feasibility study of the Metro Ride bus garage, assessing infrastructure requirements for a potential future transition to electric vehicles; the city's share is \$8,000 with the remainder covered by a grant. Separately, Metro Ride is scheduled to receive 10 new clean-diesel replacement buses this fall through a federal grant, replacing 2009-model vehicles with approximately 400,000 miles that have exceeded the federally mandated 12-year useful life threshold. A council vote on modernizing the fare payment system using a separate grant is also pending. If the garage study is approved, work would begin in summer 2026. Transit Director Ronald Schuenke II holds operational authority over the agency.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/04/10/wausaus-metro-ride-works-modernize-buses/>

City of Green Lake will burn yard waste, not chip it

The Green Lake Common Council approved an increase in septage receiving rates at its regular Monday meeting, with new charges taking effect June 1, 2026. Public Works Director Jason Carley presented the rate increase, proposing holding tank waste fees rise from \$12 to \$18 per 1,000 gallons and septic waste fees from \$80 to \$90 per 1,000 gallons. At the same meeting, the council approved the hiring of part-time police officer Jason Reyson, a former chief of police, bringing the Green Lake Police Department to four full-time officers. The council also approved reclassification of 528 and 532 Lake Street from Commercial to Residential-1 to permit single-family home construction, and approved certified survey maps for four additional parcels. The Committee of the Whole gave verbal approval for Caestecker Public Library Director Christina Lyon to proceed with facility improvement planning, with no city funding requested at this stage.

Source: Ripon Commonwealth Press (Northeastern) | https://riponpress.com/news/city-of-green-lake-will-burn-yard-waste-not-chip-it/article_ce26a159-0a6d-40d9-a0e8-a9010b08f295.html

Public Safety

Eau Claire City Council approves contract to provide ambulance services to Town of Wheaton

The Eau Claire City Council voted unanimously on April 15, 2026 to approve a three-year contract extension under which the Eau Claire Fire Department will continue providing ambulance services to the Town of Wheaton. Under the agreement, Wheaton will pay a \$24 per capita annual fee over the three-year term; the City of Eau Claire will additionally invoice a \$200 non-resident ambulance fee for each individual receiving services within Wheaton's boundaries. The Town of Wheaton has utilized Eau Claire Fire and Rescue for ambulance services since 2021. The contract takes effect following the April 15 council approval and runs for three years from that date. No further procedural steps were identified.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/04/15/eau-claire-city-council-approves-contract-provide-ambulance-services-town-wheaton/>

Dane County Board votes to remove funding for Flock system

The Dane County Board of Supervisors voted 32-1 on April 17, 2026 to remove \$80,000 in budgeted funding for the Dane County Sheriff's Office's annual Flock Safety automated license plate reader subscription and to prohibit further county spending on the system. The resolution, authored by Supervisor Chad Kemp, cited the Sheriff's Office's data-sharing practices, including reported informal sharing with more than 140 law enforcement agencies across multiple states and with federal agencies. The current Flock subscription, covering 24 cameras installed across unincorporated county areas, expires May 31, 2026. Supervisor Michael Engelberger of Stoughton cast the sole dissenting vote after a proposed amendment to redirect the \$80,000 to the Sheriff's Office at its discretion failed. County Board Chair Patrick Miles stated the board remains open to considering alternative automated license plate reader vendors with stronger data safeguards.

Source: Cambridge Enterprise Sentinel (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/leader_independent/news/local/dane-county-board-votes-to-cut-funding-for-flock-license-plate-reader-cameras/article_df6d5043-0b19-4053-8510-ff5aacfc463b.html

Land Use and Development

Countdown begins for potential multi-million dollar wakesurfing lawsuit

The Town of Rhine Board voted 4-1 to issue a formal disallowance of a claim filed by Elkhart Lake Watersports Alliance Inc. seeking unspecified damages in the millions of dollars the organization alleges resulted from the Town of Rhine's ordinance banning wake-enhanced boating. The disallowance, approved by the board as the governing authority over municipal claims, formally rejects the demand and starts the statutory countdown under Wisconsin's notice-of-claim law within which the claimant must file a civil suit or forfeit the claim. No additional dollar figures or ordinance identifiers were publicly disclosed. The next procedural step is a potential lawsuit by the Alliance against the Town of Rhine, which must be filed within the statutory timeframe following the board's disallowance action.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | <https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/countdown-begins-for-potential-multi-million-dollar-wakesurfing-lawsuit/>

New Berlin board allows neighbors to move forward with appeal of proposed recovery center

The New Berlin Board of Appeals ruled April 16, 2026 that New Berlin Citizens United has legal standing to pursue a formal appeal challenging the Milwaukee Rescue Mission's

proposed New Journey addiction recovery center, which would serve up to 120 men in residential recovery near Interstate 43 and Moorland Road. The Board determined the resident group is sufficiently and directly affected by the proposed facility to continue its challenge; the April 16 hearing was limited to the standing question and did not address project merits. The Plan Commission reviewed the proposal in December 2025, after which the resident group formed and filed its appeal. A separate lawsuit filed in Waukesha County Circuit Court by the property owner and Milwaukee Rescue Mission, arguing the project meets zoning requirements, has a hearing scheduled for April 28, 2026. No date has been set for the Board of Appeals hearing on the merits.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/waukesha-county/new-berlin-board-allows-neighbors-to-move-forward-with-appeal-of-proposed-recovery-center>

Some Woodruff residents concerned about proposed gas station near small lake

The Oneida County Planning and Development Committee voted 5-0 on April 15, 2026 to table a resolution that would have advanced Circle K's permit application to demolish Lakeside Plaza at the intersection of County Road J and Highway 51 in Woodruff and replace it with a gas station. The proposed site sits within the 75-foot ordinary high-water mark setback required under Oneida County ordinance. Committee members raised unresolved questions about whether demolishing and rebuilding on the existing footprint exempts the project from the shoreline setback requirement, and noted the applicant's stormwater runoff plan was not fully developed. Applicant representative Christian Cabrera attended virtually. The resolution was tabled pending committee research into the applicable setback regulations and stormwater requirements; no next meeting date was specified.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/some-woodruff-residents-concerned-about-proposed-gas-station-near-small-lake/article_76e200e7-6869-4681-b409-e35d427c2055.html

Port Washington residents urge DNR to deny air quality permits for data center

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources conducted a virtual public hearing on air pollution control permit applications submitted by Vantage Data Centers for a \$15 billion data center campus under construction in Port Washington, Ozaukee County. Vantage is seeking permits to operate 45 diesel-fired generators for backup power, which the DNR preliminarily approved after determining the facility would meet applicable air pollution limits. The DNR estimated the generators could produce a maximum of approximately 48,500 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually. Port Washington residents and organizations including Sierra Club Wisconsin and Midwest Environmental Advocates testified urging denial of the draft permits and requesting a full environmental impact statement, citing emissions of fine particulate matter and nitrogen oxides. The DNR will review public comments before issuing a final permitting decision; no timeline was specified.

Source: WPR News Madison (Southeastern) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/port-washington-residents-urge-dnr-to-deny-air-quality-permits-for-data-center>

Future of the Lake Mills golf course in question after development rejected

The Lake Mills Plan Commission rejected a future land use map amendment proposed by Loos Homes at its March 19, 2026 meeting, blocking a plan to build approximately 150 single-family homes on the Lake Mills Golf Course property; the commission also rejected a revised

proposal that would have preserved nine holes alongside the housing development. Golf course owner Katye Chwala subsequently stated she is not proceeding with a sale and clarified on April 16, 2026 that she remains under contract with Loos Homes for several more months. The commission's rejection followed strong community opposition voiced at city meetings; plan commission approval would have been required before any residential development could proceed. No further formal proceeding has been scheduled, and the property's future use remains unresolved pending expiration of the existing sales contract.

Source: Waterloo/Marshall Courier (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/leader_independent/news/local/future-of-the-lake-mills-golf-course-in-question-after-development-rejected/article_6bf6f79d-32b1-439e-aa47-4b0ad714f930.html

Governance and Elections

Wisconsin GOP advised officials not to count late-arriving ballots, raising possibility of legal challenge

The Dane County Board of Canvassers voted 2-1 on April 14, 2026 to count 23 absentee ballots from the April 7 Wisconsin Supreme Court election that arrived at Madison polling places after the 8 p.m. statutory deadline. Dane County Clerk Scott McDonell and canvasser Erik Paulson voted in favor; Republican appointee Mike Willett voted against, citing the board's prior practice of rejecting such ballots. The Madison Board of Canvassers had voted unanimously on April 11 to count the same ballots, following guidance from Madison Assistant City Attorney Amber McReynolds that doing so aligned with court precedent and Wisconsin Elections Commission guidance. The Republican Party of Wisconsin, through outside attorney Nicholas Boerke, had urged both bodies in writing not to count the ballots, asserting the 8 p.m. delivery deadline is mandatory. The Republican Party of Wisconsin has not confirmed whether it will file a legal challenge to the canvassing decisions.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (South Central) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/04/wisconsin-madison-election-late-arriving-absentee-ballot-count-republican-legal-challenge-possibility/>

Canvassers' recount changes O'Leary to winner of Rock County Board District 8 race

The Rock County Board of Canvassers conducted a recount on April 17, 2026 in the Supervisor District 8 race, reversing the outcome of the April 7 election. Initial certified results showed Daniel Burke defeating challenger Bryce O'Leary by two votes, 618 to 616. During the recount, canvassers determined that three absentee ballots had been improperly collected and randomly removed three ballots from the total; all three discarded ballots contained votes for Burke. The adjusted totals left Burke with 615 votes and O'Leary with 616, making O'Leary the winner by one vote. County Clerk Lisa Tollefson confirmed the revised outcome. District 8 encompasses wards from the towns of Beloit, Janesville, and Rock. No further procedural challenge was reported at the time of publication.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/canvassers-recount-changes-oleary-to-winner-of-rock-county-board-district-8-race/article_8e29423b-28a4-4321-8871-948af1d34f44.html

Close county board race results unchanged after Portage County recount

The Portage County Board of Canvassers completed a hand recount of more than 900 ballots on April 15, 2026 in the District 19 County Board Supervisor race, confirming the original

election night results. The recount was initiated following a petition filed April 13 by candidate Amberle Schwartz, who alleged a possible counting error in the April 7 spring election. The hand count verified that Scott Soik defeated Schwartz by three votes, leaving the outcome unchanged. Portage County Clerk Maria Davis announced the recount completion on April 15. No further procedural challenge was reported, and Soik remains the certified winner of the District 19 County Board Supervisor seat.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/04/15/close-county-board-race-results-unchanged-after-portage-county-recount/>

La Crosse park board advances e-bike, e-scooter ordinance changes

The La Crosse Board of Park Commissioners voted 5-2 on April 16, 2026 to advance a proposed ordinance that would repeal, recreate, and amend multiple sections of the city's municipal code governing electric bicycles and electric scooters in parks and on city streets. The ordinance would permit e-bikes on sidewalks using pedal assist only with throttle use prohibited, and would allow e-scooters on most sidewalks while banning them from a defined downtown area bounded by 2nd Street, King Street, 6th Street, and State Street. In city parks, both device types would be restricted from natural surface trails, undeveloped areas, pools, beaches, playgrounds, ice skating rinks, sports fields, and fenced dog park areas. Enforcement would rely on a reasonable-rate-of-speed standard rather than fixed speed limits. The ordinance requires approval from the Judiciary and Administration Committee on May 5, 2026, and from the Common Council on May 14 before taking effect.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Western) | https://www.news8000.com/news/local-news/la-crosse/la-crosse-park-board-advances-e-bike-e-scooter-ordinance-changes/article_b9a0e5b9-af8f-4afb-a848-efc4e75b9045.html

Human Services

Emergency homeless shelter to open in Appleton this winter

The Appleton Common Council unanimously approved a conditional use permit for the Providence Promise emergency homeless shelter at 314 N. Appleton Street at its April 16, 2026 meeting. The facility, to be operated by Providence Promise in a building purchased from The Mission Church for approximately \$1.7 million using privately raised funds, will accommodate up to 50 individuals during extreme weather events and will serve homeless persons who cannot access other shelters due to mental health conditions, addiction, or criminal records. Providence Promise President Steve Wuerger stated the organization has raised approximately 52 percent of its \$3.25 million fundraising goal, with remaining funds earmarked for renovation. All financing to date has been private. The shelter is targeted to open in December 2026, pending completion of fundraising and renovation.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://fox11online.com/news/local/emergency-homeless-shelter-to-open-in-appleton-this-winter>

School Districts

Siren School Board reviews options after failed referendum

The Siren School Board voted at a special meeting on April 13, 2026 to accept the resignation of Finance Director Laura Lessard, whose last day is May 5, 2026. The district's April 7

referendum failed by 88 votes, 452 in favor to 540 against, leaving the district facing a projected \$1.6 million deficit for the upcoming school year with approximately \$700,000 remaining in its fund balance. Superintendent Kevin Shetler reported that CESA 11 has offered part-time finance coverage two days per week through the end of the fiscal year and the district's upcoming audit; a cost proposal for that interim arrangement is expected at the board's April 20 committee of the whole meeting. The board discussed potential staff non-renewals and restructuring of seventh and eighth grade programming in closed session, though no formal action on staffing was taken.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/siren-school-board-reviews-options-after-failed-referendum/article_49bbbe5d-dff5-46a0-9b05-10d58a1fb276.html

Despite growing opposition to property tax hikes, Wisconsin voters show increased support for school referendums

Wisconsin voters in the April 7, 2026 spring election approved 46 of 75 school district referendums, authorizing more than \$564 million in property tax increases statewide, representing a 61 percent passage rate compared to a 70 percent average from 2020 through 2025 and last year's 56 percent rate. Of 63 operational referendums, 37 passed; 9 of 12 capital referendums passed. Notable individual outcomes include the Oakfield School District's \$4 million operational referendum approved by 41 votes, the Crandon School District's \$3.75 million operational referendum approved by 19 votes, and the Appleton Area School District's \$60 million operational referendum approved by a 31-point margin. The Howard-Suamico School District passed both capital and operational referendums, with capital funds designated for upgrades to six of its eight schools. Additional school district referendums are anticipated in the August and November 2026 election cycles.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/04/wisconsin-voters-school-district-referendum-funding-support-property-tax-election-2026/>

Staff cuts: Despite referendum passage, WUSD still making reductions

The Watertown Unified School District Board of Education approved staff reductions totaling 12.5 positions for the 2026-27 school year, including 3.5 teaching positions at the high school, 3.5 at the middle school, two across elementary schools, two in Special Education, one at the district office, and one in the technology department, along with reductions in discretionary budgets and overtime costs. The reductions follow voters' April 7 approval of a \$4.5 million annual operational referendum for five years, which was insufficient to close a budget gap exceeding \$4.5 million annually. Co-interim Superintendent Jason Bull announced the cuts in an April 16, 2026 letter to families and staff. The Board previously decided to close Lincoln and LEAP Lebanon elementary schools at the end of the 2026-27 school year and approved creation of a District of the Future Advisory Committee to develop programming and facilities recommendations.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (Southeastern) | https://www.wdtimes.com/for_the_record/staff-cuts-despite-referendum-passage-wusd-still-making-reductions/article_36b06bd5-8732-4df4-a35d-30fe4cbd5741.html

Hustisford residents react to district's failed referendum

Hustisford School District voters rejected a \$3.75 million operational referendum on April 7, 2026, by a vote of 861 against (58.5 percent) to 612 in favor (41.6 percent) out of 1,473 ballots cast, the seventh referendum failure for the district over the past decade. The district, which

serves approximately 240 K-12 students, faces a \$1.6 million deficit; without additional operational funding, the district is on a path to dissolution. Interim Superintendent Todd Bugnacki confirmed that summer school is canceled and district schools are projected to be vacant by the 2026-27 school year. No further referendum is currently scheduled; dissolution proceedings are the district's next procedural step.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (Southeastern) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/hustisford-residents-react-to-districts-failed-referendum/article_f3a1512a-bbbb-4103-9178-d8e8beb7e498.html

Augusta schools prepare for cuts after failed referendum

Augusta School District voters rejected a special referendum on April 8, 2026 that would have authorized \$375,000 per year for two years in operational expenses, with 693 votes against (55.8 percent) and 550 in favor (44.2 percent). The failed referendum leaves the district facing a \$630,000 deficit that Superintendent Reed Pecha said could require cutting approximately eight positions; preliminary non-renewal notices must be issued by April 30, 2026 under state requirement. The district serves approximately 540 K-12 students and has managed some vacancies through attrition while awaiting potential late retirements or resignations. Pecha stated he intends to consult newly seated board members before deciding whether to pursue a November 2026 referendum. No specific programs or position types have been formally identified for elimination at this time.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/daily-updates/augusta-schools-prepare-for-cuts-after-failed-referendum/article_15312e94-aaaf-475f-b11e-46d46a11f67e.html

Milwaukee Public Schools plans to add 150 staff to classrooms

Milwaukee Public Schools Superintendent Brenda Cassellius announced a staffing expansion plan to add approximately 150 classroom personnel for the 2026-27 school year, estimated to cost \$24.6 million. The plan includes 89 licensed classroom teachers, raising total teaching staff from 3,903 to 3,992, along with 63 paraprofessionals and 5 school psychologists. The announcement follows Cassellius's prior decision to cut approximately 200 non-classroom staff positions. The \$24.6 million expenditure will be incorporated into the 2026-27 draft budget. The staffing additions are part of a broader fiscal restructuring responding to a \$46 million deficit identified by external auditors in the 2024-25 budget, with offsetting savings of \$30 million from Central Services reductions, \$11 million in increased state special education reimbursement, and \$40 million from fewer charter schools, plus \$47 million in new referendum revenue. The draft budget is the next procedural step for formal board consideration.

Source: WPR News Madison (Southeastern) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/milwaukee-public-schools-add-150-staff-classrooms>

State-Local Interface

As construction continues, judge weighs whether to halt Enbridge Line 5 reroute

Bayfield County Circuit Court Judge John P. Anderson declined to rule at an April 17, 2026 hearing on a motion to halt construction of Enbridge Energy's 41-mile Line 5 pipeline reroute, taking the matter under advisement after more than three hours of arguments. The hearing consolidated two cases challenging the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' permit approvals for the project; petitioners include the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, represented by Earthjustice, and a coalition including Clean Wisconsin and the League of

Women Voters of Wisconsin, represented by Midwest Environmental Advocates. Enbridge attorney Eric Maassen argued a stay would impose approximately \$49 million in additional costs and threaten a June 16 federal deadline requiring cessation of Line 5 operations on the Bad River reservation. Anderson set a final written-arguments deadline of April 27 for all parties; no stay is in effect while he deliberates, and construction including tree clearing begun in February continues.

Source: Ashland Daily Press (Statewide) | https://apg-wi.com/ashland_daily_press/news/local/as-construction-continues-judge-weighs-whether-to-halt-enbridge-line-5-reroute/article_c60d9d8b-b142-4560-9dc3-944ebe0e8636.html

Habitat for Humanity helps get Assembly Bill 545 passed

The Wisconsin State Assembly passed Assembly Bill 545, establishing a \$10 million workforce home loan fund to provide gap financing for substantially rehabilitated homes across the state. The fund operates as zero-percent-interest second mortgages, structured to be repaid after the primary mortgage is satisfied, with all repaid principal recycled back into the program. Natalie Heneghan, community outreach director for Habitat for Humanity La Crosse, stated the financing structure is projected to reduce monthly housing costs by an average of \$270 for qualifying home buyers. Habitat for Humanity's La Crosse affiliate coordinated with other Wisconsin affiliates to advance the legislation. No Assembly vote count, Senate companion bill status, or gubernatorial signature date was reported.

Source: WXOW ABC19 La Crosse (Statewide) | https://www.wxow.com/news/la-crosse/habitat-for-humanity-helps-get-assembly-bill-545-passed/article_1696ca4f-d22d-46af-ab4c-a4bccd67c2c6.html

DOA dismisses Town of Washington's petition to incorporate into a village

The Wisconsin Department of Administration's Incorporation Review Board formally dismissed the Town of Washington's petition to incorporate as a village on April 14, 2026, issuing a 28-page draft determination. The board evaluated the petition against six required statutory standards and found the town met only three: adequate tax revenue capacity, viability of the remainder town, and no substantial hindrance to metropolitan governmental problem-solving. The town failed standards related to territory compactness and homogeneity, potential for urban development beyond the core area, and demonstrated ability to provide necessary governmental services without undue reliance on neighboring jurisdictions. The petition had advanced to DOA review following circuit court approval in July 2025; the town had sought incorporation to prevent future annexations by the City of Eau Claire. Town of Washington Board Chair Bob Solberg stated the board will evaluate the determination before deciding on next steps and noted reapplication is unlikely given the difficulty of satisfying the failed standards.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Statewide) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/04/14/doa-dismisses-town-washingtons-petition-incorporate-into-village/>

Governor declares State of Emergency due to impacts of severe weather

Governor Tony Evers signed an executive order on April 16, 2026 declaring a State of Emergency in Wisconsin in response to severe storms that began April 13, producing tornadoes, flooding, high winds, hail, and structural damage statewide. The declaration authorizes access to additional state resources for affected communities and activates coordinated state agency response. Concurrent with the state declaration, the Village

President of Shiocton in Waupaca County issued a mandatory large-scale evacuation order for all village residents effective 3:00 p.m. on April 16. The Shawano County Highway Department constructed berms at the Balsam Row Road dam under direction of the Shawano County Sheriff's Office. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources reported active monitoring of levees near Portage as the Wisconsin River reached approximately 19 feet, roughly two feet above flood stage, with projections of further rise to approximately 20 feet.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Statewide) | <https://www.wxpr.org/wisconsin-news/2026-04-16/governor-declares-state-of-emergency-due-to-impacts-of-severe-weather>

This edition of the Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing has been lightly reviewed for accuracy, but errors in source reporting or in the curation process may occur. If you notice an inaccuracy or a story of statewide governance significance that was missed, please let me know. Some Wisconsin news outlets restrict automated access to their content, which can limit coverage in any given edition. This is the inaugural production run of a workflow I have spent considerable time designing and refining, and I expect each edition to improve. Your feedback is essential to that process. I welcome hearing from you about this briefing, about how it was built, or about any other way BoldPath Consulting can support your work in Wisconsin local government. Reach me directly at patrick@boldpathconsulting.com or (920) 522-2413.

LocalGovHub: Local Government Briefing ©
