Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing

September 26 to October 3, 2026

The Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing is a weekly governance intelligence product curated by BoldPath Consulting from Wisconsin local journalism, public-sector think tanks, and credible regional media. Source collection is automated; editorial selection, summarization, and topic assignment are overseen by Patrick Glynn, and a source link accompanies every item so readers can verify the underlying reporting. Items are selected for governance relevance, not political leaning. If a story meets the newsworthiness standards built into this workflow, it is included regardless of which direction it cuts, and contested or uncomfortable decisions are reported rather than avoided. The intent is to put the week's governance record in front of the practitioners who have to work with it, not to add to the argument surrounding it. The briefing is offered as an informational service and does not constitute legal, financial, or policy advice.

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Budgets and Finance

Agard introduces 2027 county budget

Dane County Executive Melissa Agard on Oct. 1 introduced a $946.8 million proposed 2027 budget, comprising an $861.0 million operating budget and an $85.8 million capital budget. The proposal lowers the property tax rate for the second consecutive year to $2.43 per $1,000 of assessed value, though the average Madison homeowner would see a levy increase of $20.67. The budget eliminates no filled county positions, restores the 1% employee wage reduction imposed in 2026, and includes $20 million for an Affordable Housing Development Fund, $10 million for the Conservation Fund, $3.5 million for new voting equipment, $17.3 million in highway capital improvements, $3 million for body-worn cameras for the Sheriff's Office, and $2.1 million for a Salvation Army shelter. S&P Global Ratings recently revised the county's outlook from Stable to Negative despite its maintained AAA bond rating; Agard has directed development of a five-year capital improvement plan, a five-year operating budget forecast, and a fund balance standard for the Human Services Fund. The County Board will take up the budget through an amendment process.

Source: Verona Press (South Central) | https://veronapress.com/news/government/agard-introduces-2027-county-budget/article_51acd2fe-4356-4baf-bafc-4f60d4786c3e.html

Dane County budget plan would reduce health insurance costs, cut jobs

Dane County Executive Melissa Agard on Oct. 1 introduced a proposed budget that would draw more than $23 million from reserves, down from more than $27 million used in 2026 and the

lowest surplus reliance in years. The plan cuts 34 vacant positions, mostly in public safety, while restoring the 1% wage reduction imposed last year. Health insurance changes are projected to save $5 million: $1.3 million from plan design changes and $3.7 million by shifting to a preferred-provider network and offering buy-out incentives. The proposed net property tax rate drops five cents to $2.43 per $1,000 of equalized value, though total property taxes would rise about 2%. Capital items include $3 million for Sheriff's Office body cameras, $20 million for affordable housing, and $17 million for roads and bridges. The County Board will hold hearings before a vote later this fall.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/dane-county-budget-plan-would-reduce-health-insurance-costs-cut-jobs/article_161abce1-8aa7-409d-a4d7-8d40d3d9969c.html

Crowley Avoids Transit Cuts In 2027 Budget Proposal

Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley's proposed 2027 budget addresses a $50 million structural gap through spending cuts, a 2.55 percent property tax levy increase, and a $12.1 million withdrawal from the county's rainy day fund to reduce an otherwise $15.7 million Milwaukee County Transit System shortfall to $3.6 million, avoiding a proposed 25 percent service cut. The budget proposes a 2 percent salary increase for county employees but increases their health plan contributions. It also endorses a paid-parking pilot program at high-demand lakefront locations to address a Milwaukee County Parks backlog estimated at $500 million and avoid nearly $1 million in park cuts, including closing two pools. Approximately $140,000 previously allocated to Flock surveillance cameras in county parks would be redirected to the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee's Right to Counsel eviction program.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/10/01/mke-county-crowley-avoids-transit-cuts-in-2027-budget-proposal/

Supervisors Authorize $851 Million Courthouse Project

The Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors voted 16 to 1 on Thursday to authorize a debt issuance for a new $851 million criminal courthouse to replace the nearly 100-year-old Safety Building at 821 W. State St. An amendment by Sup. Shawn Rolland cut $46 million from the original budget by removing a planned new entranceway to the adjacent historic courthouse at 901 N. 9th St., reducing required borrowing to $812 million. Estimated interest on the original budget is $621 million, pushing the total long-term cost above $1 billion. The county will need to raise property taxes to an equivalent of approximately $137 annually for a $250,000 home to service the debt, with repayment extending to 2049. The debt issuance will exceed a county bonding cap set by policy but remains below state-imposed limits. Only Sup. Justin Bielinski voted against; Sup. Juan Miguel Martinez was absent. The board also adopted an amendment calling for state support without cutting other county services.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/10/02/mke-county-supervisors-authorize-857-million-courthouse-project/

Microsoft to redirect $5 million yearly incentive to Mount Pleasant, Village says

Microsoft will redirect a development incentive of up to $5 million per year, owed to it under a 2023 agreement with the Village of Mount Pleasant, back to the Village beginning with the 2026 tax bill issued in December. The Racine County Economic Development Corporation will receive the funds first, retain approximately $100,000 for countywide work, and forward $4.9 million annually to the Village. Village officials say Microsoft qualifies for the incentive because its data center buildings have exceeded the property value threshold set in the agreement. The Village Board will determine how to allocate the funds, between tax levy reduction and capital costs such as roads and public safety vehicles, when it approves the 2027 budget, expected to be released in October.

Source: WRJN 1400 AM Racine/Kenosha (Southeastern) | https://wrjn.com/news/2026/09/29/microsoft-to-redirect-5-million-yearly-incentive-to-mount-pleasant-village-says

Mount Pleasant data center: Village gets $5M back from Microsoft

The Village of Mount Pleasant will receive approximately $4.9 million annually after Microsoft voluntarily waived its development incentive tied to a 2023 agreement for its Mount Pleasant data center, with the decision announced at a Village Board meeting. The $4.9 million could be paid annually for up to 20 years. The village plans to use the funds to reduce or stabilize property taxes and fund capital projects, with the average Mount Pleasant homeowner potentially saving approximately $35 per month. An additional $100,000 will go to the Racine County Economic Development Corporation. A specific budget for the funds is to be finalized in November.

Source: WITI FOX6 Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.fox6now.com/news/mount-pleasant-data-center-village-gets-5m-back-from-microsoft

Douglas County committee recommends budget with 1% levy increase

The Douglas County Administration Committee gave preliminary approval October 1 to a 2027 budget of approximately $69 million supported by a tax levy of nearly $19.27 million, a 0.88% increase of about $167,000 over 2026. Total expenses increase approximately 5%, and the budget includes a 1% wage increase and health insurance premium increases. The committee voted 4-2 to eliminate funding for one open deputy position over Administrator Dave Sletten's recommendation to retain it, then voted unanimously to recommend the full budget as amended. The Douglas County Board will consider the budget October 27.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/douglas-county-committee-recommends-budget-with-1-levy-increase

Woodman's Center shows $177,000 deficit in first year, but use of facility exceeds expectations

City of Janesville Finance Director David Godek reported to the City Council that the Woodman's Sports and Convention Center posted a $177,000 operating deficit through its first full year of operation, driven primarily by athletic programming revenue of approximately $321,000 against a $761,000 projection, a shortfall of about $440,000. Total revenue reached just over $1.5 million against a $2 million projection, while the management company, Sports Facilities Management,

held expenses to $2.1 million against a $2.4 million budget. The city had anticipated an operating subsidy for the facility's first five years. Attendance reached 67,000 visitors over 138 events, with Janesville Jets games averaging 980 attendees, roughly 319 more than at the former arena. Council Member Heather Miller requested more granular data on which programming configurations were profitable before further decisions.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/woodmans-center-shows-177-000-deficit-in-first-year-but-use-of-facility-exceeds-expectations/article_909731e6-8d75-4b74-b09f-3cd7c58017c6.html

Superior assessment board upholds General Mills valuation

Superior's Assessment Board of Review unanimously upheld a $7.1 million property assessment for the General Mills grain facility at 2205 Winter St. after a September 30 hearing. General Mills, represented by tax consultant Tim Levens of DuCharme, McMillen and Associates, sought a reduction first to just under $5.6 million and then to just under $3.5 million, arguing economic obsolescence due to declining grain shipments through the Duluth-Superior port, which fell from about 3.1 million tons in 2005 to about 560,000 tons in 2025. City Assessor Colin Payton argued for maintaining the valuation, citing the facility's $8.3 million sale price in 2012 and $4.8 million in subsequent capital improvements and maintenance. Board members noted that General Mills did not provide profitability or financial statements to support the reduction request.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/superior-assessment-board-upholds-general-mills-valuation

Village of Lake Hallie hires outside help after budget delays

The Lake Hallie village board approved a $33,000 contract with government accounting firm Caselle to resolve significant accounting discrepancies after roughly $5 million in transactions were paid or received but never properly applied to fund accounts. Village Administrator-Clerk-Treasurer Anastasia Stueber, the sixth person in the role since the longtime clerk retired in late 2024, attributed the problem to turnover and inadequate succession planning. The issues have stalled the current audit by Baker Tilly and delayed 2027 budget planning. The goal is to reconcile 2025 accounts by end of October and close the audit by early November, with Caselle presenting progress to the board at the Nov. 2 meeting.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/10/02/village-lake-hallie-hires-outside-help-after-budget-delays/

Workforce and Labor

Wisconsin workers' compensation insurance rates fall for 11th consecutive year

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development and the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance approved an average 1.97% reduction in workers' compensation insurance premiums, effective Thursday, projected to save employers an estimated $36 million over the next year. The rate decrease marks the eleventh consecutive annual reduction. Rates are developed by

actuaries at the Wisconsin Compensation Rating Bureau and reviewed by the Commissioner of Insurance before taking effect.

Source: WBEV 1430 AM Beaver Dam (Statewide) | https://dailydodge.com/wisconsin-workers-compensation-insurance-rates-fall-for-11th-consecutive-year/

Chad La Lor named District Attorney for Douglas County

Gov. Tony Evers appointed Chad La Lor as Douglas County District Attorney, filling the vacancy created by Mark Fruehauf's resignation. La Lor has served as an assistant district attorney in Douglas County since 2019 and brings 30 years of experience across prosecution, law enforcement, and public defense, including nearly two decades with the Superior Police Department rising to captain. He will serve the remainder of the term ending January 2029.

Source: WDIO ABC10 Duluth (Western) | https://www.wdio.com/top-stories/chad-la-lor-named-district-attorney-for-douglas-county/

Houseman gives light goodbye in manager report

Fort Atkinson City Manager Rebecca Houseman, who has served five and a half years, will leave the city Oct. 30 to become Janesville's next city manager, starting in November. The city is conducting a search for her successor. At the Sept. 15 Common Council meeting she also noted that a 2027 Budget and 2027-2032 Capital Improvements Plan Workshop was scheduled for Sept. 29.

Source: Daily Jefferson County Union (South Central) | https://www.dailyunion.com/news/local/houseman-gives-light-goodbye-in-manager-report/article_67e02a60-ed9d-45d0-baff-860d7eea38eb.html

Rhinelander selects Angela Gorall as new city administrator

The Rhinelander Common Council unanimously appointed Angela Gorall as city administrator, with a start date of November 16, 2026. Gorall holds 26 years of local government experience and currently serves as Deputy City Administrator for Woodbury, Minnesota, a city of more than 81,000 residents. She previously served as Administrator for the Village of Bellevue, Wisconsin, and holds an MPA from UW-Oshkosh. The city used Innovative Public Advisors to conduct the recruitment. Gorall replaces Patrick Reagan, who resigned in August to become city administrator in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wxpr.org/politics-government/2026-09-30/rhinelander-selects-angela-gorall-as-new-city-administrator

Council to consider pay adjustment for police sergeants

The Superior Human Resources Committee unanimously recommended moving police sergeants to step eight on the wage scale, at $49.17 per hour, retroactive to July 1. The adjustment addresses wage compression created when patrol officers received a 4% increase under a new contract while sergeants received only a 2.8% increase with other nonunion staff. A third-party study by Cottingham and Butler found city wages overall are 6% to 9% below benchmark and recommended a broader wage study. The Superior City Council will consider the

recommendation at its October 6 meeting, with the fire department's battalion chief and assistant chief positions deferred to an October 19 committee meeting.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/council-to-consider-pay-adjustment-for-police-sergeants

Winneconne school administrator placed on leave last month to retire

The Winneconne School Board accepted the retirement of longtime administrator Margaret "Peggy" Larson on a 4-2 vote at a special meeting Wednesday, with Larson's final day set for Friday. An earlier motion to reinstate Larson failed 3-3. Board member Jill Verich, who voted against accepting the retirement, stated she did not believe it was voluntary. The board had previously placed Larson on leave without public explanation and has already approved a search for an interim administrator. Recall petitions against Board President Kati Calewarts and Vice President Dean Ackman have each gathered more than 2,300 signatures, though those signatures had not yet been validated as of last week.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/news/education/winneconne-school-administrator-placed-on-leave-last-month-to-retire

Infrastructure and Utilities

MMSD selects Jacobs for Milwaukee wastewater contract amid Veolia lawsuit

The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District Commission voted unanimously to select Dallas-based Jacobs Solutions as its next wastewater operator, awarding a 10-year contract set to begin in 2028. Jacobs outbid incumbent Veolia North America by $54 million over the contract term and received the prior recommendation of a five-member ad hoc committee of former MMSD commissioners. Veolia, which has operated the district's plants since 2008, filed suit Sept. 11 alleging a flawed and biased selection process; a district court's order permits MMSD to select but not sign a contract until the case is resolved. Briefs from both parties are due in December, with a judicial ruling expected by late January. A third-party performance audit of Veolia, conducted by EMA Inc., was extended through October after the firm requested additional time for interviews.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Southeastern) | https://dailyreporter.com/2026/09/28/mmsd-selects-jacobs-milwaukee-wastewater-contract-veolia-lawsuit/

WPS proposes 15% rate increase over two years; PSC hears public input

Wisconsin Public Service is seeking Public Service Commission approval for a 15% residential rate increase spread over two years. WPS spokesperson Matt Cullen said the filing includes $132 million in savings through federal tax credits and earnings sharing. The PSC held a public hearing on the request Sept. 30 and will review testimony and other evidence before voting to approve, modify, or reject the plan, with a final decision expected later this fall.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Northeastern) | https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/30/wps-proposes-15-rate-increase-over-two-years-psc-hears-public-input/

Enbridge estimates northern Wisconsin Line 5 gas leak will cost $15M

An accident report filed by Enbridge Energy Limited Partnership with the federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration estimates the August Line 5 leak in Iron County will cost at least $15.1 million, with emergency response accounting for nearly $9.9 million, property damage and repairs about $5 million, and the remainder covering environmental remediation and lost product. The company reported approximately 33,000 barrels (more than 1.3 million gallons) of natural gas liquids escaped; 165 barrels were recovered. A PHMSA corrective action order states preliminary findings indicate the subcontractor's truck was left unattended in neutral on a slope. The Wisconsin DNR has said Enbridge lacked state approvals for a temporary bypass used to restore service Sept. 13, and the agency says it continues reviewing options. The FBI is leading a separate investigation into fires at two Enbridge sites in Superior and Ashland County.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Central/Northern) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/09/enbridge-estimates-northern-wisconsin-line-5-gas-leak-will-cost-15m/

County sets rules for children riding in taxis

The Ozaukee County Public Works Committee voted in September to set a minimum age of 12 for unaccompanied children on the Ozaukee County Shared Ride Taxi, effective Nov. 1, aligning with Washington County's policy to facilitate cross-county transfers. The committee also adopted child safety seat requirements for accompanied young children and updated its no-show policy, imposing progressive suspensions of 7, 14, and 30 days for repeat violations within a 60-day window, with a voluntary payment alternative of $7, $14, or $30. Transit Supervisor Kerise Zutz noted fewer than 10 unaccompanied children currently use the service. August 2026 ridership reached 8,425 trips, the highest August total since 2019, up 2.2% year over year.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/county-sets-rules-children-riding-taxis

Bridges approved for state-aid replacement

Two Rusk County bridges with active weight restrictions have been approved for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's 2026-31 Local Bridge Improvement Assistance program. Bridge P-54-117 on Buck Lake Road carries a 15-ton load posting and is estimated to cost $636,000 to replace; P-54-921 on County Highway H over Clear Creek carries a 25-ton posting with an estimated replacement cost of $776,000. The combined estimate is $1.412 million, with an 80/20 state-federal and local funding split leaving approximately $282,400 in local costs. Both projects are listed for 2028 design and construction, though that schedule may change. Rusk County Highway Commissioner Justin Livingston said the county cannot proceed until it receives the State/Municipal Agreement from WisDOT.

Source: Ladysmith News (Central/Northern) | https://ladysmithnews.com/news/article_11b720e4-6826-4244-affa-811545d6cd50.html

CWA Awarded Federal Grant to Restore Flights to Detroit

The U.S. Department of Transportation awarded Central Wisconsin Airport a $950,000 grant through the Small Community Air Service Development Program to help restore service to Detroit

Metropolitan Wayne County Airport, a route Delta discontinued in late 2022. Airport Director Brian Grefe characterized the Detroit connection as a top priority for expanding the regional network. Airport officials must still coordinate with airlines and the Department of Transportation to complete the grant process before a return date can be confirmed.

Source: WSAU 550 AM / 99.9 FM Wausau (Central/Northern) | https://wsau.com/2026/10/03/cwa-awarded-federal-grant-to-restore-flights-to-detroit/

Oneida County Highway Department holds open house to discuss winter management

The Oneida County Highway Department hosted an open house in collaboration with Wisconsin Salt Wise to demonstrate snow and ice control equipment and discuss application methods ahead of winter. Highway Commissioner Ben Rich said the department will begin mounting plows in about two weeks and must produce approximately 30,000 tons of salt sand for itself and townships. Salt Wise is working with eight Wisconsin highway departments to expand use of salt brine as an alternative to granular salt in order to reduce chloride pollution in lakes and drinking water.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wxpr.org/energy-environment/2026-10-02/oneida-county-highway-department-holds-open-house-to-discuss-winter-management

Eau Claire says PFAS officially being treated by removal facility

The City of Eau Claire's PFAS removal facility began active treatment of the city's well water, coming in under its $25 million projected budget at approximately $23.5 million. The facility went live in June 2026, and summer test results show PFAS levels are being reduced below EPA standards. Eight of the city's 16 wells have been offline since PFAS was detected in 2021, and the city plans to return the offline wells to service over coming months. The next phase involves establishing an in-house PFAS testing lab, as external samples cost approximately $500 each.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/eau-claire-says-pfas-officially-being-treated-by-removal-facility/article_d9b34804-7823-42d5-8bee-5ad5e0b67f00.html

Council Discusses Potential Equipment Costs At Recycling Center

The Bloomer City Council discussed but took no action on purchasing a cardboard baler for the city's recycling center, which has operated at a loss for several years. Street Department Manager Chad Gudis estimated the total initial investment at approximately $180,000, with the baler equipment alone costing about $65,000, and projected a return-on-investment timeline of roughly 15 years at current prices of $90 per cardboard bale. The council's next step is further discussion on whether to maintain the current joint service arrangement with surrounding towns or separate into a city-only operation, a decision requiring at least one year's prior notice to dissolve the existing agreement.

Source: Bloomer Advance (Western) | https://www.bloomeradvance.com/news/community_news/article_0b20c866-a477-48d6-bb9d-a18717548829.html

WisDOT planning next major Highway 16 project in La Crosse

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation held a public open house Wednesday on a proposed Highway 16 corridor project spanning from Losey Boulevard to Highway 157 in La Crosse. The 4.5-mile project would reduce the speed limit to 40 mph, add 11-foot travel lanes, replace a 1937-era bridge over the La Crosse River, and reconfigure intersections at Losey Boulevard, Gillette Street, County Highway B, and Highway 157, where 547 of 702 total crashes between 2015 and 2019 occurred. WisDOT will submit an environmental document by mid-2027, with construction not starting until 2031 at the earliest. Public comments are accepted through Oct. 31.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Western) | https://chippewa.com/news/local/article_ebcd1860-615f-51dd-b606-4b83a00f42a2.html

Shullsburg announces grant award, start of major Badger Park improvements

The City of Shullsburg secured a $489,500 federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant, the latest addition to a funding package that also includes a $1 million state grant and more than $2 million in private donations, for a comprehensive Badger Park renovation. Contractors have been selected and construction is beginning, with project completion scheduled for June 2027. Improvements include ballfield reconstruction with new storm sewer infrastructure, LED stadium lighting, a roundhouse conversion, and a new multi-purpose building to house the Badger Mine and Museum with ADA-compliant restrooms. A Freedom Rock is scheduled for delivery in mid-May 2027.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/shullsburg-announces-grant-award-start-of-major-badger-park-improvements/

Superior twice previously attempted utility takeovers

A Superior Telegram archive review documents that in November 1918, approximately 73% of Superior voters favored a city takeover of Superior Water, Light and Power, and in April 1919 approximately 80% favored municipal ownership of the gas, electric, and water utilities separately. The company offered to sell all three utilities for $3.3 million in 1921, but the city rejected that figure because the Railroad Commission valued them at approximately $2.3 million. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1923 that Wisconsin's public utility law could not override the original franchise contract, citing the Constitution's contracts clause, effectively blocking condemnation at appraised value and requiring the city to pay 20 times annual profits. The article is the first of a planned series examining Superior's prior utility takeover attempts as a current referendum approaches.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/superior-twice-previously-attempted-utility-takeovers

Cycling nonprofit to help connect Superior trails

The Superior Parks and Recreation Commission recommended entering a memorandum of understanding with Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores to fund and build a 3.3-mile natural surface trail connecting the Osaugie and Millennium trails through the Central Park area. Under the

agreement, the city would lead permitting, land access, and grant administration while COGGS would handle fundraising, community engagement, and construction consultation, retaining raised funds in restricted accounts and transferring them to the city by project. The commission also recommended a separate maintenance agreement with COGGS for three mountain bike trails in the Superior Municipal Forest. The City Council will consider both agreements at its October 6 meeting.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/cycling-nonprofit-to-help-connect-superior-trails

Committee discusses property for police use

The Ladysmith Property Committee held a closed session Sept. 15 to discuss property that could be purchased or transferred for use by the Ladysmith Police Department, with no action disclosed in the meeting minutes. The city has been exploring relocating the police department from leased space in the Rusk County Law Enforcement Center, where lease costs have risen. One option under prior Common Council discussion is converting the city-owned fire hall and ambulance barn on Miner Avenue at an estimated cost of $280,000, with Short Elliott Hendrickson identified to develop plans. The committee also approved a 90-day lease for Gates Avenue through end of 2026 and agreed to seek proposals for a vacant city-owned lot at 508 Corbett Ave.

Source: Ladysmith News (Central/Northern) | https://ladysmithnews.com/news/article_6d2d570e-1e7f-4e12-859d-490a5ccbb303.html

Group seeks city partnership to preserve, revitalize Parker Memorial Building

A volunteer steering committee is asking the Stevens Point Board of Park Commissioners to formally recognize it as a city partner for preservation and revitalization of the Parker Memorial Building at Goerke Park. The group, co-founded by Trina Dorn and Kimberly Fiers, seeks to pursue Wisconsin State Register and National Register of Historic Places designations, which could unlock preservation grants. Parks Director Dan Kremer cautioned that designation does not guarantee grant funding and that future accepted funds could impose design conditions. Formal recognition would not authorize renovations, construction, or changes to the Goerke Park master plan; those decisions would return to the Park Commission and Common Council. A city-hired consultant's facility assessment, including the Parker building, is expected in coming months. The Park Commission is scheduled to consider the proposal at its Oct. 7 meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Source: Stevens Point Metro Wire (Central/Northern) | https://spmetrowire.com/group-seeks-city-partnership-to-preserve-revitalize-parker-memorial-building/

Technology and AI Governance

Monroe schools getting back online

School District of Monroe Superintendent Joe Monroe updated the Board of Education at its September 21, 2026 meeting that district network and phone systems are being restored following a security incident that forced them offline approximately two weeks earlier. ACT testing

preparation was delayed more than a week due to the outage. The superintendent acknowledged recovery costs and said the district prioritized building safety and operational continuity throughout the incident. No timeline for full restoration was specified.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/monroe-schools-getting-back-online/

Public Safety

Supervisors Pass Flock Ban

Milwaukee County supervisors voted 16-0 on Thursday to direct Milwaukee County Parks to remove all 42 Flock Safety cameras from county parkland, including 25 ALPR cameras and 6 Flock Condor cameras operated by the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office. The resolution, authored by Sup. Justin Bielinski, was amended by the Committee on Parks and Culture to authorize MCSO to replace the removed cameras with conventional video surveillance cameras on the county network. County Executive David Crowley's 2027 budget proposal omits Flock funding, redirecting those dollars to a legal aid program for residents facing eviction. MCSO opposed the resolution, citing the cameras' use in homicide and other serious crime investigations.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/10/03/mke-county-supervisors-pass-flock-ban/

Legal risk grows amid Flock camera vandalism

Watertown Police reported that someone stole a Flock surveillance camera valued at $3,500 from Air Park Drive. Former UW-Madison law professor John Gross noted that under Wisconsin law, theft or damage valued between $2,500 and $5,000 is a Class I felony, and installation and subscription costs could push the total value past that threshold, exposing perpetrators to fines up to $10,000 and potential restitution. Watertown Police Chief David Brower said the cameras remain critical public safety infrastructure, and the investigation is ongoing.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (Southeastern) | https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/10/01/legal-risk-grows-amid-flock-camera-vandalism/

Six arrested after Caledonia shooting first called in as a hit-and-run; police credit Flock camera

Six people were taken into custody Sept. 28 following a Sept. 27 shooting on 6½ Mile Road in the Village of Caledonia; Caledonia police forwarded recommended attempted first-degree intentional homicide charges for all six to the Racine County District Attorney's Office. Chief Christopher Botsch credited a Flock Safety automated license plate reader camera with enabling arrests within hours. Caledonia's Flock contract, signed December 2023, covers four cameras at $12,000 annually plus a one-time $2,600 installation fee, totaling $14,600 in year one and $26,600 over the two-year initial term. The contract specifies the village owns its data and Flock may not sell it, though Flock can anonymize and use data for service improvement. The Racine County

Sheriff's Office removed its Flock cameras Sept. 4 and the Racine Common Council voted Sept. 15 to end the city's Flock contract.

Source: Racine County Eye (Southeastern) | https://racinecountyeye.com/2026/09/28/caledonia-shooting-six-arrested-flock-camera/

County pausing EMS Working Group meetings as it reviews next steps

Jefferson County Administrator Michael Luckey declared the EMS Working Group's first stage complete at the Oct. 1 Executive Committee meeting and has asked the group's chair to indefinitely pause future sessions while the County Board of Supervisors determines next steps and the body's future composition. The existing 13-member Working Group had recommended a 5-member successor body; Luckey favors a 7-member body with 4 county supervisors holding majority control. Executive Committee member Steve Nass supports reducing membership for scheduling flexibility. Luckey said he is contacting the Wisconsin Counties Association about a possible consultant, citing Bayfield County's imminent countywide EMS contract overhaul as a model for structuring funding distributions to towns.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (Southeastern) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/county-pausing-ems-working-group-meetings-as-it-reviews-next-steps/article_efdbd50e-072c-4a30-9015-b18a8529363c.html

'We'll continue on until we can't'

Fennimore Area EMS, down to nine members and self-funded since 1951, held a Sept. 20 community meeting to address a staffing crisis as call volume has grown from 209 in 2017 to 291 through late September 2026. The squad recently hired two volunteers as part-time paid positions, covering 224 of the 1,344 monthly hours needed for 24/7 coverage. If Fennimore closes, officials estimate a contracted paid service would cost roughly $600,000 annually in wages and benefits alone. Municipalities currently pay $750 to neighboring squads when Fennimore cannot respond, adding an average 45-minute delay to hospital transport. City Clerk Ashley Edge confirmed the EMS situation is on the agenda for the next Fennimore City Council meeting. Grant County Emergency Manager Steve Braun told municipal representatives present that communities must contribute financially, calling the all-volunteer model "not a realistic model."

Source: SW News Group (portal) (South Central) | https://www.swnews4u.com/local/well-continue-on-until-we-cant/

Middleton Police cite e-moto rider, highlighting rules riders may not know

Middleton Police cited an e-moto rider for operating the device in an area prohibited under city rules that follow Wisconsin state law. Under those rules, e-motos, which can exceed 28 mph, are banned from bike lanes, trails, sidewalks, and shared-use paths, and riders must hold a valid driver's license with the vehicle registered. City spokesperson Brent McHenry said school resource officers are conducting student outreach and the city has published a classification guide distinguishing e-motos from e-bikes.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/10/02/middleton-police-cite-e-moto-rider-highlighting-rules-riders-may-not-know/

Boulder Junction residents divided over ATV/UTV use on township roads

The Boulder Junction Town Board held a public meeting on a Musky Riders ATV Club proposal to open township roads to ATV and UTV traffic, a question the board has previously voted down and that a prior community survey showed a majority opposed. Town Chairman Dennis Reuss said the board will make a decision in the near future. Boulder Junction and Manitowish Waters are the only two townships in Vilas County that do not permit UTV traffic on town roads.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/boulder-junction-residents-divided-over-atv-utv-use-on-township-roads/article_751c16f8-4ff6-4cb8-bfd3-bca36f488915.html

WEAU UNCOVERS: Elk Mound police department spent less than budgeted as village considers disbanding force

A resolution to disband the Elk Mound Police Department is heading to the village board, which will also vote on a 2027 budget proposal for Dunn County Sheriff's Office services. WEAU records show the department spent $159,889.19 in FY2025 against a $194,408.20 allocation, a $34,000 surplus, potentially reducing the Wisconsin Innovation Grant (created by 2023 WI Act 12) from an estimated $48,000 to roughly $40,000 annually over four years, totaling about $160,000. The proposed sheriff's contract would exceed $176,000 per year after the grant expires. The department's sole full-time officer, Chief Chad Weinberger, earned $11,381.29 in overtime in 2024; calls for service reached 841 in 2025 and are on pace for more than 816 in 2026. A special village board meeting with a community forum was scheduled for Monday at Village Hall at 6 p.m.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/10/01/weau-uncovers-elk-mound-police-department-spent-less-than-budgeted-village-considers-disbanding-force/

North Prairie exploring possibility of public safety referendum

The North Prairie Village Board voted unanimously at a special meeting Wednesday to engage Ehlers, a Minneapolis-based municipal financial advisor, to assist with budgeting for public safety and drafting potential referendum language. The board discussed holding separate referendums for police and fire or a single combined public safety referendum. To place a measure on the April 6, 2027 ballot, final language must be submitted to the state by Jan. 1. The North Prairie Police Department has been suspended for six months following the retirement of Police Chief Sal Tamez and other longtime staff at the end of 2025, and the Village is negotiating its fire and EMS contract with the Kettle Moraine Fire District.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/news/north-prairie-public-safety-referendum/article_b529ab21-d030-5a71-a389-9fc6fc0aa7dd.html

Two Wisconsin sheriff races test the future of local ICE cooperation

Voters in Sauk and Winnebago counties will decide Nov. 3 sheriff races in which both Democratic candidates pledge to end their counties' 287(g) agreements with ICE upon taking office, while Republican opponents support continuing them. Sauk County's 287(g) agreement, signed by

Sheriff Richard Meister in November 2025, allows six jail supervisors to execute immigration warrants on people in county custody. ICE recorded about 100 arrests in Sauk County during Trump's second term, nearly all through custody transfers at the county jail. Both Sauk County candidates support maintaining a separate contract allowing ICE to rent jail space for detentions. A Wisconsin Watch and Bolts analysis found about half of those transferred from the Sauk County Jail to ICE had prior criminal convictions; at least 8% had a prior DWI conviction. Outgoing Sheriff Meister, who has served 16 years, endorsed Republican nominee Matt Burch in the August primary.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/wisconsin-sheriff-election-races-future-of-local-ice-cooperation-immigration-law-enforcement/

Tablets offer benefits for inmates, staff

Rock County Jail officials describe their inmate tablet program, operated under a contract with ICSolutions, as a closed-loop intranet system with no open internet access, deployed across 230 correctional facilities nationally. Rock County pays the base contract cost; inmates pay for communications such as messaging and video visits. Captain Nick Brown noted that before tablets, the jail had more than 450 inmates but only one computer for legal research. Jail staff can block contacts, enforce court no-contact orders through the system, and obtain full communication records for investigations.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/tablets-offer-benefits-for-inmates-staff/article_b1f67ea7-b1e3-44dd-b32a-d615ee1d636a.html

Updates to city's emergency management procedures get green light from Health and Safety Committee

Tomahawk's Health and Safety Committee approved an ordinance on Sept. 29 that would repeal the city's "Civil Emergencies" municipal code chapter and replace it with an "Emergency Management" chapter. The ordinance shifts the role of Local Emergency Management Director from the Police Chief to the Mayor and formally adopts the Incident Command System and National Incident Management System. Police Chief Al Elvins supported the change, noting operational commanders cannot simultaneously coordinate emergency responses. The ordinance was forwarded to the Common Council, which was scheduled to meet Oct. 6 for final review.

Source: Tomahawk Leader (Central/Northern) | https://www.tomahawkleader.com/stories/updates-to-citys-emergency-management-procedures-get-green-light-from-health-and-safety,357122

Former CBS News correspondent discusses Madison police body camera rollout

Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway announced a $350,000 grant from the Madison Community Foundation to accelerate the Madison Police Department's body-worn camera rollout, with the goal of equipping all officers by the end of 2027. Under the prior phased plan, only North District officers would have received cameras by that date. The grant does not cover the full

cost of the more than 200 cameras needed, and Rhodes-Conway said she plans to apply for a federal grant to cover remaining capital costs.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/former-cbs-news-correspondent-discusses-madison-police-body-camera-rollout/article_e05b51da-69cd-4209-aa4e-bf93eda31815.html

Milwaukee Police Department considers use of generative AI

The Milwaukee Police Department released a generative AI policy in January requiring that AI-generated material be treated as a draft, reviewed for accuracy, and labeled as AI-assisted in final work products. MPD's Generative Artificial Intelligence Committee has evaluated multiple products but has not approved any for use. Axon, MPD's body-camera vendor, offers a product called Draft One that generates police report drafts from body-camera audio. The ACLU of Wisconsin and Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office both identified risks including transcription errors, model bias, and potential Brady list implications if AI-assisted reports conflict with officer testimony.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Southeastern) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/09/wisconsin-milwaukee-police-department-generative-artificial-intelligence-ai-technology-use/

Mid-State Technical College and Partners Launches the Campaign for the Nexus Public Safety Center

Mid-State Technical College, the City of Stevens Point, and central Wisconsin public safety agencies have launched a fundraising campaign for the Nexus Public Safety Center, a planned approximately $32 million, 71,000-square-foot complex in Stevens Point. The facility would combine a 52,000-square-foot Mid-State training center with a 17,000-square-foot Stevens Point fire station and a 2,000-square-foot satellite police station, plus $13 million in outdoor training environments. All 62 public safety agencies in Mid-State's eight-county district have expressed support. The campaign has raised more than $2.5 million to date. The facility is projected to serve approximately 2,680 participants annually by its third year, a 110% increase from the 2024-25 baseline of 1,272, and is estimated to generate $8.2 million in annual economic impact. Funding will combine philanthropic support, public-sector resources, federal appropriations, grants, and partner contributions.

Source: WDLB 1450 AM Marshfield (Central/Northern) | https://wdlbam.com/2026/10/01/mid-state-technical-college-and-partners-launches-the-campaign-for-the-nexus-public-safety-center/

Fox Crossing replaces damaged fire engine, buys from another community

Fox Crossing finalized a $285,000 purchase of a 2014 fire engine from the Village of Butler, funded from the village's equipment replacement fund, after the July tornado destroyed Fire Station 41 and damaged two engines and a rescue truck. Insurance negotiations for the original three pieces of equipment remain ongoing. Chief Todd Sweeney said the department may sell or retain the Butler engine once original apparatus are repaired or replaced.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://fox11online.com/news/local/fox-crossing-replaces-damaged-fire-engine-from-community-with-no-fire-department-july-tornado-village-of-butler-grand-chute-pierce-manufaturing

Siting and Moratoria

Manitowoc County proposes data center restrictions

Manitowoc County released a draft ordinance this week that would limit data centers to 500 acres, with no more than 100 acres converted from agricultural land, and require closed-loop cooling systems to protect groundwater. The ordinance is being developed during an 18-month moratorium on data centers that runs through October 2027. Noise monitoring and air quality plans would also be required. County Executive Tyler Martell said no data center developers have approached the county and the ordinance is intended to be proactive. The draft next goes to the Planning and Zoning Commission for review, with public hearings expected before the commission makes a recommendation to the County Board.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/manitowoc/manitowoc-county-proposes-data-center-restrictions

Zoning committee approves 12-month data center moratorium

The Vilas County Zoning and Planning Committee voted unanimously on September 23 to advance an ordinance imposing a 12-month moratorium on permitting data centers, battery energy storage systems, and certain solar energy systems. Zoning Administrator Dave Sadenwasser confirmed no developers have contacted the county and that state law prohibits a permanent ban and caps any moratorium at 24 months. The ordinance includes protections covering stormwater runoff, groundwater quality, and glare hazards. The full Vilas County Board of Supervisors will vote on the ordinance November 10 at 9 a.m. at the courthouse.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wxpr.org/energy-environment/2026-10-01/zoning-committee-approves-12-month-data-center-moratorium

Janesville city council approves 12-month pause for data centers

The Janesville City Council voted unanimously to approve a 12-month moratorium on data center development, halting the city's acceptance, processing, and approval of rezoning, permit, annexation, and other development applications related to data centers. Before the final vote, Council Member Josh Erdman successfully moved to remove three recital sections referencing the GM/JATCO site and the November referendum, framing the moratorium as a citywide measure rather than one tied to a specific property. Council Member Heather Miller noted she had first called for a data center pause in May, after the council rejected an extension to its letter of intent with Viridian Partners, a hyperscale data center developer, for the GM/JATCO site.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/janesville-city-council-approves-12-month-pause-for-data-centers/article_a2a675b4-4862-4f51-ada2-460aeee20a45.html

Stevens Point to open discussion on data center development

Stevens Point District 7 Council Member Mary Kneebone requested that data center development be added to the Plan Commission agenda for an Oct. 5 discussion, citing regulatory actions taken recently by other municipalities. No specific project, permit, ordinance, or development agreement is before commissioners. Kneebone made the request in a Sept. 28 email to Mayor Mike Wiza and Associate Planner Adam Kuhn, saying the city should establish a policy position before a developer submits a proposal. The Plan Commission meets at 6 p.m. Monday, Oct. 5, at 933 Michigan Ave., open to the public.

Source: Stevens Point Metro Wire (Central/Northern) | https://spmetrowire.com/stevens-point-to-open-discussion-on-data-center-development/

Grounding a charged debate over data centers

A Wisconsin Policy Forum report finds Wisconsin lags Virginia and Ohio in data center development, with three hyperscale centers currently under construction or operating in Mount Pleasant, Port Washington, and Beaver Dam. The report identifies electricity costs and transmission rate allocation as the primary policy challenge, noting state projections show peak power demand rising more than 5 gigawatts between 2024 and 2030. On local finance, the report finds state TIF law makes it difficult for municipalities to protect existing taxpayers when significant TIF spending is required for data center infrastructure, and notes the cost of Wisconsin's state sales tax exemption for data centers is significant. An August Marquette Law School poll found 78% of registered Wisconsin voters believed data center costs outweigh benefits. The Forum reviewed deals in Mount Pleasant, Port Washington, Beaver Dam, Janesville, and DeForest and generally found communities struck reasonable deals with fiscal safeguards.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Statewide) | https://dailyreporter.com/2026/10/02/data-center-development-challenges-impacts-wisconsin/

Report: Wisconsin could make up taxes lost to data center incentives

A Wisconsin Policy Forum report found the state's sales tax exemption for data centers will cost Wisconsin an estimated $1.5 billion in construction-related sales tax revenue from 2024 to 2028 and $369 million annually in operations-related sales tax, based on Legislative Fiscal Bureau estimates. The report found local development agreements in Mount Pleasant, Port Washington, and Beaver Dam include financial safeguards such as limits on municipal borrowing, guaranteed property values, and performance-tied incentives. Peak electricity demand on the Wisconsin grid is projected to grow from 14.6 gigawatts in 2024 to 19.9 gigawatts by 2030, driven largely by data centers. The report said the state could recoup a significant portion of forgone tax revenue through income, sales, corporate, and property taxes generated by data center activity.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/09/wisconsin-data-center-incentives-taxes-report-energy-water-usage-electricity/

Jefferson County committee approves Watertown solar project, despite City of Watertown opposition

The Jefferson County Planning and Zoning Committee approved a conditional-use permit for the Concord-Highland Solar Energy Systems project, an approximately 25-acre, 5 MW array proposed by Seattle-based OneEnergy Renewables LLC near the STH 26 Bypass, over the formal objection of Watertown Mayor Robert Stocks. Stocks cited conflicts with the City's 2019 Comprehensive Plan, future land-use designations, and proximity to the Watertown Municipal Airport. County Planning Director Matt Zangl reported an FAA "null hazard" determination and a glare analysis showing no pilot-safety concerns. Corporation Counsel Danielle Thompson advised the committee it could not deny the permit solely on one municipality's disapproval. The full Jefferson County Board of Supervisors will review the project at its next meeting, where the City of Watertown Common Council is also expected to act.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (Southeastern) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/jefferson-county-committee-approves-watertown-solar-project-despite-city-of-watertown-opposition/article_9899f964-54ad-4606-9f5c-7a19eae904c7.html

'Include local governments:' Luckey issues statement following Microsoft deal with Sinnissippi solar

Jefferson County Administrator Michael Luckey issued a statement Sept. 30 calling for Wisconsin to restore meaningful local government involvement in large-scale energy and data center siting decisions. The statement followed disclosure that Microsoft will subscribe to 90% of the power capacity from the proposed 100-megawatt Sinnissippi Solar Energy Center, sited across the towns of Watertown, Ixonia, and Concord under a Payment and Cancellation Agreement executed April 27 with We Energies. Construction is slated to begin April 2027 with full operation targeted for 2028. Luckey said the arrangement reinforces concerns that farmland converted for solar generation may not benefit local communities.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (Southeastern) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/include-local-governments-luckey-issues-statement-following-microsoft-deal-with-sinnissippi-solar/article_72b93ced-f245-4d4d-8e83-ede5037d0927.html

Oracle offers to buy nuclear power in Wisconsin

Oracle announced Sept. 30 it seeks to purchase 125 to 250 megawatts, representing roughly 10% to 20% of the energy needs of its $15 billion Lighthouse Campus AI data center in Port Washington, from the Point Beach Nuclear Plant in Manitowoc County. The company says the arrangement could save We Energies customers $300 million in fuel costs between 2027 and 2033 by shifting costly nuclear power costs away from general ratepayers. We Energies currently pays escalating rates under a contract with NextEra Energy that will jump 6% to 8% annually through 2033, and cited the agreement as cause for 20% of a proposed $176 million 2027 electric rate hike. The Public Service Commission must approve Oracle's plan; Oracle's Vice President Julia Robin said the proposal will be submitted by year's end.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Southeastern) | https://dailyreporter.com/2026/10/02/oracle-offers-to-buy-nuclear-power-in-wisconsin/

Local opposition to transmission line be part of 'A Day of Power' in Madison

No 765 Line Inc. has organized an Oct. 13 lobby day in Madison, "A Day of Power," at which representatives from 10 Wisconsin counties will deliver to legislators 69 local government resolutions opposing the MariBell and BECI high-voltage transmission line projects. The Town of Beloit Board of Supervisors voted 5-0 on Sept. 24 to oppose the BECI line, a proposed 190-mile, $1.2 billion route through up to nine southwest Wisconsin counties. Midcontinent Grid Solutions plans to apply to the PSC for approval in early 2027, with a decision anticipated by mid-2028.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/local-opposition-to-transmission-line-be-part-of-a-day-of-power-in-madison/article_a2868555-6d96-5bd6-ae77-ba6b8bcc3460.html

'We knew it was coming': Wheatland residents react as Robin Energy files formal application

Robin Energy Storage filed a formal application with the Wisconsin Public Service Commission for a 200-megawatt battery energy storage system near Highway 50 and the Balsam Substation in the Town of Wheatland. The project would include 200 battery containers with space for 44 additional units. The Town of Wheatland remains opposed. Construction is projected to begin in 2028 with operations starting in 2029. The PSC must first review the application for completeness before the proposal advances further.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/kenosha-county/we-knew-it-was-coming-wheatland-residents-react-as-robin-energy-files-formal-application

Housing and Development

County board approves up to $10,000 for Design Wisconsin campus study

The Marinette County Board of Supervisors voted to approve up to $10,000 for UW Extension's Design Wisconsin Program to facilitate a community planning charrette for the former UW campus, rejecting a motion to delay action until January 2027. The process will involve volunteer specialists in real estate, public finance, housing, design, and waterfront development. The board also approved a lease agreement for the Stephenson Public Library, subject to corporation counsel review, defeating a motion by Supervisors Anderson and Bird to postpone one month; the lease now advances to the City of Marinette for consideration. County Administrator Kevin Solway separately reported that 2027 operating expenditures are projected to rise $504,249 while the tax levy is expected to fall $1.6 million.

Source: EagleHerald (Northeastern) | https://www.ehextra.com/news/county-board-approves-up-to-10-000-for-design-wisconsin-campus-study/article_236ff758-9578-439f-a860-7efb57d3343c.html

City of Janesville unveils plan for multifamily housing, retail along Humes Road

Janesville is presenting to its Plan Commission on Monday a proposal to create a new tax-increment financing district around a 55-acre corridor north of Humes Road and west of Wright Road on the city's east side. The TID would support up to $20 million in improvements and loan

incentives. An initial phase would rezone 15 acres from single-family and duplex to general-residence designation to accommodate 208 market-rate apartments in eight multifamily buildings, proposed by Milwaukee developer Wangard Partners. A comprehensive plan amendment, rezoning, TID creation, and conditional-use permit are all required, with public hearings targeted for Oct. 19.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/city-of-janesville-unveils-plan-for-multifamily-housing-retail-along-humes-road/article_5b4c114e-b936-4ac1-9d2f-c7dc88a015d8.html

Menasha launches recovery plan survey as city shifts towards long-term redevelopment plans

Menasha Community Development Director Andrew Dane announced the city launched a four-month "Menasha Strong Recovery Plan" survey on Oct. 2 to assess resident and business needs following the July tornado, which officials estimate caused tens to hundreds of millions of dollars in damage. The plan covers housing, small business, infrastructure, and environmental resiliency. Funding mechanisms under consideration include a TIF district, nonprofit donations, short-term emergency financing, state and federal grants, and a potential FEMA emergency declaration.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://fox11online.com/news/local/menasha-launches-recovery-plan-survey-as-city-shifts-towards-long-term-redevelopment-plans

New downtown Racine loan program offers low-interest, partly forgivable loans to fill vacant storefronts

The Racine County Economic Development Corporation, City of Racine, and Downtown Racine Corporation announced the Downtown Racine Business Attraction Loan Program on Oct. 1, offering loans typically no more than $250,000 at a fixed low interest rate to for-profit businesses opening in currently vacant downtown buildings. Up to 50 percent of each loan may be forgiven if 51 percent of newly created jobs are filled by low-to-moderate income individuals. Eligible uses include real estate acquisition, renovation, equipment, inventory, and working capital. Applications are accepted until funds are exhausted or September 2027. The program is the second downtown storefront incentive this year; a $5,000 pre-development grant launched in May.

Source: WRJN 1400 AM Racine/Kenosha (Southeastern) | https://wrjn.com/news/2026/10/01/new-downtown-racine-loan-program-offers-low-interest-partly-forgivable-loans-to-fill-vacant-storefronts

Amazon breaks ground on 216,000-square-foot delivery facility in Sheboygan

The City of Sheboygan approved a purchase and land sale agreement with Amazon on Jan. 19, selling approximately 58 acres at the SouthPointe Enterprise Campus for more than $2 million; Amazon held a groundbreaking ceremony Sept. 1. The 216,000-square-foot delivery station at Stahl Road and Taylor Drive is expected to open in late 2027 and create 150 to 200 direct jobs and around 450 indirect jobs, generating an estimated $73 million in wages. Construction costs were targeted between $30 million and $50 million. The project proceeded without local or state incentives.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Southeastern) | https://dailyreporter.com/2026/10/01/amazon-breaks-ground-on-216000-square-foot-delivery-facility-in-sheboygan/

Bay View Church Drops Housing Development Plan

Unity Lutheran Church, 1025 E. Oklahoma Ave. in Milwaukee's Bay View neighborhood, has withdrawn a proposal to develop apartments on its campus after neighborhood opposition. The church council suspended a motion that would have gone before congregation members for a vote October 25, and Pastor Kevan Penvose confirmed in a September 28 letter that the church will not seek developer proposals for apartments. The sanctuary, which opened in 1940, will remain. Any apartment project would also have required a zoning change, as the property is zoned RT3. The church council plans to form a neighbor advisory board at its October meeting to guide strategic planning for its aging facility, including a possible remodel or replacement of its 1960s education wing.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/10/02/bay-view-church-drops-housing-development-plan/

Land Use and Zoning

In GM/JATCO referendum argument, project size could matter

A Gazette-hosted forum on Janesville's Nov. 3 referendum, which would give voters final authority over any GM/JATCO site development project exceeding $450 million, surfaced sharp disagreement over project scale. Opponents, led by Grow Janesville Responsibly co-chair George Cullen, argued the threshold could deter megaprojects; he cited SHINE Technologies CEO Greg Piefer's statement that SHINE's $450 million-plus Janesville facilities would have been harder to develop under such a rule. Supporters, including SNOW Janesville's Cathy Erdman, contended large transformational projects are rare statewide, with fewer than 10 mega-projects active in Wisconsin at any given time, and argued the 250-acre site may be better suited to smaller-scale redevelopment.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/in-gm-jatco-referendum-argument-project-size-could-matter/article_1981322e-3676-45f9-b0d3-9959082bb349.html

Historic Eagles Club to be demolished after preservation efforts fall through

The Kenosha Historic Preservation Commission's six-month effort to preserve the Eagles Club at 302 58th St. ended unsuccessfully at a Sept. 30 meeting, and city staff will submit the owners' raze permit request to the State Historic Preservation Office on or before Oct. 2. The state office has 30 days to review. Owners Dan and Gene Madrigrano and Eugene Brookhouse cited estimated repair costs of $2.2 million to $2.5 million plus more than $700,000 already spent on 2024 water-damage remediation. The building is currently listed for sale at $2.3 million, with the raze cost of approximately $825,000 to be added to the asking price. A prospective buyer showed interest in August but had not responded for several weeks as of the Sept. 30 meeting. Demolition may begin immediately upon final state approval.

Source: Journal Times (Southeastern) | https://journaltimes.com/news/local/business/real-estate/article_cfcc4bda-00eb-5c32-8139-102c0e2eb0c9.html

City exploring increase to permitted driveway width

The River Falls City Council held a first reading on Sept. 22 of an ordinance to increase the maximum driveway width at the right-of-way line in R-1 zoned districts from 25 feet to 30 feet. A city survey of 125 driveways found 55.4% of sampled homes already exceed the current 25-foot limit. The city engineer found the change would not negatively affect stormwater. The ordinance also shifts from zoning categories to land use designations. A second reading and potential adoption is scheduled for the Oct. 13 council meeting. Separately, the council declared intent to apply special assessments in the downtown business improvement district at a board-requested level of $44,500.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/city-exploring-increase-to-permitted-driveway-width,207961

Lake Mohawksin enhanced wake ordinance gets thumbs up from Bradley board

The Town of Bradley Board of Supervisors approved an enhanced wake ordinance for Lake Mohawksin on Sept. 14 by a 3-1 vote, following the City of Tomahawk Common Council's approval of a companion ordinance on Sept. 1. Both ordinances were required to meet Wisconsin DNR guidelines, as the two municipalities share jurisdiction over the lake. The ordinances restrict wake-enhancing equipment but do not ban water skiing, tubing, or wakeboarding. Bradley and Tomahawk join the Towns of King, Wilson, Nokomis, and approximately 100 other Wisconsin municipalities with enhanced wake rules.

Source: Tomahawk Leader (Central/Northern) | https://www.tomahawkleader.com/stories/lake-mohawksin-enhanced-wake-ordinance-gets-thumbs-up-from-bradley-board,356661

Governance and Ethics

October: Kaul: More money is needed for records access

Attorney General Josh Kaul told the Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council that additional DOJ funding is needed to reduce public records response times. Kaul's administration sought 2.6 positions in the 2025-27 state budget for DOJ public records staffing, but those positions were cut; the same request has been submitted for the 2027-29 budget. Kaul also said Wisconsin's sunshine laws should be modernized for technology changes, that legislators should no longer be exempt from record retention rules, and that agencies should proactively post records-request response data. Republican challenger Eric Toney did not respond to the Council's questionnaire. The attorney general election is November 3.

Source: Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council (Statewide) | https://wisfoic.org/october-kaul-more-money-is-needed-for-records-access/

Amery school board to post treasurer's reports online, but not detailed spending vouchers

The Amery School District's Finance Oversight Committee, with board members Larry Wojchik and Steve Osero concurring, approved posting monthly treasurer's reports on the district website with a one-month lag. No formal vote was required. The board separately declined to publish detailed monthly spending vouchers showing individual checks and electronic payments. Board member Osero cited competitive sensitivity, personnel-related content, and proprietary vendor information as reasons to withhold vouchers. Residents may still review vouchers in person with district staff.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/amery-school-board-to-post-treasurers-reports-online-but-not-detailed-spending-vouchers/article_45696eac-06fe-43e8-87bd-326f17d49ced.html

Your Right to Know: Gazette seeks records on closed sessions in Janesville schools' superintendent hire

The Janesville Gazette has filed open records requests with the Janesville School District seeking board meeting notices, minutes, and the employment contracts of incoming Superintendent Allison DeGraaf and retiring Superintendent Mark Holzman. The district promoted DeGraaf internally following multiple closed sessions held between July and September 2026, some labeled "superintendent goals/contract" and others simply "personnel matter." The school board announced Holzman's retirement and DeGraaf's appointment simultaneously on Sept. 18, giving the public four days' notice. The district said Holzman provided internal notice of retirement as early as January 2026 and that the board had considered DeGraaf as a successor since February. The district is also managing a $98 million operational referendum on the Nov. 3 ballot.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/your-right-to-know-gazette-seeks-records-on-closed-sessions-in-janesville-schools-superintendent-hire/article_d81ef477-aa40-42a8-93ae-0048e13ad070.html

New Berlin mayor anti-Muslim comments; records reveal backlash, support

Public records obtained by FOX6 through an open records request to the City of New Berlin show that Mayor Dave Ament's social media activity prompted a resignation letter from a city employee citing racism, Islamophobia, homophobia, misogyny, and bigotry, and a separate internal complaint from another employee noting no internal apology had been issued. Some council members condemned Ament's conduct. Ament solicited supporters to email the Common Council on his behalf. The city's public communications manager stated Ament will not conduct media interviews on the matter.

Source: WITI FOX6 Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.fox6now.com/news/new-berlin-mayor-anti-muslim-comments-records-reveal-backlash-support

New Berlin officials reach no decision on petition to remove Mayor Ament

The New Berlin Common Council held a special closed-session meeting on Sept. 29 regarding a citizen petition to remove Mayor Dave Ament, adjourning after approximately one hour with no decision announced. The removal petition cites anti-Muslim posts on Ament's personal Facebook

page and claims that approval of a Milwaukee Rescue Mission facility violated open meetings laws. Ament was not present. Council members declined to comment on the outcome or confirm whether a follow-up meeting would be scheduled.

Source: WITI FOX6 Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.fox6now.com/news/new-berlin-officials-take-no-action-petition-remove-mayor-dave-ament

County board OKs Meyer for interim role

An emergency meeting of the Rusk County Board on Sept. 17 was called after District Attorney John Cabranes raised a statutory concern under Wis. Stat. 66.0501 that Board Chair Ron Freeman had improperly appointed himself interim administrative coordinator following Ashley Heath's Sept. 1 departure. Ten board members attended, constituting a quorum. After approximately 45 minutes in closed session, the board adopted an emergency resolution designating an interim administrative coordinator, with the resolution specifying the position's authorized duties under Wis. Stat. 59.19 and leaving blanks for the designee's name and compensation. Corporation Counsel Steven Sorenson disputed the DA's statutory interpretation, while Cabranes had threatened to refer the matter to outside law enforcement if the appointment was not rescinded.

Source: Ladysmith News (Central/Northern) | https://ladysmithnews.com/news/article_638924b9-564a-47b4-ba8d-96fed7bdad2c.html

Madison police monitor review shows defiance to city rules

A 42-page employment review dated October 2, 2026, from City Attorney Michael Haas's office found Madison Interim Independent Police Monitor Aeiramique Glass submitted her budget late, failed to attend the August 13 Mayor's Team Operating budget meeting, and engaged outside contractors including Dr. Victor Weedn and Sulton Law Office without approved city contracts, despite a Madison General Ordinance requiring the monitor to follow all city contracting requirements. The review also identified potential Open Meetings Law violations related to the Police Civilian Oversight Board, and a Human Resources complaint of potentially coercive or threatening behavior by an office employee forwarded to Glass on August 7 without a city-accessible response. Glass was hired in late 2025 for a six-to-nine-month term; the Madison Common Council extended her appointment on June 9, 2026 through March 31, 2027. Nearly ten months into her tenure, no job posting for the permanent Independent Monitor position has been made, as no position description yet exists.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/madison-police-monitor-review-shows-defiance-to-city-rules/article_adf93be3-2787-47a2-a231-4dc011e89f28.html

RUSD Board censures Bellagio for 'disparaging messages'

The Racine Unified School District Board unanimously approved a resolution at its Monday business meeting censuring board member Mike Bellagio for violating five board policies related to conduct and communication. The resolution found Bellagio posted disparaging messages on social media that embarrassed individual board members, disrupted board operations, and incited significant negative public reaction. The censure is the first by the RUSD Board since 1991.

Bellagio, who serves as board clerk and was absent from the meeting, did not respond to a request for comment. Censure carries no formal sanction beyond public disapproval. The resolution acknowledged Bellagio's First Amendment rights while stating the board was exercising its own free speech rights in issuing the censure. Bellagio holds a three-year term ending April 2028.

Source: Journal Times (Southeastern) | https://journaltimes.com/news/local/education/article_03420a7f-5cdd-4c8d-a668-3f8a31a83fa8.html

'How does your stomach feel right now?' Judge says in sentencing former fire chief

Waushara County Judge Guy Dutcher sentenced former Plainfield Fire Chief Jeffrey Kessenich to nine months in jail and four years of probation after a no-contest plea to theft in a business setting covering $112,157.65 in village funds taken between December 2023 and September 2025. Two additional counts were dismissed. The first 30 days must be served without work release; restitution has been paid. The state Department of Justice investigated after the village of Plainfield requested a review.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Central/Northern) | https://fox11online.com/news/crime/jeffrey-kessenich-plainfield-fire-department-chief-theft-business-setting-no-contest-plea-sentence-jail-time-probation-judge-guy-dutcher?teaserSource=trending

Elections and Election Administration

Wisconsin Elections Commission meets ahead of midterms

The Wisconsin Elections Commission met Thursday to review midterm election readiness, voter roll maintenance, and two complaints. Administrator Meagan Wolfe reported that WEC and local clerks have reviewed or updated nearly 500,000 voter files ahead of November, and that municipal clerks have updated or deactivated more than 500,000 records since the last general election. Of nearly 22 million votes cast in Wisconsin since 2020, 445 (0.002 percent) were matched to voters with felony convictions. The commission voted to find no probable cause in a complaint alleging Milwaukee violated state law by sorting absentee ballots behind a curtain at its central count location during the November 2024 and April 2025 elections. Commissioner Ann Jacobs stated the agency's 30-person staff is insufficient and that a budget request for additional positions has been submitted to the Legislature.

Source: WRJN 1400 AM Racine/Kenosha (Statewide) | https://wrjn.com/news/2026/10/01/wisconsin-elections-commission-meets-ahead-of-midterms

Wisconsin Department Of Justice is Working to Protect Fair Elections

The Wisconsin Department of Justice issued a pre-election reminder that voter intimidation and threats to election workers are crimes under state law, and that federal law generally bars federal officials from ordering military or armed personnel to active polling places. The DOJ's Division of Criminal Investigation, through the Wisconsin State Intelligence Center, is sharing threat intelligence with local law enforcement and election administrators through Election Day. AG

Josh Kaul said the DOJ is committed to ensuring "a fair and secure election." The DOJ is also communicating relevant election laws to prosecutors and law enforcement statewide.

Source: DrydenWire (Statewide) | https://drydenwire.com/news/wisconsin-department-of-justice-is-working-to-protect-fair-elections/

How the upcoming midterms could change Wisconsin election policy

A Votebeat analysis finds that either party winning a November trifecta in Wisconsin would have limited room to dramatically reshape election law, as major policies including voter ID and a ban on private election funding are now in the state Constitution. Democrats, if they gain unified control, would prioritize allowing ballot processing on the Monday before an election, codifying absentee drop-box legality, and expanding absentee ballot tracking. Republicans would likely focus on citizenship verification requirements and potential voter roll audits for noncitizens, reflecting Trump administration pressure. Democratic gubernatorial nominee David Crowley cited better funding for local election officials as a priority; UW-Madison Elections Research Center director Barry Burden said Republicans already enacted most priorities during their 2011-2018 trifecta.

Source: Monroe Times (Statewide) | https://themonroetimes.com/local-election-coverage/how-the-upcoming-midterms-could-change-wisconsin-election-policy/

Alien Charged with Illegal Voting in 2024 Wisconsin Federal Election

First Assistant U.S. Attorney Brad Schimel announced that on September 30, 2026, Sara Luma, 30, a North Macedonia citizen, was charged under 18 U.S.C. Section 611 with unlawfully voting as a non-citizen in the November 5, 2024 federal general election in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Luma registered and voted on the same day, falsely certifying U.S. citizenship on her voter registration form, and admitted to the conduct when interviewed by federal agents. She was taken into custody in August 2026 upon attempting to re-enter the U.S. and self-deported to North Macedonia in September 2026 as part of removal proceedings. An arrest warrant has been issued should she attempt to re-enter.

Source: DrydenWire (Southeastern) | https://drydenwire.com/news/doj-alien-charged-with-illegal-voting-in-2024-federal-election/

Turtle board chair recall drama to be decided Tuesday

Town of Turtle Board Chair Roger Anclam faces a recall election Oct. 6 against challenger Donna Redner, the first contested race for the position since 2009 and the first recall in Rock County since 2024. Recall petitioners gathered 600 valid signatures from a township of approximately 2,400 residents. The recall was triggered after Anclam joined two other board members in approving a cost-reimbursement agreement with Panattoni Development Co. of Irvine, Calif., related to a proposed $1 billion data center campus; the board later reversed course and subsequently approved a 12-month large-scale development moratorium. Polls at Turtle Town Hall, 6916 S. County Rd. J, open at 7 a.m. and close at 8 p.m.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/turtle-board-chair-recall-drama-to-be-decided-tuesday/article_1eb8dacc-b16d-5a3b-9f3c-d4d7d2fabad3.html

Human Services

Wisconsin's Medicaid budget is $322 million short. Racine County is seeing one reason why

Wisconsin's Department of Health Services projected a $322.4 million Medicaid shortfall for the 2025-27 biennium as of June 30, more than doubling from a $144.1 million projection in September 2025. The largest overruns are prescription drugs ($99.1 million), nursing homes ($78 million), federally qualified health centers ($58 million), and Children's Long-Term Support ($56.9 million). In Racine County, Children's Long-Term Support enrollment reached 984 children in July, up 19 percent from 826 in February 2025, with the county averaging 64 days from referral to enrollment against a 90-day state benchmark. DHS has stated services will not be affected; lawmakers must resolve the gap before June 30, 2027.

Source: WRJN 1400 AM Racine/Kenosha (Statewide) | https://wrjn.com/news/2026/10/01/wisconsins-medicaid-budget-is-322-million-short-racine-county-is-seeing-one-reason-why

Federal immigration policy shifts may be worsening Wisconsin's caregiver shortage

The Trump administration's suspension of nearly all refugee programs in January 2025 and termination of Temporary Protected Status for people from 13 countries have disrupted long-term care workforce pipelines in Wisconsin, where home health agencies and nursing homes had invested years in recruiting foreign-born workers. Immigrants constitute 30% of all direct care workers nationwide, per KFF. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects home health aide jobs will grow by 847,000 over the next decade, against a 2025 median salary of $35,800. In response to the broader shortage, bipartisan Wisconsin legislation authored by Sen. Jesse James, Rep. Joel Kitchens, and Rep. Sylvia Ortiz-Velez passed in April allowing DACA recipients to obtain professional nursing licenses. Wisconsin facilities have responded by limiting admissions and closing beds and wings.

Source: PBS Wisconsin WHA21 (Statewide) | https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/federal-immigration-policy-shifts-may-be-worsening-wisconsins-caregiver-shortage/

Wisconsin measles cases up to 243, and that could be an undercount

Wisconsin's measles outbreak reached 243 confirmed cases as of October 2, spanning eight counties, with Lafayette (86), Iowa (74), and Grant (56) counties leading. Grant County Health Officer Kessa Klaas told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel the county's case count is "grossly undercounting" actual infections due to undertesting. Grant County's health department will offer the MMR vaccine at local school flu clinics. Wisconsin ranks fourth nationally in 2026 measles cases; the U.S. total stands at 3,887 confirmed infections.

Source: Wausau Pilot & Review (Statewide) | https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/10/03/wisconsin-measles-cases-up-to-243-and-that-could-be-an-undercount/

Measles virus detected in Green Co. wastewater

Green County Public Health, in coordination with Wisconsin DHS, confirmed detection of measles virus in untreated wastewater from the City of Monroe collected September 16. No confirmed measles cases have been identified in Green County as of the report date. As of September 25, Wisconsin had 192 confirmed measles cases in 2026 across Grant, Iowa, Lafayette, and Vernon counties. Health Officer RoAnn Warden urged residents to verify vaccination status and consult providers, noting wastewater detection does not identify specific infected individuals.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/measles-virus-detected-in-green-co-wastewater/

Packed event brings people together to find solutions for unhoused community

A community forum organized by Rep. Amaad Rivera-Wagner (D-Green Bay), Green Bay city councilors, Brown County supervisors, the City of Green Bay homeless outreach team, and local nonprofits drew approximately 200 attendees September 30 to discuss homelessness in Brown County. A July count recorded 556 people experiencing homelessness in the county, including 350 in shelter and 206 unsheltered. Attendees raised concerns about affordable housing, park safety, and basic needs. Rivera-Wagner said the suggestions will be compiled into a list of action items to be presented at a second meeting before year's end.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/greenbay/packed-event-brings-people-together-to-find-solutions-for-unhoused-community

Waukesha warming center to open at St. Matthias during extreme cold

A coalition of nonprofit and community organizations established a warming center at St. Matthias Church in Waukesha, filling a gap identified during a January cold snap when wind chills reached minus 40 and all 120 area shelter beds were filled. The center will operate from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. during extreme cold starting in mid-December, serving 50 to 75 individuals per night for an estimated 30 to 40 nights per season. Operating costs are projected at $25,000 to $50,000 per season. Hebron Housing Services will staff the center; St. Vincent de Paul will provide hospitality; HAWS will coordinate pet assistance. The city, police, and fire department are reported as supporters of the initiative.

Source: WITI FOX6 Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.fox6now.com/news/waukesha-warming-center-open-st-matthias-church-during-extreme-cold

The Real Cost of Weakening Head Start Standards

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has proposed cutting 90% of Head Start program regulations, which the authors say would allow larger class sizes, shorter program days, lower staff pay, and reduced requirements for children with disabilities and multilingual learners. Wisconsin currently has approximately 12,000 children enrolled in Head Start. The authors, leading the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association and Wisconsin Head Start Association, argue the changes would reduce program quality and limit access especially in rural Wisconsin. The

public comment deadline for the federal proposal was October 6. The article's language is partly advocacy-oriented.

Source: Peninsula Pulse (Statewide) | https://doorcountypulse.com/the-real-cost-of-weakening-head-start-standards/

Wisconsin now accepting applications for energy assistance

Wisconsin's Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) is now accepting applications for the upcoming heating season. The state estimates approximately 170,000 households will seek assistance, with an average heating benefit of $441 and an average electric benefit of $257. Eligibility requires gross household income at or below 60% of the state median income. Applications are available by phone at 1-866-HEATWIS, by mail through local agencies, or online at energybenefit.wi.gov.

Source: WIZM 1410 AM La Crosse (Statewide) | https://www.wizmnews.com/2026/10/03/wisconsin-now-accepting-applications-for-energy-assistance/

Hospital project can give insight into Lafayette Co. manor projections

Lafayette County voters will decide in November whether to authorize a $500,000 annual tax levy increase for three years to support the Lafayette Manor nursing home project. The article uses the county's Lafayette Hospital + Clinics Darlington project as a financing reference point: that project totaled approximately $64 million, funded by $9 million in federal grants, up to $46 million in USDA loans (six bond notes at 2.125%, four at 40 years covering $28.766 million and two at 20 years covering $15 million), and two 30-year Compeer Bank loans totaling $5 million. Combined loan and bond payments in 2026 totaled $2,501,282.89, against a total county tax levy of $10,444,988. A $150,000 home would see approximately $54 per year in added taxes under the proposed Manor levy.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/hospital-project-can-give-insight-into-lafayette-co-manor-projections/

Intervention

Six Monroe County law enforcement chiefs, including Sparta Police Chief Emilee Nottestad and Sheriff Wes Revels, sent a July 14 letter to county supervisors alleging that the Child Protective Services division has failed to follow a memorandum of understanding developed over nearly two years and has not responded appropriately at scenes. The letter, signed by chiefs from Tomah, Cashton, Norwalk, and Wilton as well, asks the County Board to intervene, stating that internal resolution attempts have repeatedly failed. Human Services Director Tracy Thorsen responded publicly but did not address several specific allegations, including scene-response failures and law enforcement's decision to change its voluntary placement practices. One proposal, assigning a dedicated social worker to each law enforcement agency, was not implemented. No County Board action date is reported.

Source: Monroe County Herald (Sparta) (Western) | https://monroecountyherald.com/stories/intervention,183469

Gas prices strain Meals on Wheels in lakeshore counties

The ADRC of the Lakeshore, which operates Meals on Wheels in Manitowoc and Kewaunee counties, reports that rising fuel costs are depleting program funds and deterring volunteers. The federal volunteer mileage reimbursement rate is currently 72 cents per mile, up from 67 cents in 2024, and each rate increase directly reduces dollars available for meals. The program currently has routes with no assigned volunteer every day, requiring ADRC staff to fill gaps.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/lakeshore/gas-prices-strain-meals-on-wheels-in-lakeshore-counties

La Crosse healthcare referendum: What voters should know

La Crosse voters will decide on a referendum, placed on the ballot after approximately 5,000 residents signed a petition, that would create a Citizens Advisory Healthcare Action Committee meeting every two years to assess local healthcare gaps and make non-binding recommendations to the city council. The committee would operate on a volunteer basis with no authority to propose or enact legislation and no direct budget impact. Campaign organizers Community Action Wisconsin, which gathered over 13,000 signatures across Eau Claire and La Crosse, acknowledge the city has limited direct healthcare authority, with most jurisdiction held by La Crosse County and state and federal governments.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Western) | https://chippewa.com/news/local/government-politics/article_c93da504-ee79-5e81-9c72-ff46793e6ea9.html

Racine Public Library to launch twice-weekly social services hours starting Oct. 13

Racine Public Library will begin standing drop-in social services hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. starting Oct. 13, based in the second-floor Business Center. Services include referrals for housing, legal help, employment, mental health, addiction, domestic violence, and benefits applications, as well as free bus passes and translation. The library logged more than 1,065 social service interactions in 2025. The new hours replace existing bus pass hours, which end Oct. 13.

Source: WRJN 1400 AM Racine/Kenosha (Southeastern) | https://wrjn.com/news/2026/09/28/racine-public-library-to-launch-twice-weekly-social-services-hours-starting-oct-13

School Districts

District expects tax rate to stay steady

The Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah School District's proposed 2026-27 tax levy is dropping 16%, or $1.5 million, from $9,573,330 to $8,051,150, partially reversing a 46% levy increase from the prior year. The tax rate is expected to remain near the previous $7.16 per $1,000 of assessed property value.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/district-expects-tax-rate-to-stay-steady/

Ladysmith school officials kick off operational referendum information push

The School District of Ladysmith is seeking voter approval on Nov. 3 to exceed its state revenue limit by $950,000 per year for five school years beginning in 2027-28, an increase of $350,000 over its existing $600,000 operational referendum approved in 2022. District Administrator Jason LeMay presented the case to the Ladysmith City Council on Sept. 28 and two public informational sessions are scheduled for Oct. 6 and Oct. 20. The district estimates the additional $350,000 would raise the school portion of property taxes by approximately $10 per $100,000 of equalized value. The district cites expired federal ESSER relief funds, a revenue limit unchanged for inflation since 2010, and declining enrollment as primary fiscal pressures. If the referendum fails, officials say they would consider staff reductions, larger class sizes, and deferred maintenance; a spring 2027 referendum at a lower amount is also possible.

Source: Ladysmith News (Central/Northern) | https://ladysmithnews.com/news/article_3760c188-6eff-49ff-b3ab-0192f4c5d41f.html

Maple school taxes to decrease

The School District of Maple presented a proposed 2026-27 budget at a September 28 public hearing showing the property tax levy decreasing approximately 12%, from about $12.03 million to about $10.59 million. The budget includes $20.50 million in general fund operating expenditures and debt service against $21.03 million in revenues. A $14.5 million building referendum approved in April adds levy authority, but a larger 2006 referendum is expiring after its final debt payment, more than offsetting the new levy. Enrollment is projected at 1,193 students, down from approximately 1,250. The board is expected to adopt the final budget at its October 12 meeting.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/maple-school-taxes-to-decrease

Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District voters deciding on $118M school referendum in November

Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District voters will decide in November on a referendum authorizing more than $118.5 million in additional general-fund operating revenue over four years, phased from $24.9 million in 2027-28 to $34.6 million in 2030-31. For an average $500,000 home, the district estimates a cumulative property tax increase of about $600 over four years. School Board President Bob Hesselbein said a failed referendum would require roughly a 20% budget cut, potentially triggering school consolidation and program reductions. More than 150 Wisconsin school districts are holding referendums in 2026, and a district community survey found 66% of respondents likely to support the proposal.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/middleton-cross-plains-area-school-district-voters-deciding-on-118m-school-referendum-in-november/article_21c34ed2-934f-4903-9354-3e66b2bfc210.html

State assessment results show gradual academic gains for Wisconsin students

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction released 2025-26 statewide assessment results showing 48.4% of grades 3-11 students proficient or above in English language arts and 48.7%

proficient or above in mathematics. Among public school students, rates were 49.7% and 50.2% respectively; Choice school students scored 30.2% and 27.3%. The English language arts proficiency gap between Black and white students narrowed by 0.4 percentage points to 40.1%, while the mathematics gap narrowed by 1.4 percentage points to 44.9% compared with 2023-24.

Source: WBEV 1430 AM Beaver Dam (Statewide) | https://dailydodge.com/state-assessment-results-show-gradual-academic-gains-for-wisconsin-students/

MPS Literacy Plan Shows Early Gains On State Reading Exams

Milwaukee Public Schools posted a 1.5 percentage point increase in English Language Arts proficiency on the Wisconsin Forward Exam, rising from 23.6 percent to 25.1 percent for grades three through eight. Twenty-three MPS schools improved by at least five percentage points, and four schools improved by at least 10 points. Growth among Black MPS students exceeded the statewide average, rising 2 points. High school reading scores declined 1.2 percentage points, though Superintendent Brenda Cassellius said a new high school curriculum will be introduced this school year, replacing materials dating to 2006 and 2012. MPS launched its new elementary literacy curriculum in January, and more than 1,000 staff participated in literacy training over the summer. Statewide, 48.4 percent of students in grades three through 11 were proficient or above in ELA.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/10/02/mps-literacy-plan-shows-early-gains-on-state-reading-exams/

Wisconsin schools face funding squeeze as voters pick Legislature

Wisconsin school districts operate under revenue limits in place since the 1993-94 school year, and in six years between 2008 and 2023 districts received no per-pupil increase, with limits actually cut by an average of $554 per student in 2011-12. Gov. Evers' 2023 partial veto set annual increases at $325 per pupil. Wisconsin's per-pupil funding ranking has fallen from 11th nationally in 2003 to 26th in 2023, according to the Wisconsin Policy Forum. Appleton School District's spring 2026 operational referendum for $15 million passed with roughly two-thirds of more than 26,000 votes cast. Statewide, more than a third of school referendums failed during the same election. The incoming Legislature, to be decided in the Nov. 3 election, will begin work on the next biennial state budget in January.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/wisconsin-schools-education-funding-squeeze-election-voters-legislature-revenue-limits/

State superintendent calls for more Wisconsin school funding

State Superintendent Jill Underly, in her sixth State of Education address at the state Capitol on September 27, 2026, called for changes to Wisconsin's school funding formula, stating that 90% of Wisconsin school districts have gone to referendum over the past nine years. The Department of Public Instruction's 2027-29 budget request includes $28 million in additional state aid and funding for two new positions to investigate educator licenses.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/state-superintendent-calls-for-more-wisconsin-school-funding/article_d9007336-6775-4067-81bb-c940899349f2.html

Sudden closure of community pool fuels conflict in Antigo over school spending

The Antigo Unified School District board closed the Clara R. McKenna Aquatic Center on Sept. 1, then reopened it after public outcry at a Sept. 3 emergency meeting. Board documents released just before the emergency meeting assert the pool has lost money for years, was illegally funded under state law, and faced outstanding bills exceeding $117,000 after a $75,000 foundation donation proved insufficient. Critics, including Parks Director Sarah Repp, question the board's cost figures and note the board voted the same month to spend $5 million on a new sports stadium. Repp submitted 10 open records requests beginning in August and reported receiving no documents. A resident called for a forensic audit at the Sept. 21 board meeting, and swim coach Andrew Tainter cited a 54 percent variance in the district's own annual operating cost estimates, ranging from $650,000 to $890,000.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Central/Northern) | https://www.wpr.org/news/sudden-closure-of-community-pool-fuels-conflict-in-antigo-over-school-spending

Foundation releases statement regarding aquatic center

The Foundation of the Unified School District of Antigo disputed the school board's 39-page press release on the Clara R. McKenna Aquatic Center, contending that some board characterizations are opinion rather than fact. The foundation reported that 573 donors contributed $4.3 million to construct the facility and that private grants and donations funded major capital projects including a $550,000 HVAC overhaul. It noted the 2025-2026 fiscal year began with $151,000 in fund balance, of which $33,000 consisted of restricted grant funds. The foundation said the district expensed $24,425 in legal fees pursuing closure and has budgeted another $25,000 for the current fiscal year, and alleged that a contractor was told repairs did not make sense if the center would close, leaving identified critical deferred maintenance uncompleted.

Source: Antigo Daily Journal (Central/Northern) | https://www.antigojournal.com/news/foundation-releases-statement-regarding-aquatic-center/article_ec146926-b50a-48fc-8f65-5c3bf93ab44b.html

School District of Beloit mulling aggressive down-sizing plans

The Beloit School Board discussed three building-consolidation scenarios at a special meeting Monday that could close as many as five facilities, responding to enrollment that has fallen from 7,022 students in 2014-2015 to an internally reported 4,536 this fall. Scenarios range from closing two elementary schools while retaining two middle schools and one high school, to consolidating into five total buildings across all grade bands. Board President Tia Johnson said no decisions were made and directed Interim Superintendent Leah Gordon to research configurations used by Wisconsin districts enrolling 3,800 to 4,200 students. The board is weighing whether to pursue an April referendum, having failed three consecutive referendum votes in 2023, 2024, and 2025, and previously closed Cunningham School this summer to address a $5.7 million projected budget deficit.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/education/school-district-of-beloit-mulling-aggressive-down-sizing-plans/article_61199b7e-8742-4a0f-b74f-2e7372154214.html

D.C. Everest plans to demolish 75-year-old junior high school due to declining enrollment

D.C. Everest Area School District is planning to demolish most of its 75-year-old junior high school in approximately three years in response to declining enrollment and deteriorating infrastructure, including collapsing clay pipes, a decaying roof, and non-ADA-compliant bathrooms identified in 2024. The district's recommended base plan, estimated at up to $94 million, calls for additions to the middle and senior high schools to absorb roughly 420 current junior high students per grade, while retaining a gym, football field, and locker rooms from the existing building.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/d-c-everest-plans-to-demolish-75-year-old-junior-high-school-due-to-declining/article_f0e6de01-909e-4d42-9f61-6e36376df4fb.html

La Crosse Schools superintendent on new branding campaign

The La Crosse School Board voted unanimously to adopt new branding for the district, renaming it "La Crosse Public Schools" with the slogan "Grow Here, Go Anywhere" and a new logo featuring the bluffs and three rivers. The rebranding replaces the name "School District of La Crosse," which had been in use for 20 years. A contract with CEL Marketing and PR Design for the rebranding cost $100,000, with implementation costs for signage and materials estimated to exceed $350,000, according to a commenter at the board meeting.

Source: WIZM 1410 AM La Crosse (Western) | https://www.wizmnews.com/2026/10/01/la-crosse-superintendent-on-branding/

Private school voucher caps just ended. What does it mean for Madison?

A state law capping Wisconsin Parental Choice Program enrollment within public school district boundaries expired this fall, removing the former 10% limit. Madison Metropolitan School District Assistant Superintendent Bob Soldner said the change will have little effect locally because voucher enrollment, roughly 580 full-time-equivalent students, was far below the prior cap of approximately 2,600 students. The state spent over $700 million on its four voucher programs last school year. Madison district lost about $6.6 million in state aid redirected to vouchers. Last school year, only three districts statewide had students on waiting lists due to the cap, totaling 135 students. Local private school operators say physical capacity, not the cap, limits growth in the Madison market.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/education/private-school-voucher-caps-just-ended-what-does-it-mean-for-madison/article_f18eda0c-4fa7-48d6-a591-d207045bb11d.html

Why does Appleton have the 2nd-most charter schools in Wisconsin?

The Appleton Area School District operates 15 district-authorized public charter schools, second only to Milwaukee's 19 statewide. Charters must be approved by the school board and renew at least every five years. The newest, Hmong American Immersion School, opened last school year.

Appleton charter schools received higher average state ratings than traditional district schools in 2024-25 data, though a UW-Madison researcher noted charter enrollment skews toward higher-income families due to lack of busing. Charter schools recruit a higher share of open-enrolled students, generating additional state aid but also additional administrative overhead. Many charters share buildings with traditional schools to limit overhead costs.

Source: WTAQ 1360 AM / 97.5 FM Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://wtaq.com/2026/10/02/why-does-appleton-have-the-2nd-most-charter-schools-in-wisconsin/

Tri-County School District considers co-ops for the 2028 season

The Tri-County School Board voted 4-3 on Sept. 22 to approve a co-op football team with Almond-Bancroft beginning in fall 2028. The board also approved joining a research group, to be organized by M3 Insurance at no cost to the district, to explore a health insurance cooperative with area schools. District Administrator Jamie Delikowski reported a third-Friday enrollment count of approximately 560 and 507 students present, the figure the state uses in setting general school aid.

Source: Waushara Argus (Central/Northern) | https://wausharaargus.com/stories/tri-county-school-district-considers-co-ops-for-next-year,357000

State-Local Interface

Learn more about the three Wisconsin constitutional amendments on the Nov. 3 ballot

Wisconsin voters will decide Nov. 3 on three Republican-led constitutional amendments: one limiting the governor's partial veto power to prevent creating or increasing taxes and fees, one preventing government from stopping religious gatherings during emergencies, and one banning discrimination by state and local governments and public education institutions. GOP lawmakers have placed 12 constitutional amendments before voters during Gov. Evers' tenure; seven have been approved, including a photo ID requirement passed by nearly 63% in April 2025. The partial veto amendment arose directly from Evers' 2023 budget veto setting school revenue limit increases at $325 per student annually, a veto the Wisconsin Supreme Court upheld in 2025. Gov. Evers and Democratic gubernatorial nominee David Crowley oppose all three; Republican nominee Tom Tiffany supports all three.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Statewide) | https://www.wxpr.org/election/2026-10-02/learn-more-about-the-three-wisconsin-constitutional-amendments-on-the-nov-3-ballot

What to know about the partial veto referendum on Nov. 3 ballot

Wisconsin voters on Nov. 3 will weigh a constitutional amendment to Article V, Section 10(1)(c) that would prohibit the governor from using partial veto authority to create or increase any tax or fee. The measure is a direct response to Gov. Tony Evers' 2023 "400-year veto," which extended school district revenue limit increases through 2425 by deleting text from a budget bill; the

Wisconsin Supreme Court upheld that veto. A yes vote restricts partial veto use on tax and fee legislation; a no vote preserves the current broad veto authority.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Statewide) | https://www.wuwm.com/what-to-know-about-the-partial-veto-referendum-on-nov-3-ballot

What to know about the religious freedom to gather referendum on Nov. 3 ballot

Wisconsin voters on Nov. 3 will decide a constitutional referendum asking whether to amend Article I, Section 18 to prohibit the state or any political subdivision from ordering the closure of or forbidding gatherings in places of worship during a state of emergency, including public health emergencies. A yes vote would bar such closures even if businesses and schools are ordered shut; a no vote would preserve existing government authority. The Wisconsin Council of Churches and the Wisconsin Catholic Conference of bishops have registered as neutral.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Statewide) | https://www.wuwm.com/religious-freedom-to-gather-referendum-on-nov-3-ballot

Trump Administration Launches National School Choice Tax Credit

The federal Education Freedom Tax Credit, part of the 2025 Republican tax and spending bill, launches Jan. 1 and offers dollar-for-dollar credits of up to $1,700 for individuals and $3,400 for married couples filing jointly on donations to nonprofit Scholarship Granting Organizations. Treasury and Education department rules project the program could fund up to 2.2 million K-12 scholarships annually by 2030 at a cost of nearly $26 billion per year. Eligibility requires family income below three times the local median. Governors must decide by Jan. 1 whether to participate; states opting out risk losing federal funding. As of mid-September, 30 states have joined.

Source: WIBA 1310 AM Madison (Statewide) | https://wiba.iheart.com/content/2026-10-01-trump-administration-launches-national-school-choice-tax-credit/

Billions in private donor support for students could be 'largest investment in education ever' in America

U.S. Treasury proposed rules clarify that the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit's $1,700 limit applies per individual, allowing married couples to direct up to $3,400 in federal taxes to scholarship-granting nonprofits. Treasury now estimates the credit could generate up to $26 billion annually in education funding, compared to an earlier Congressional estimate of $4.4 billion by 2034. Gov. Tony Evers has declined to opt Wisconsin into the program, meaning no donations can support Wisconsin children, though Wisconsin taxpayers may donate to scholarship organizations in any of the 30 participating states. Wisconsin's next governor could opt in beginning with the 2028 tax year. The article's language is partly advocacy-oriented.

Source: Badger Institute (Statewide) | https://www.badgerinstitute.org/billions-in-private-donor-support-for-students-could-be-largest-investment-in-education-ever-in-america/

Wisconsin opens second round of Innovation Grant program for local governments

The Wisconsin Department of Revenue opened the second application period for its Innovation Grant program Oct. 1, making nearly $228 million available to counties, municipalities, and tribal nations that transfer eligible government services to another entity. The program, created under 2023 Wisconsin Act 12 and modified by 2025 Wisconsin Act 15, awarded $72 million to 35 projects affecting 81 communities in its first round. Each eligible unit of government may receive up to $10 million annually for up to four years, with qualifying service areas including public safety, courts, public works, information technology, public health, and planning and zoning.

Source: WBEV 1430 AM Beaver Dam (Statewide) | https://dailydodge.com/wisconsin-opens-second-round-of-innovation-grant-program-for-local-governments/

The Red Cliff Band and the future of the Apostle Islands

U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany proposed legislation to redesignate the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore as a national park, presenting the bill to the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources on Feb. 11. Red Cliff Band Chairwoman Nicole Boyd said the tribal council responded with concerns about environment, economy, and resources, and noted the council has never met formally with Tiffany or his staff. Bayfield County Board Chair Jan Lee stated in a May 22 interview that the county's roughly 16,000 residents already struggle to fund emergency services for over 4 million annual visitors in 2025, warning a national park designation would require raising the county levy. Boyd also noted the National Park Service is currently short-staffed at the lakeshore. If enacted, the Apostle Islands would be Wisconsin's first national park.

Source: PBS Wisconsin WHA21 (Statewide) | https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/the-red-cliff-band-and-the-future-of-the-apostle-islands/

Judges warn that underfunded courts are falling behind

Brown County Judge Tammy Jo Hock told the county's Public Safety Committee on Sept. 9 that the judicial system receives less than 2% of the 2025-27 state budget, forcing unworkable staff conditions. Brown County has the largest judicial deficit in Wisconsin, short nearly six judges and court commissioners according to the April Wisconsin Judicial Needs Assessment Survey. About half of all criminal cases required more than six months to resolve in 2025. Outagamie County District Attorney Mindy Tempelis, testifying Aug. 25 before the state's first study committee on district attorney funding, cited a backlog of 1,400 cases and said the prosecutor-count formula is outdated. State Public Defender Jennifer Bias said "the entire system is broken."

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/09/wisconsin-justice-system-judges-underfunded-courts-staffing-shortages-rising-caseloads-election-legislature/

Crypto ATM scams have wreaked havoc in Wisconsin. A new law is helping change that, but did it go far enough?

Wisconsin Act 226, the state's first consumer protection law for cryptocurrency ATMs, restricts daily transactions to $1,000, requires receipts and consumer identification, and provides refunds to victims. The law was co-authored by Sen. Jesse James, R-Thorp, following cases including a

Walworth County victim who lost $400,000 and a Dane County resident who lost $135,000 in September 2025. Wisconsin has approximately 700 crypto ATM locations. Law enforcement officials and the Department of Financial Institutions report a reduction in scam complaints since the law took effect. Wisconsin opted not to ban the machines outright, unlike Minnesota and Indiana, following lobbying from the industry. AARP Wisconsin reports 86% of crypto ATM scam losses nationally involve victims over age 60.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/09/wisconsin-crypto-atm-scams-fraud-new-law-consumer-protection/

Wisconsin DOJ challenges EPA rollback of power plant pollution limits

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul joined a 25-member coalition of states, cities, and counties filing a petition for review Oct. 1 in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit seeking to overturn the EPA's repeal of the 2024 Carbon Pollution Standards for coal- and gas-fired power plants. The coalition also notified the EPA of intent to sue over its failure to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from existing natural gas plants. A 2024 report cited by the Wisconsin DOJ estimated Wisconsin communities could face more than $16 billion in climate-related infrastructure costs.

Source: WBEV 1430 AM Beaver Dam (Statewide) | https://dailydodge.com/wisconsin-doj-challenges-epa-rollback-of-power-plant-pollution-limits/

Wisconsin DMV adds heavy vehicles to Fleet plate option

WisDOT's Division of Motor Vehicles expanded its Fleet license plate program to include heavy vehicles effective Oct. 1. Non-individual entities such as businesses or organizations with 10 or more vehicles, including heavy trucks, tractors, and trailers, are now eligible. More than 12,000 automobiles and light trucks carried Fleet plates last year. Enrollment is managed through the DMV's eMV Fleet online portal at wisconsindmv.gov/emvfleet. DMV Bureau of Vehicle Services Director David Albino cited reduced paperwork and streamlined compliance as key benefits.

Source: Tomahawk Leader (Statewide) | https://www.tomahawkleader.com/stories/wisconsin-dmv-adds-heavy-vehicles-to-fleet-plate-option,357284

Is 5.9 million acres of government-owned land enough?

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program expired June 30 without reauthorization, halting DNR land purchases and grants to conservation nonprofits. The program spent $720 million acquiring roughly 646,000 acres, about three-fourths of which is in northern counties. In Oneida County the program acquired approximately 60,000 acres, equal to 8 percent of the county; in Iron County, about 16 percent. Total government-owned undeveloped land in Wisconsin stands at 5.9 million acres, one-sixth of the state, reaching 60 percent of Forest County and 46 percent of Vilas County. Republican gubernatorial candidate Rep. Tom Tiffany favors reauthorization focused on maintenance and improved access, while Democratic candidate Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley favors renewed land acquisition. The Assembly passed a reauthorization bill but the Senate did not. The article's language is partly advocacy-oriented.

Source: Badger Institute (Statewide) | https://www.badgerinstitute.org/is-6-million-acres-of-government-owned-land-enough/

Online portal aims to make restraining orders more accessible

The Wisconsin Court System launched a Restraining Order Portal on Sept. 1, available in all 72 counties, allowing petitioners to seek temporary restraining orders online without first appearing at a courthouse. During a pilot in eight counties, 72 petitions were filed through the portal and 122 advocates, clerks, and court officials were trained. The portal currently covers domestic abuse and harassment petitions; child abuse and individual-at-risk petitions still require paper filing. Wisconsin is one of only three courts selected as a learner court in a U.S. Department of Justice-funded national project on accessible civil protection order processes.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Statewide) | https://chippewa.com/news/local/crime-courts/article_074797cb-3e80-56ed-a51a-3ef6545755a9.html

SNAP Benefits Changes Go Into Effect: Here's What You Need To Know

Federal SNAP program changes effective Oct. 1 raise the maximum monthly benefit for a single-person household from $298 to $306 and for a family of four from $994 to $1,023. Under the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," states must now cover 75% of SNAP administrative costs, up from 50%. Work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents now extend to age 64, up from 54. States with recipient error rates above 6% will be required to cover a portion of benefits starting in 2027. State agencies, including Wisconsin's, are responsible for administering the program and communicating these updates.

Source: WISN 1130 AM Milwaukee (Statewide) | https://newstalk1130.iheart.com/content/2026-10-01-snap-benefits-changes-go-into-effect-heres-what-you-need-to-know/

Northwest communities awarded coastal grants

Gov. Tony Evers and the Wisconsin Department of Administration announced $1.3 million in statewide Wisconsin Coastal Management Program grants, with more than $319,000 directed to five projects in Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, and Iron counties. The largest award, $180,774, funds acquisition of 132 acres in the White River watershed in Bayfield and Ashland counties. Additional awards include $50,000 for an 11.59-acre acquisition along the Sioux River, $30,000 for regional technical assistance, $25,000 for the Bois Brule River Watershed Protection Plan, and $25,000 for trail and EMS access improvements at Lost Creek Falls. The City of Washburn received a separate $9,250 Great Lakes Education grant. Applications for the next WCMP grant cycle are open through Nov. 3, 2026, at coastal.wisconsin.gov.

Source: Ladysmith News (Statewide) | https://ladysmithnews.com/news/area_news/article_609490be-c438-4162-bf43-73a983fbcb35.html

Summaries are drawn from the linked source reporting and are not independently fact-checked, so errors in the original coverage can carry through. Some Wisconsin outlets restrict automated access to their content, which leaves known gaps in any given edition, and I keep refining the collection workflow to close them. If you spot an inaccuracy, or know of a governance story a colleague in another community would want to see, I want to know. Forward this edition to someone who works in Wisconsin local government. Reach me at patrick@boldpathconsulting.com or (920) 522-2413.