

Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing

July 18 to July 25, 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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JOB OPPORTUNITY: Door County HR Director



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Budgets and Finance

Plans for \$107M Wauwatosa library gain momentum

Wauwatosa's Committee of the Whole voted 8-2 on July 21, 2026, to recommend Option 4, a \$107.2 million plan to demolish the municipal complex at 7725 W. North Ave. and replace it with a combined city hall and public library joined by a central lobby. The committee adopted an amendment by Ald. Amanda Fuerst raising the private fundraising target from \$8 million to approximately \$27.4 million, which lowers the projected monthly tax impact on the owner of an average \$418,800 Wauwatosa home from \$26.91 to \$20.00 over 20 years. Under the recommended structure taxpayers would carry roughly \$67.8 million, a \$12 million Innovation Grant would fund a further portion, and the remaining \$27.4 million would come from private fundraising, the Wauwatosa Public Library Foundation, and additional grants. The city would temporarily raise its self-imposed debt limit to finance the project. Of 1,397 survey respondents, nearly 35 percent preferred the least expensive \$36.1 million option and just over 20 percent supported Option 4. The full Common Council vote is expected July 28, 2026.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Southeastern) | <https://dailyreporter.com/2026/07/24/wauwatosa-committee-backs-107-million-library-city-hall-plan/>

Kewaunee County considers making half-cent sales tax permanent, ending sunset dates

The Kewaunee County Board reviewed the first reading of an ordinance that would make the county's half-cent sales tax permanent by removing its expiration date. The tax took effect April 1, 2017, and was most recently extended in 2021 through the end of 2025 following the closure of a local nuclear power plant. The current proposal contains no sunset clause, departing from both previous extensions. Finance and Public Property Committee minutes record \$161,307 in collections in May alone, bringing the year-to-date total through that month to \$602,397. County Clerk Jamie Annoye confirmed that a final vote could come at the August 18 County Board meeting. If adopted, Kewaunee County would join the majority of Wisconsin counties levying the tax; only Winnebago and Waukesha counties do not impose it.

Source: WTAQ 1360 AM / 97.5 FM Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://wtaq.com/2026/07/24/kewaunee-county-considers-making-half-cent-sales-tax-permanent-ending-sunset-dates/>

City council OKs room tax change

The Ladysmith Common Council voted unanimously at its July 13 meeting to restructure the city's room tax ordinance, consolidating tourism funding under the Room Tax Commission and eliminating a requirement that 55 percent of room tax revenue be paid directly to the Greater Ladysmith Area Chamber of Commerce. Under the revised ordinance, lodging businesses continue to retain 10 percent for collection and the city retains 3.5 percent for administration, while the city's tourism and recreational promotion share rises from 31.5 percent to 86.5 percent. Room tax collections have grown from \$42,499.97 in 2021 to \$89,895.63 in 2025, figures reported before the lodging and administration deductions. The council also approved a \$30,000 business renovation grant for a downtown adult day services facility where total project costs exceed \$130,000 and include ADA accessibility upgrades. A separate resolution established a new cash payment policy at City Hall, allowing utility bill overpayments to be credited to future bills while requiring exact cash amounts for property tax payments.

Source: Ladysmith News (Western) | https://ladysmithnews.com/news/article_dae969a1-14e5-4aca-80f2-df285e613983.html

'A death spiral': Council cautions against Emmet utility extension, suggests extended timelines

The Watertown Common Council approved a resolution declaring its intent to exercise special assessment powers for the Emmet utility extension project, which carries a total cost just under \$1.6 million with special assessments just under \$1.1 million spread across 36 annexed properties, including 16 residences. The Highway 16 Residential Area of the Town of Emmet was annexed to the city in 2024, obligating property owners to connect to municipal water and sanitary sewer. The city's Finance Committee previously authorized \$1.1 million in borrowing under an eight-year repayment timeline. Assessment areas include North Second Street, Prospect Street, Center Street, and Boulder Drive. District 7 Alder Tony Arnett said he will propose a no-interest eight-year payback schedule and an extension of the mandatory connection deadline beyond the five-year window specified in the intergovernmental agreement. The approved resolution is a preliminary step, and the final special assessment resolution returns to the full council for action.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/a-death-spiral-council-cautions-against-emmet-utility-extension-suggests-extended-timelines/article_1729aa89-eeb4-4f69-9b0e-68dbf9e350bd.html

Amery street funding debate heads to committee ahead of 2026 budget deadline

Amery's Common Council referred a proposed \$20 vehicle registration fee to a special committee-of-the-whole meeting after a divided 45-minute discussion on July 23, 2026, without taking a vote. City Administrator Alex Mansfield presented a five-year funding model projecting a street program shortfall in every year through 2031, and said adopting the fee would reduce the estimated five-year gap from \$1.29 million to \$944,000. The fee would apply to approximately 3,678 vehicles and generate about \$73,560 annually once fully phased in. Council members also debated a staff proposal to leave a vacant part-time Public Works position unfilled, which would free roughly \$50,000 annually for street maintenance; council members Duncanson and Van Blaricom expressed reluctance to eliminate the position. Public Works Director Jeff Mahoney said road reconstruction costs have risen approximately 40 percent over the past five years. Mayor Rick Van Blaricom asked that the committee meeting include public input, and Mansfield said a decision is required before the city adopts its 2026 budget.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/amery-street-funding-debate-heads-to-committee-ahead-of-2026-budget-deadline/article_9783e10b-d33b-4747-bf06-ab91e360c20c.html

Polk County governments to put \$2.4 million in state road aid toward local infrastructure

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation issued its July round of General Transportation Aids on July 6, directing a combined \$2.44 million to Polk County's municipal governments for road maintenance, repair, and improvement. Polk County itself received \$1,118,048.12, while the county's 24 towns will collectively receive \$975,984.05, its nine villages \$192,843.28, and its two cities \$152,598.32. Aid is calculated using a formula based on road mileage and past highway expenditures. Among individual municipalities, the City of Amery received \$80,211.48, the City of Saint Croix Falls \$72,386.84, and the Town of Alden led all towns at \$71,250.27, while the Village of Osceola received the largest village allocation at \$38,483.22. No Polk County municipality received Connecting Highway Aids, Supplemental Transportation Aids, or Expressway Policing Aids in this cycle. The department reported the broader Northwest Region will receive \$34,549,379.88 in the same distribution, part of a statewide total exceeding \$176.6 million.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/polk-county-governments-to-put-2-4-million-in-state-road-aid-toward-local-infrastructure/article_4c8df1c7-179b-4509-97f7-06a27053127e.html

Burnett County fire departments to see boost from state's 2% Fire Dues Program

The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services distributed \$38,181,592 statewide through the Wisconsin 2% Fire Dues Program in July 2026, roughly \$2 million more than the 2025 payment total and an increase of about 6 percent year over year. Burnett County allocations covered 21 towns and three villages. The Town of Jackson received the largest township payment at \$18,709.55, followed by the Town of Scott at \$16,809.69 and the Town of Oakland at \$16,802.80. Among villages, Grantsburg received \$5,365.10, Siren \$4,867.35, and Webster \$2,793.34. The program requires insurance companies to remit 2 percent of premiums collected for fire-loss coverage to the Wisconsin Office of the Commissioner of Insurance, which transfers

funds to the department for distribution under a formula based on insured property values within each municipality. DSPS Secretary Dan Hereth announced the payments, which departments may use for equipment purchases, fire prevention programs, and crew training. A full accounting of the 2026 distribution is posted on the department website.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/burnett-county-fire-departments-to-see-boost-from-state-s-2-fire-dues-program/article_12336c6b-168a-44c5-80ab-43395cf05da7.html

Here It Comes: Downtown Eau Claire Paid Parking Starts Aug. 1

The City of Eau Claire will activate a paid parking system in its downtown core on August 1, 2026, following a delay from the originally scheduled June 1 start date. Enforcement falls under the city's Neighborhood Services Division, led by Parking Administrator Aaron Roths, who was hired earlier in 2026 as Eau Claire's first full-time parking staffer. Fees range from \$0.50 to \$1.00 per hour depending on location within the zone bounded by E. Madison Street and Emery Street, enforced Monday through Saturday from 1 to 11 p.m., with payment accepted at more than 25 kiosks or through the Passport app. The two downtown parking ramps retain their existing \$0.50 per hour rate. Employee parking passes are available for \$5 per month through the parking administrator's office, with just over 100 passes available in the Gibson Parking Ramp. The city projects the partial-year rollout will generate approximately \$285,000 in new revenue, with a full calendar year estimated to exceed \$500,000, directed toward parking and road-related expenditures.

Source: Volume One (Western) | <https://volumeone.org/articles/2026/07/24/396345-here-it-comes-downtown-eau-claire-paid-parking-starts-aug-1>

Town of Delafield voters to decide on \$450K fire department referendum

The Town of Delafield has placed a \$450,000 referendum on the August ballot to fund additional staffing for Lake Country Fire & Rescue, the second phase of a staffing plan the town approved three years ago. Assistant Chief Jeremy Wachtl said the funding would bring daily on-duty staffing to 12 personnel across the department's three stations, operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The measure reflects a broader departmental transition from volunteer and part-time staffing to full-time firefighters. For a Town of Delafield homeowner with an assessed property value of \$800,000, the tax impact would equal \$142 per year. An informational open house is scheduled at the Town of Delafield Fire Station on Thursday, July 30, at 6 p.m. for residents with questions about the referendum.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/waukesha-county/town-of-delafield-voters-to-decide-on-450k-fire-department-referendum>

No help for public infrastructure one year after 'the floods'

A Wisconsin Policy Forum analysis published July 24, 2026, found that Milwaukee-area local governments received no federal public assistance funding following the August 2025 floods, despite sustaining at least \$34.7 million in combined damage to buildings and infrastructure across Milwaukee County, the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee Public Schools, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, and 18 other municipal governments. The storm dropped more than 10 inches of rain in under 24 hours, a Wisconsin record for a single 24-hour period, and caused more than \$240 million in total damage to private and public property. FEMA approved approximately \$210 million in individual assistance but denied public assistance, an outcome

recorded in only 87 of 3,178 named federal disasters nationwide since 2000. Wisconsin's state disaster relief appropriation covered \$16.9 million in damage claims in 2025, the highest annual total in records dating to 2000. The analysis identifies state legislative action authorizing additional state tax revenue for disaster relief as a potential next step.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Southeastern) | <https://dailyreporter.com/2026/07/24/milwaukee-local-governments-denied-public-infrastructure-aid-floods/>

LETTER: County plans to buy 28 robot mowers for 400K, not just 4

The Ozaukee County Natural Resources Committee approved the purchase of 28 robotic lawn mowers for \$400,000, according to a correction letter submitted by committee chair Rob Holyoke of Thiensville. A July 9 Ozaukee Press article had reported the quantity as four units. The purchase was made using municipal discounts. The robotic mowers are expected to reduce labor by approximately 1,900 work hours per year at Ozaukee County golf courses and are anticipated to lower ongoing maintenance costs. Holyoke stated that no employees will lose their jobs as a result of the procurement, as other work remains available for existing staff. No vote count, ordinance number, or effective date was provided in the letter. This item is sourced to a signed letter from the committee chair rather than to staff reporting.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/letter-county-plans-buy-28-robot-mowers-400k-not-just-4>

Workforce and Labor

Help wanted: Ashland's top public works job finds no applicants

The Ashland City Council was informed at its July 13 meeting that a nearly month-long recruitment for a Public Works Director has produced zero applicants through Public Administration Associates, the public employee search agency the city retained. Outgoing Director John Butler, who has held the position for seven years, departs at the end of July. City Administrator Brant Kucera reported that only two unsolicited email applications had arrived and had not yet been reviewed. Kucera cited wage competition from larger cities and Ashland's distance from metropolitan areas as the primary recruitment barriers, noting it previously took the city a year and a half to fill its planning director position. Upon Butler's departure, his workload will be distributed among public works division heads, with Kucera assuming overall supervisory responsibility. The city plans to revise the position's job description in an effort to attract interest, and Kucera said he would consider finding a candidate within six months a success.

Source: Ashland Daily Press (Central/Northern) | https://apg-wi.com/ashland_daily_press/paywall/help-wanted-ashlands-top-public-works-job-finds-no-applicants/article_6b2196bd-bcac-4678-a574-d3ce628f6cfe.html

Ashland superintendent Prater won't renew contract, plans 2027 exit

Ashland School District Superintendent Robert Prater informed the Ashland School Board on July 13, 2026, that he will not renew his contract when it expires in June 2027, citing family care obligations requiring relocation to Minnesota. Prater has led the district since July 2022. School Board President Eric Brandis said the board will begin a superintendent search in August 2026, with monthly updates provided to the public, and plans to engage either CESA 12 or the Wisconsin Association of School Boards to assist. Candidate interviews are projected for January

and February 2027, with a final selection expected in March 2027. Prater said the incoming superintendent will face ongoing fiscal challenges, including a current district referendum and declining enrollment driven by lower birth rates, and identified Business Manager Amanda Tutor as a key district resource for budget management and contract negotiations.

Source: Ashland Daily Press (Central/Northern) | https://apg-wi.com/ashland_daily_press/paywall/ashland-superintendent-prater-wont-renew-contract-plans-2027-exit/article_a064fc15-d471-4507-8e3a-b09b23068a5d.html

Committee expands Superior's nepotism policy

The Superior Human Resource Committee adopted an updated nepotism policy on July 20, 2026, expanding the city's definition of "relative" to include personal relationships of a romantic or intimate nature. The revision followed identification of a personal relationship as a source of tension within the Superior Police Department in the prior year. Under the new policy, employees are prohibited from directly supervising relatives or individuals with whom they hold a personal relationship, and are barred from participating in hiring or disciplinary processes involving such individuals. Employees must affirmatively report covered relationships. Hiring, promotion, or reassignment may be denied when a direct supervisory relationship would result and cannot be redirected to another supervisor. Violations may result in transfer, required resignation, or termination at the discretion of the mayor and human resources director, except where state law governs sworn police and fire employees. Elected officials and members of city boards, committees, and commissions are not covered as employees under the policy.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/committee-expands-superiors-nepotism-policy>

Records detail sheriff candidate firing after crash response probe

Rusk County Sheriff Phil Grassmann terminated then-Sergeant Zac Neal on November 21, 2025, following an internal investigation into a crash notification mishandled on November 9, 2025, at approximately 2 a.m. Neal was the on-duty supervisor in dispatch when the call came in and left the building roughly 30 minutes later without directing a deputy to respond; a passerby discovered the crash victim, who had sustained life-threatening injuries, approximately five hours after the initial notification. Grassmann's termination letter, obtained by the Ladysmith News through an open records request, cited Neal's failure to supervise and alleged dishonesty with Chief Deputy Wojcik and subordinate employees about directing dispatch to send deputies. Dispatcher and jailer Julie Olsen was separately terminated November 19, 2025, under Policy IV(F)(1)(c) of the department's 911 Telephone Procedures for failing to create a Computer-Aided Dispatch entry or assign deputies to either GPS or ping location. Neal is now challenging Grassmann in the August 11 partisan primary.

Source: Ladysmith News (Western) | https://ladysmithnews.com/news/article_89607999-17a3-448b-b68d-278c93c63edc.html

Osceola Middle School will welcome a familiar face to the principal's office

Brent Lundgren officially assumed the role of principal at Osceola Middle School on July 6, 2026, following his appointment by the Osceola School District. Lundgren, a graduate of the Osceola School District, brings more than 10 years of experience as a middle and high school teacher, including roles as a special education teacher, a sixth-grade math and science teacher, and a coach, and has spent 13 years working in education. In his most recent position he served as a

Teacher on Special Assignment focused on student support systems and school operations. He holds an Educational Specialist degree in Educational Leadership and a Wisconsin PK-12 principal license. Lundgren said his initial priority will be listening to staff and students before implementing changes. No contract terms were reported in connection with the appointment.

Source: Osceola Sun (Western) | https://osceolasun.com/news/osceola-middle-school-will-welcome-a-familiar-face-to-the-principal-s-office/article_ba259cd8-0672-4a41-b208-392e2de157a8.html

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Dodge County internship program providing hands-on opportunities

Dodge County Community Development Marketing and Communications Manager Morgan Muche reported to the Board of Supervisors on July 22, 2026, that the county's Career Exploration Internship program is in its second year, placing three high school interns across 11 county departments for a seven-and-a-half-week summer session. The participating department count increased from nine in the program's inaugural year. Interns Paige Murphy of Lakeside Lutheran High School, Braxton Soldner of Dodge County High School, and Carter Wild of Horicon High School were selected from eight applications submitted by students from Dodge County high schools. The program targets juniors entering their senior year. A new specialty day allows interns to revisit or try a department outside the standard rotation; Soldner will spend his specialty day at the Dodge County Medical Examiner's office under Medical Examiner PJ Schoebel. The three interns present their findings at 9 a.m. August 4 before the Dodge County Executive Committee in the Administration Building.

LocalGovHub: Local Government Briefing © (July 18 to July 25, 2026)

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Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/dodge-county-internship-program-providing-hands-on-opportunities/article_55d43935-ee7e-4b92-b3b1-5c9dce400e54.html

NLRB board certifies union election of St. Mary's Hospital nurses in Madison

The National Labor Relations Board's regional office certified the June 11 union election at St. Mary's Hospital in Madison on July 23, 2026, overruling objections filed by SSM Health, the hospital's St. Louis-based parent company. Nurses voted 89 percent in favor of union representation in what was reported as the largest representation election in Wisconsin in at least a quarter century. SSM Health objected on grounds that charge nurses hold supervisory roles and should not have been permitted to vote, and also alleged pro-union electioneering, disruptions to human resources staff, and improper conduct near the voting area. Regional Director Jennifer Hadsall ruled that the company's offer of proof was insufficient to meet its burden for setting aside the election. The question of whether charge nurses may join the bargaining unit remains unresolved before the board. SSM Health spokesperson Lisa Adams said the hospital is reviewing the decision, and nurses publicly urged management to begin collective bargaining.

Source: Phillips Price County Review (South Central) | https://apg-wi.com/news/state/nlr-board-certifies-union-election-of-st-mary-s-hospital-nurses-in-madison/article_9c93a5cd-7d45-5641-9f95-cbf5ec18f4fe.html

Scammers target injured Wisconsin workers with fake worker's compensation hearings

Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development issued a fraud alert this week warning of a multi-state scheme targeting Spanish-speaking injured workers with fake workers' compensation hearings conducted by video call. Department spokesperson Haley McCoy reported that 10 Wisconsin workers received emails from senders using .org addresses and impersonating agencies such as the Workers' Compensation Board, directing them to attend online hearings via Zoom, WhatsApp, or Teams. The staged hearings featured actors posing as judges, bailiffs, and attorneys, concluding with a verdict in the worker's favor before fraudsters demanded fees to finalize the payout. At least four Wisconsin workers lost a combined \$30,000 in sham legal fees since January, and some victims also surrendered Social Security numbers. The department noted it communicates with injured workers exclusively by mail using Wisconsin area-code phone numbers. A June alert from the National Insurance Crime Bureau documented the same scheme in Illinois, Indiana, and Oregon. Neither agency has determined how organizers obtained the workers' email addresses.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/07/scammers-target-injured-wisconsin-spanish-speaking-workers-fake-compensation-hearings/>

Can Wisconsin's health apprenticeships become a national model? UW Health thinks so

UW Health launched a health care apprenticeship program in 2018 and has since graduated more than 1,000 apprentices across 17 professions, including registered nurses, surgical technicians, pharmacy technicians, and respiratory therapists. The Madison-based system covers all tuition costs and pays apprentices for time spent in classroom instruction, which is required under Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development registration rules. Before the program launched, approximately three in 10 positions for medical assistants, nursing assistants, and pharmacy technicians were unfilled; that vacancy rate has since fallen to approximately one in

10. In May 2026 UW Health created a separate company called WorkForward, directed by Bridgett Willey, who oversaw the original apprenticeship launch, to help health systems and state agencies in other states replicate the model. Medical assistant apprenticeships run 10 months and registered nurse apprenticeships run four years. Nationally, the number of registered health care apprentices has grown more than 40 percent over five years, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (Statewide) | <https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/07/23/can-wisconsins-health-apprenticeships-become-a-national-model-uw-health-thinks-so>

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Infrastructure and Utilities

Madison to assume control of Park Street corridor after fatal crash

The Madison City Council agreed to assume jurisdiction of portions of U.S. 151 from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, covering segments of South Park Street, John Nolen Drive, West Washington Avenue, Proudfit Street, North Shore Drive, and Blair Street. Under the transfer agreement the state will issue a one-time payment of \$37 million to be deposited in a new city transportation fund, and the council has designated \$15 million of that amount toward the planned north-south bus rapid transit line along South Park Street. In exchange, the state's annual \$300,000 connecting highway aid payments to Madison will cease and the city will become

ineligible for future state highway reconstruction payments. State estimates projected \$42.3 million in reconstruction costs for the relevant U.S. 151 segments over the next 25 years. The city opted against also assuming East Washington Avenue due to cost concerns. Transferred roadways become eligible for federal Surface Transportation Grant-Urban funds after ten years.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-to-assume-control-of-park-street-corridor-after-fatal-crash/article_9667bc55-7493-4f0f-aff0-f49f8a6a2418.html

Menomonie extends irrigation ban

The City of Menomonie extended its full-lawn irrigation ban through Tuesday, August 18, 2026, following a low-pressure event that had previously triggered boil and bottled-water advisories for city residents. The city stated the extension is intended to allow rest time for overworked wells and to permit completion of leak detection surveys across the water system. All boil and bottled-water advisories have since been lifted, and the city's three water towers have been refilled completely and are operating normally. City crews have issued 32 written warnings to residents since the irrigation ban was first enacted. The August 18 deadline marks the next operational milestone, after which the ban's status will be reassessed based on well recovery and survey results.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/local/menomonie-extends-irrigation-ban/article_3c8d6cf0-f723-46c8-ba69-067b838e06aa.html

Can city afford \$17.5M Valley Creek project?

The Port Washington Board of Public Works was scheduled July 22 to act on a proposed timeline and budget for the three-phase, \$17.5 million Valley Creek restoration project. Phase one, from Birchwood Hills to Hales Trail, is estimated at \$7.6 million; phase two, from Hales Trail to upstream of Lake Street, at \$7.4 million; and the final phase daylighting the stream to Lake Michigan at \$2.5 million. Design costs have been covered by a \$915,000 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant and a \$500,000 Wisconsin Coastal Management Program grant. Secured construction funding includes a \$1.8 million Vantage data center donation and potential use of \$2.1 million from the Vantage tax incremental district for phase one. Pending applications total roughly \$13 million across two federal grant programs, a state agency grant, and a congressional allocation. General Government and Finance Committee Chairman Dan Benning raised concern about drawing down district funds before closure. Public Works Director Rob Vanden Noven said phase one construction could begin in 2026 if grant awards are confirmed.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/can-city-afford-175m-valley-creek-project>

Free public Wi-Fi coming to Superior parks

The Superior City Council voted Tuesday, July 21, to approve a memorandum of understanding with Duluthian Networks LLC to provide free public Wi-Fi at city-owned spaces served by the ConnectSuperior network. Under the no-cost agreement, Duluthian Networks supplies internet access while the city provides infrastructure and electricity, with no money changing hands between the parties. Hammond Park is identified as the likely first deployment site, operating on a 2-gigabits-per-second connection, and Broadband Manager Stephanie Becken is also evaluating Benny Peterson and Kelly parks. The council simultaneously approved a contract amendment with WIN LLC that reduces ConnectSuperior's network-monitoring costs by approximately

\$33,000 per year and extends that agreement from 24 to 48 months. The council also approved a contract with Hanco Utilities to install fiber at the new North End Fire Station at a cost of just over \$44,000, a figure already included in the construction budget. Becken is coordinating installation timelines with the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/free-public-wi-fi-coming-to-superior-parks>

McFarland residents push for pedestrian safety in County AB project

More than 40 attendees at Dane County's July 22 public involvement meeting at the McFarland Municipal Center pressed for pedestrian safety enhancements to the planned County Highway AB improvements, particularly near the village's new 26-acre Community Park, where soccer fields are under construction. Village Trustee Ken Boyd formally requested flashing stop signs at the park crosswalk, a speed limit reduction from the current 55 mph to 35 mph or lower, and consideration of an underpass. Clement Abongwa, commissioner of the Dane County Highway and Transportation Department, presented the plans alongside consultant Caleb Manske of raSmith. In response to the park, the county has added a northbound right-turn lane into the site and left-turn lanes at Fjelstad Lane to the previously published scope. No vote or final design approval was taken at the meeting.

Source: Cambridge Enterprise Sentinel (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/leader_independent/news/local/mcfarland-residents-push-for-pedestrian-safety-in-county-ab-project/article_d32115b9-cd6e-488d-906d-44750b90006f.html

McFarland to hold community listening session on Aug. 6

The Village of McFarland announced a community listening session on traffic safety scheduled for August 6, 2026, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the McFarland Municipal Center with a simultaneous Zoom option, following the July 8 crash at the intersection of Broadhead Street and North Peninsula Way that killed 8-year-old Braeyla Valenza. Village leaders will accept resident questions and comments, with the session structured as a group question-and-answer period followed by smaller discussions with village staff and written comment forms available. Police Chief Brian Redman confirmed the driver is cooperating with law enforcement and that crash investigation findings will be released when complete. The speed limit on Broadhead Street increases from 25 to 45 mph just past the intersection, which sits at the McFarland and Town of Dunn boundary. Village officials described August 6 as the first of multiple planned public input opportunities, and residents may sign up through the village website for notice of subsequent meetings.

Source: Cambridge Enterprise Sentinel (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/leader_independent/news/local/mcfarland-to-hold-community-listening-session-on-aug-6/article_17b605ca-642c-45c6-9574-64430e88372a.html

Grafton residents want solutions as Highway 60 traffic grows; here's what's behind the congestion

Grafton Police reported a significant increase in vehicle traffic through the village since its last completed traffic study, citing Flock Safety camera data showing more than 1.5 million vehicle passages through the village in a single recent month and more than 261,000 unique vehicles recorded in that same period. Afternoon rush-hour backups at the intersection of Wisconsin Highway 60 and 12th Avenue now stretch between a half mile and one mile, according to resident

accounts. Three contributing factors are identified: a village population increase of more than 10 percent since 2020 per U.S. Census data, heavy truck traffic generated by the Port Washington data center and nearby developments, and a physical bottleneck created by narrow roads without turn lanes adjacent to a Milwaukee River bridge. Grafton Police have increased enforcement along Highway 60 in coordination with the State Patrol. Additional housing developments are proposed along the corridor, and residents have raised the possibility of a second river bridge as a long-term infrastructure solution.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/ozaukee-county/grafon-residents-want-solutions-as-highway-60-traffic-grows-heres-whats-behind-the-congestion>

Is Sludge Poisoning Your Well?

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater conducted a statewide study in 2022 sampling 450 volunteer-owned private wells for 44 types of PFAS and found that 71 percent contained at least one type. In Stella, Oneida County, a community of approximately 686 residents, subsequent DNR testing revealed some private wells with combined PFOA and PFOS levels exceeding 35,000 parts per trillion, nearly ten times above the Wisconsin Department of Health Services drinking water standard for those two compounds. Stella Town Chairman David Brunette wrote formally to DNR officials stating that water can no longer be safely consumed by town residents. Approximately 1.2 million acres of Wisconsin land are approved for sewage sludge spreading under federal regulations. The Trump administration proposed in May rescinding national PFAS drinking water limits except for PFOA and PFOS, and separately terminated the risk assessment of sewage sludge applied to farmland. Private wells remain unregulated under federal public drinking water law, leaving testing and treatment costs with individual owners.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (Statewide) | <https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/07/23/is-sludge-poisoning-your-well>

Madison announces Willy Street detour; businesses react to shutdown

Madison's Transportation Division announced a detour on Friday directing motorists away from the intersection of Williamson and Baldwin streets, which has been blocked by activists since a police officer shot and killed Corey Ruiz there at approximately 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday. Ald. Davy Mayer, who represents the area on the City Council, said the city was taking the closure day by day while looking to restore services such as trash collection. The blockade, constructed from trash cans, boards, and other objects, covers the 1200 and 1300 blocks of Williamson Street. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul resale shop at 1309 Williamson reported it cannot operate without street access because delivery trucks cannot restock the store, and the nonprofit's chief executive and executive director, Julie Bennett, confirmed the shop has been closed since Wednesday afternoon. City officials stated no reopening date or conditions for lifting the closure as of Friday.

Source: La Crosse Tribune (South Central) | https://lacrossetribune.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_83a7a96c-9b88-5d5d-865f-da59cdecf381.html

No safety review, little public notice for county herbicide program that now covers most roadsides

Sheboygan County's Transportation Department has expanded a roadside herbicide and growth-inhibitor program from a narrowly targeted invasive-species control effort, launched five years ago, to coverage of most county roadsides, now in its second year of full-scale operation. County Transportation Department officials confirmed the expansion. The county has never conducted a safety review of the program for effects on pets or aquatic resources and provided little public notice of the change in scope. The program originated as an invasive-species control measure before being broadened. No vote count, resolution identifier, dollar figure, or named county official responsible for the decision is reported, and no next scheduled procedural step, public hearing, or formal review process for the program is identified.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | <https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/no-safety-review-little-public-notice-for-county-herbicide-program-that-now-covers-most-roadsides/>

Superior officials host public water talks

Superior city officials have scheduled a series of public information sessions on the potential municipal acquisition and operation of the water utility currently owned and operated by Superior Water, Light & Power, a privately held utility. The sessions are designed to share information, answer resident questions, and gather public input on the city potentially assuming ownership of the utility. No vote count, dollar figures, session dates, or formal resolution identifiers were included in the published article. The next procedural step is completion of the public conversation series, after which city officials are expected to consider whether to proceed with a formal ownership transition effort.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/superior-officials-host-public-water-talks>

Paris residents share concerns about proposed natural gas plant

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission hosted two consecutive public hearings on July 23 in the Town of Paris Safety Building on Chicago-based Invenergy's proposed 1.1 gigawatt Red Oak Ridge natural gas peaker plant. The sessions lasted nearly six hours and drew close to 100 attendees, the majority of whom opposed the project. The commission had previously granted WeEnergies' application for a 128 megawatt natural gas facility in Paris; the Red Oak Ridge plant, if approved, would become the second-largest natural gas plant in Wisconsin. Paris resident Rachel Kirschner noted the proposed facility would be the third gas plant in the town and the third within five miles of one another. Trade union representatives from IUOE Local 139 and Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 118 testified in support, while opponents raised concerns about water usage, emissions, and farmland clearing. The July 23 sessions were the final two public hearings before the commission votes on the application.

Source: Kenosha News (Southeastern) | https://www.kenoshanews.com/news/local/article_4f0d6909-4c2b-4581-a5a4-b73075aff46.html

Various developments with 765 kV transmission line play out

The Vernon County General Government Committee on July 1, 2026, discussed engaging Madison attorney Frank Jablonski of the Progressive Law Group for a limited, one-time shared legal consultation to advise Vernon and Crawford counties on intervening in Public Service

Commission proceedings for the proposed 765 kilovolt BECI transmission line. Retiring Vernon County Corporation Counsel Nikki Swayne reported an initial conversation with Jablonski and described him as well-versed in commission intervention and potentially affordable, with cost details to be finalized with the county's incoming corporation counsel. The BECI segment is a 190-mile line running from Bell Center in Crawford County east to the Columbia Substation near Portage and south to the Illinois state line; developers Transource and Berkshire Hathaway Energy announced intent to file a commission application as early as February 2027. Separately, Citizens Against MariBell 765 voluntarily dismissed a Vernon County Circuit Court case filed in May 2026 due to a filing error, then re-filed on June 30, 2026, with no court dates announced.

Source: SW News Group (portal) (Western) | <https://www.swnews4u.com/local/environment/various-developments-with-765-kv-transmission-line-play-out/>

Grantsburg's National Night Out expands

The Grantsburg Village Board approved a water rate study recommended by S-E-H Engineering and the Grantsburg Plan Commission in light of multiple ongoing infrastructure projects. The board also approved change orders totaling just under \$3,500 for the pending wastewater treatment plant project, and S-E-H Engineering confirmed additional change orders are forthcoming, with the project carrying a contingency fund of approximately 5 percent of the projected estimate. Public Works Director John Erickson reported that treated effluent has resumed discharge into the Wood River following system updates and that holding pond capacity allowed a two-week discharge delay without issue. Police Chief Jared Woody reported that all department officers have completed updated certifications in weapons, firearms, and vehicle operations, and that the department's new 2026 Ram 1500 SSV squad truck awaits only a light bar and brush guard before entering full service. In separate action the board approved closing East Broadway Avenue for the August 4 National Night Out event, which organizers expect to draw up to 1,200 attendees.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/grantsburg-s-national-night-out-expands/article_5af3f46c-aec5-4462-9a9a-c4d519d0f231.html

United Airlines service from La Crosse to O'Hare delayed to 2027

United Airlines announced on July 25, 2026, that its planned service between La Crosse Regional Airport and Chicago O'Hare International Airport will remain on hold through October 2027, at least a one-year additional delay beyond a prior postponement. The airline attributed the extension to operational limitations at O'Hare driven by Federal Aviation Administration restrictions, not to any change in its assessment of the La Crosse market. La Crosse Regional Airport, in a statement posted to social media, confirmed it remains in communication with the airline and characterized the delay as one of many U.S. routes similarly affected by the restrictions. The airport stated it expects to welcome the service once those restrictions are lifted. No revised launch date within the October 2027 window was specified, and no vote or contract action by the airport governing body was reported.

Source: La Crosse Tribune (Western) | https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/business/article_03657fd1-2e08-4f84-a77b-d501be82e0cb.html

WisDOT seeking input on project rehabbing six I-94 bridges in Eau Claire County

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is soliciting public comment through Friday, August 7, 2026, on a proposed rehabilitation of six Interstate 94 bridges in Eau Claire County. The six structures, built in the 1960s, carry eastbound and westbound I-94 over WIS 37, the Chippewa River, and Chippewa River overflow. Proposed work includes replacing expansion joints and abutment backwalls at all six structures, overlaying the bridge decks over the Chippewa River crossings with concrete, making concrete surface repairs to all six bridges, applying a high-friction surface treatment to the eastbound Chippewa River deck, cleaning and painting bearings, and updating guardrail at all bridge approaches. During construction, I-94 will remain open with traffic shifted to one side via median crossovers carrying one lane in each direction. Construction is scheduled for 2028 and 2029, and comments may be submitted by email or by mail to the department's Eau Claire office.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/25/wisdot-seeking-input-project-rehabbing-six-i-94-bridges-eau-claire-county/>

Public Safety

UW-Madison researchers question fatal shooting by Madison police

Madison Police Chief John Patterson confirmed that four officers responding to a report of a man checking parked cars in the Marquette neighborhood fatally shot Corey Ruiz, 38, on July 22, 2026, at the intersection of Williamson and Baldwin streets after a struggle in which officers reported Ruiz produced a knife and a deployed Taser proved unsuccessful. All four involved officers are on administrative leave. The Wisconsin Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation is conducting a mandatory outside review under state law, after which Dane County District Attorney Ismael Ozanne will determine whether to charge any officer. Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway announced her proposed budget will include funding for body-worn cameras, which the department has estimated would cost \$3.2 million to \$6.7 million to implement fully. Patterson said the department will begin internal policy, training, and response reviews immediately without waiting for the state report, and pledged collaboration with the city's Office of the Independent Monitor and the Police and Fire Commission.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/uw-madison-researchers-question-fatal-shooting-by-madison-police/article_38cb5cd0-c438-44ae-9eae-2fa86a325667.html

Ruiz family wants charges against officer, body cameras for Madison cops

At a July 25, 2026, press conference in the Wisconsin State Capitol's Assembly parlor, family members of Corey Ruiz called for criminal charges against the officer who shot him and for a citywide body camera program for the Madison Police Department. State Rep. Shelia Stubbs and civil rights attorney Ben Crump attended alongside Ruiz's mother, two sisters, brother, daughter, and the daughter's mother. The Wisconsin Department of Justice is conducting the officer-involved shooting investigation under state law requiring an outside agency to lead such inquiries. Madison's Common Council last fall voted against allocating budget funds for a citywide body camera program and redirected that money to the city's Office of the Independent Monitor; a body camera pilot program currently operates on the city's north side. Crump called for transparency in the state investigation and said he believes the officer should face criminal charges.

Source: Phillips Price County Review (South Central) | https://apg-wi.com/news/state/ruiz-family-wants-charges-against-officer-body-cameras-for-madison-cops/article_cf4e8580-907f-521b-8c83-570f0e129610.html

BPSA of Dane County files formal complaint against officer who shot and killed Corey Ruiz

Blacks for Political and Social Action of Dane County filed a formal complaint with the Madison Police and Fire Commission on or before July 24, 2026, against the officer who shot and killed Corey Ruiz during the July 22, 2026, officer-involved shooting. The complaint calls on the commission to act immediately to remove the officer from his position. The filing was accompanied by a public statement from Reverend David Hart, speaking on behalf of the organization, demanding administrative termination and full transparency. The Madison Police and Fire Commission is the governing body with authority over police personnel matters in the City of Madison. No vote, hearing date, or commission response was reported. The next procedural step is commission review of and action on the formal complaint.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/07/25/bpsa-dane-county-files-formal-complaint-against-officer-who-shot-killed-corey-ruiz/>

Police union urges calm as DOJ investigates Madison officer-involved shooting

The Wisconsin Professional Police Association issued a formal statement on July 24, 2026, urging peaceful conduct while the Wisconsin Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation leads the inquiry into a fatal Madison Police Department officer-involved shooting. The association stated that cell phone recordings of the incident may capture only a partial perspective and that any use-of-force determination must rest on the totality of evidence, including witness statements, physical evidence, forensic evidence, and all available video. The organization confirmed it is providing legal representation to its member officers involved in the incident. The association also addressed threats directed at law enforcement, characterizing language suggesting officers deserve violence or death as deeply troubling. It called for additional factual information to be released as soon as possible while maintaining investigative integrity. No timeline for the state investigation's findings was reported.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/07/24/police-union-urges-calm-doj-investigates-madison-officer-involved-shooting/>

Marinette police chief defends flock camera

The Marinette Public Safety and Code Enforcement Committee heard a presentation on Flock license plate recognition cameras from Police Chief Jon LaCombe on July 21, 2026, with no vote taken. LaCombe disclosed that the department's current three-year Flock contract runs through April 2028, with the first year already paid. The cameras are rear-facing and are not configured for facial recognition, and Marinette's system is no longer connected to Flock's national data-sharing pool, restricting plate-query access largely to Wisconsin and bordering states. The department recorded nine audit flags this year, each reviewed by an administrator and attributed to valid investigations, and officer access requires completed training and two-factor authentication per session. Mayor Steve Genisot reported that the city attorney reviewed a recent contract language change and confirmed that customer data ownership and privacy protections remain substantively intact. LaCombe asked the committee for a clear direction on whether to retain or discontinue the system, and the committee indicated the matter remains unresolved.

Source: EagleHerald (Northeastern) | https://www.ehextra.com/news/marinette-police-chief-defends-flock-camera/article_97b49291-7c40-40b8-b27a-5b7f24dd2122.html

How we got here: Prosecutors rebuke Chippewa County Sheriff Travis Hakes

All six prosecutors in the Chippewa County District Attorney's Office issued a public statement on July 22, 2026, declaring that Sheriff Travis Hakes does not meet the basic credibility standard necessary to continue in office. Hakes was placed on the Brady list on December 18, 2023, stemming from a 2020 incident in which he told a domestic violence victim he could turn off his body camera or that footage sometimes gets lost. In February 2024 the Chippewa County Board passed a no-confidence measure 19-1, following release of a 31-page report by the Madison-based law firm von Briesen and Roper, which concluded that substantial evidence showed Hakes sent sexually suggestive and ethnically inappropriate messages and was repeatedly dishonest with county leadership. District Attorney Wade Newell stated that Hakes has not heeded advice to avoid engaging in investigations or handling evidence. Under Wisconsin law, neither the district attorney's office nor the county board can remove an elected sheriff through public statements or no-confidence votes. Hakes faces Deputy Sheriff Mark Hollister in the August 11 primary.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/24/how-we-got-here-prosecutors-rebuke-chippewa-county-sheriff-travis-hakes/>

'We have to figure it out': Inside Madison's hazmat response following 2025 poison plot

The Madison Fire Department's Hazardous Incident Team implemented two procedural changes following its June 2025 cyanide poisoning response involving a Dane County couple who face a pre-trial conference in Dane County on July 27. During the 2025 response the team declared a mass casualty incident, a designation triggered at five or more patients, and transported each patient individually by ambulance for testing or observation. The team subsequently increased dedicated decontamination training and, after discovering that multiple team members hospitalized for exposure lacked standardized documentation, developed a hazmat patient information sheet in coordination with emergency medical services and hospitals. The team is designated a Level 2 state hazmat team authorized for statewide deployment, has 57 members across three shifts, and requires all Madison Fire Department personnel, not only team members, to hold technician-level hazmat certification. The case also produced new interagency working relationships with the Wisconsin Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation and the Wisconsin National Guard's Civil Support Team.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/07/24/we-have-figure-it-out-inside-madisons-hazmat-response-following-2025-poison-plot/>

Janesville adds defibrillators downtown, aims to increase response to sudden cardiac arrest

The Janesville Fire Department installed three publicly accessible automated external defibrillator cabinets in downtown Janesville during the week of July 24, 2026, as part of a city action plan launched in March 2026. The Save Station cabinets are placed to the left of the Marvin Roth Pavilion stage on South Main Street, to the right of the Town Square Pavilion in Janesville Town Square, and on North Main Street near the Looking Glass restaurant and bar. Each cabinet is climate controlled, video monitored, and publicly accessible at all times, and opening any cabinet

automatically notifies the fire department. All three stations were funded through donations from the Business Improvement District of Downtown Janesville, with no public appropriation reported. The installation accompanies the city's deployment of the PulsePoint Respond and PulsePoint AED applications, locally branded as Near Registry, which alert CPR-trained registered users to nearby cardiac arrest incidents. Deputy Fire Chief Jamie Kessenich identified the next step as distributing Near Registry information to local businesses, churches, and schools to expand the community's AED location database.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-adds-defibrillators-downtown-aims-to-increase-response-to-sudden-cardiac-arrest/article_dd362620-f6f4-433c-a9ae-b03e698dfed8.html

Final clarifications made before passing of city electric bicycle ordinance

The River Falls City Council unanimously passed an electric bicycle and scooter ordinance at its July 14 meeting, establishing a classification-based framework for e-bike use on city sidewalks and paths. Under the ordinance, Class 1 electric bicycles are permitted on any sidewalk that allows bicycle use, Class 2 and Class 3 electric bikes are prohibited from city sidewalks, and electric scooters may operate on sidewalks and bike paths that permit bicycle use. Each electric bicycle is required by law to display a class-identifying sticker. First-cited violations carry a forfeiture of \$5 to \$500, with second and subsequent offenses resulting in forfeitures of \$10 to \$1,000, plus court costs. City Administrator Scot Simpson noted that signage and multi-modal right-of-way considerations are tied to ongoing construction projects and a pending grant application. Police Chief Gordon Young stated that enforcement will initially prioritize education over citations, and council member Sean Downing raised questions about future signage planning for bike path and pedestrian safety.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/final-clarifications-made-before-passing-of-city-electric-bicycle-ordinance,199148>

Waushara County considers options for EMS including Chief position and consolidation

Waushara County Administrator Megan Kapp addressed the resignations of both the EMS Chief and the EMS Deputy Chief at the regular Waushara County Board meeting held July 21 at the Waushara County Government Center. The simultaneous departure of the two top EMS leadership positions prompted the board to consider multiple options for the department, including filling the vacant chief position and exploring consolidation of EMS services. No vote tallies, dollar figures, resolution identifiers, or specific consolidation partners were reported, and no next procedural step was specified.

Source: Waushara Argus (Northeastern) | <https://wausharaargus.com/stories/waushara-county-considers-options-for-ems-including-chief-position-and-consolidation,346344>

Disaster Recovery Center now available in Vernon County

Vernon County Emergency Management opened a Disaster Recovery Center on July 21, 2026, at Our Saviors Lutheran Church, 306 South Main Street, Westby, to serve renters, homeowners, and businesses affected by severe storms and flooding that occurred April 13 through April 23, 2026. The center operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Representatives from FEMA, the U.S. Small Business Administration, Wisconsin Emergency Management, and county

resources are present to explain disaster assistance programs, answer questions about written correspondence, and provide guidance on repairing homes, businesses, and vehicles. Attendees may apply directly with FEMA and Small Business Administration staff on site. Additional disaster assistance information is available through the federal disaster assistance website.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/22/disaster-recovery-center-now-available-vernon-county/>

Marinette, Oconto work together to prevent DV homicide

Rainbow House, local law enforcement, the District Attorney's Office, and Probation and Parole in Marinette and Oconto counties formalized a coordinated Domestic Violence High-Risk Team response in 2019, using the Lethality Assessment Program 2.0, an evidence-based screening model developed by the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence. Since launch, the multi-agency partnership has completed more than 1,000 lethality screens, connected more than 470 survivors directly to advocacy services, and identified more than 250 cases involving strangulation, which the reporting identifies as one of the strongest predictors of domestic violence homicide. When a responding officer identifies a high-risk victim, the victim is connected on the spot with a Rainbow House advocate for safety planning. In one documented case a survivor scored 22 out of 26 on the lethality screen, and the team provided security cameras, a personal alarm, and supplies while coordinating with the District Attorney's Office on contact information and injury documentation. Rainbow House serves as the statewide trainer for the Lethality Assessment program in Wisconsin.

Source: EagleHerald (Northeastern) | https://www.ehextra.com/community/marinette-oconto-work-together-to-prevent-dv-homicide/article_23884f1a-837e-4ec8-b4aa-eb6e4d8f018b.html

Videos appear to show Corey Ruiz hit by Tasers seconds before he was shot

Bystander video of the fatal Madison police shooting of Corey Ruiz, 38, at the intersection of Williamson and South Baldwin streets shows a three-second sequence in which officers deployed Tasers before the shooting. Madison Police Chief John Patterson stated that one officer was injured during the struggle and that the Taser was unsuccessful as a less-lethal subdual tool. University of Wisconsin-Madison law professor Ion Meyn, who researches police use of force, said the video appears to show Ruiz falling in a manner consistent with Taser effect and suggested the shooting officer may not have recognized that the threat had diminished. Law professor and Public Defender Project director John Gross noted that standard officer training calls for one officer to hold a firearm while a second deploys a Taser when a suspect is armed. No body camera footage has been released, and no timeline has been set for the official investigation, with authorities indicating results could take weeks or months.

Source: La Crosse Tribune (South Central) | https://lacrossetribune.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_cc9989a5-53dd-57df-9e00-0628f02041d6.html

Madison Independent Police Monitor believes MPD should have had body cameras “a long time ago”

Interim Independent Police Monitor Aeiramique Glass stated publicly that the Madison Police Department should have been equipped with body-worn cameras long before now, and said the technology would assist her oversight work. The department does not currently deploy body cameras, and the most recent funding proposal brought before the Madison Common Council

was not approved by the city's alders. Glass conditioned her support on accompanying policy, citing observations from a pilot program in which officers muted cameras during critical incidents, which she said affected the evidentiary record. She also stated that police should not respond to mental health crises, substance abuse calls, or contacts with vulnerable populations. Glass said her ongoing investigation has no set timeline but that evidence will be released publicly as it is obtained. Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway separately announced Thursday that she plans to include body-camera funding in her executive budget proposal.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/07/24/madison-independent-police-monitor-believes-mpd-should-have-had-body-cameras-long-time-ago/>

Federal government sues Milwaukee over law enforcement mask ban

The U.S. Department of Justice filed a federal lawsuit on July 24, 2026, in the Eastern District of Wisconsin against the City of Milwaukee over its ordinance barring law enforcement officers from covering their faces while on duty. The suit names Mayor Cavalier Johnson, City Attorney Evan Goyke, and Police Chief Jeffrey Norman as defendants. The complaint characterizes the ordinance as an unconstitutional regulation of the federal government and argues it violates the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution. The Milwaukee Common Council passed the ordinance in April, and officers who violate it face penalties between \$5,000 and \$10,000. A July 10 letter from the department to city officials had previously declared the mask ban unconstitutional and stated that it threatens the safety of federal officers and their lawful operations. The ordinance includes exceptions for officers wearing face coverings in extreme weather or during undercover operations. The city attorney's office declined to comment.

Source: WiscNews (Southeastern) | https://wiscnews.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_530df09a-5c84-5f1f-a23f-c2942ff5f62a.html

Child run over by e-bike in Menasha

Menasha Police responded to Jefferson Park on Kargus Drive at 7:23 p.m. Friday after a 4-year-old child was struck and run over by an e-bike in the playground area, sustaining cuts and contusions to the head and face, and was transported to a hospital by parents for further evaluation. The incident bears on the status of a pending intergovernmental e-bike ordinance: Menasha, Neenah, and Fox Crossing collaborated to create a uniform e-bike ordinance, and Menasha's Common Council has voted to amend that ordinance, but the amended version has not yet passed. Lt. Adam Schulz issued a public safety reminder urging e-bike operators to be cautious of pedestrians, vehicles, and speed. No information was released regarding the rider of the e-bike. The next procedural step is passage of the amended ordinance by Menasha's Common Council.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://fox11online.com/news/local/child-run-over-by-e-bike-in-menasha>

Frustrated by lack of county enforcement, town passes own marijuana ordinance

The Town of Rhine Town Board passed a new marijuana ordinance at its July 17 meeting, acting in response to what board members characterized as insufficient county-level enforcement. Board Chair Ron Platz presided over the condensed 30-minute meeting, which also addressed a Wisconsin Public Service Commission public hearing on an upcoming power line route, a new roadside herbicide spraying program, and a potential cemetery acquisition. The published text does not disclose the ordinance number, the vote count, or the specific enforcement provisions.

Two discrete actions are confirmed: passage of the ordinance and the board's consideration of a cemetery acquisition. The next reported procedural item is the Public Service Commission hearing on the power line route, for which no date or docket number was provided.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | <https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/frustrated-by-lack-of-county-enforcement-town-passes-own-marijuana-ordinance/>

ICE is detaining more people in Wisconsin jails. Immigration attorneys are scrambling to keep up.

A Milwaukee Journal Sentinel analysis of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention data released in 2026 shows the average daily number of ICE detainees held in Wisconsin jails rose to 147, up from approximately 115 between 2023 and 2025, an increase of 25 percent. Fifty-four percent of those currently detained have no criminal convictions, compared with 75 percent in the prior year. The network of Wisconsin county jails cooperating with the agency to hold detainees is expanding, and Wisconsin detainees are also being transferred to facilities in Kansas, Kentucky, and Indiana. Aissa Olivarez, partner at Eastbridge Law Group in Madison and legal director at the Community Immigration Law Center, said transfers outside the Seventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals can provide access to more favorable bond-hearing case law. The federal Department of Homeland Security is required by Congress to release detention data every two weeks but had not done so for months before this release.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Statewide) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/ice-detention-wisconsin-jails-immigration-attorneys>

Immigrant rights group says ICE detained 28 people in Rock County during July enforcement surge

Voces de la Frontera and the Wisconsin Immigrant Support Network Coalition reported that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained at least 28 people in Janesville and Beloit between July 6 and July 16, 2026. Organizers described those detained as mostly Hispanic men, with many characterized as asylum seekers with no criminal history or people facing federal expulsion orders unrelated to criminal conduct. Collette Broady Grund, minister at Faith Lutheran Church in Janesville and a coalition member, said families have reported difficulty locating detained relatives. The Janesville Police Department has not been identified as actively participating in the operations. The Gazette submitted questions to the agency requesting verification of detention totals and notification procedures, and no response was reported. The coalition is coordinating an emergency relief fund. The detention figures reported here are the coalition's own counts and have not been confirmed by the agency.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/immigrant-rights-group-says-ice-detained-28-people-in-rock-county-during-july-enforcement-surge/article_49d6b017-44ab-4fbf-946b-f7b3d93569c8.html

Flight for Life - ThedaStar adds helicopter base in Waupaca

Flight for Life and ThedaStar announced they will open a fourth Wisconsin helicopter base at Waupaca Municipal Airport on November 1, expanding the merged air medical program's statewide coverage. The Waupaca base will be the program's fourth aircraft in Wisconsin, joining existing bases in Neenah, Hartford, and Burlington. Executive Director Leif Erickson, identified as the program's top executive, attributed the expansion to a 2026 merger that consolidated Flight

for Life and ThedaStar into a single air medical program. The new base is intended to improve response times for patients and strengthen service to emergency medical services agencies and hospitals throughout the region. No vote count, contract dollar figure, or regulatory approval was cited. The November 1 opening is the next reported operational milestone for county and municipal EMS agencies coordinating air transport in the region.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://fox11online.com/news/local/flight-for-life-thedastar-adds-helicopter-base-in-waupaca>

Land Use and Development

Temporary ordinance blocking data centers in Ellsworth approved; Village Board votes to defend Hines in injunction

The Ellsworth Plan Commission unanimously approved an interim zoning ordinance amendment Monday explicitly prohibiting the establishment of data centers within the village, with Village Administrator and Clerk-Treasurer Brad Roy citing the need to update regulations written before such facilities existed. The ordinance defines data centers broadly to include AI factories, GPU clusters, cryptocurrency mining farms, colocation facilities, and related infrastructure. The temporary ordinance may remain in effect for up to two years while the Plan Commission and Village Board research the issue and finalize permanent zoning changes. Roy indicated he will evaluate whether the ordinance can extend to the village's extraterritorial zoning area. In a separate special Village Board meeting the same evening, the board voted to provide legal defense for Trustee Tony Hines in connection with a pending harassment restraining order injunction, with Trustee Lance Austin casting the lone dissenting vote. A Pierce County court commissioner denied a temporary restraining order requested by community member Sean Hall on July 13, and an injunction hearing is scheduled for July 30.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/temporary-ordinance-blocking-data-centers-in-ellsworth-approved-village-board-votes-to-defend,199165>

NO WAY!

The Monroe County Board voted Tuesday, July 21, 2026, to approve an 18-month moratorium on applications for medium- and large-scale data centers and battery storage facilities. The moratorium defines medium-scale data centers as commercial facilities consuming 500 kilowatts to 100 megawatts of electricity, and large-scale as anything exceeding 100 megawatts. Small internal-use server rooms, schools, local governments, and businesses operating their own computer servers are explicitly exempt under the resolution's definitions. The action followed more than one hour of public comment prompted by Nodiac's proposal to build a 12 megawatt modular data center on approximately 1.5 acres in the Town of Adrian, using existing electrical capacity at the Oakdale substation. Nodiac representatives stated the company has budgeted between \$360,000 and \$600,000 annually for community benefits over the project's life. Board member Doug Rogalla referenced a Dane County moratorium as a potential model for simpler language. The county plans to research potential impacts and develop zoning regulations during the moratorium period.

Source: Monroe County Herald (Sparta) (Western) | <https://monroecountyherald.com/stories/no-way,175544>

Polk ESC approves data center moratorium resolution; sends to county board

The Polk County Environmental Services Committee approved Resolution 29-26 at its July 15, 2026, meeting, establishing a 12-month moratorium on data center development and forwarding the measure to the full county board for consideration at its July 21 meeting. The moratorium applies to 16 municipalities under county zoning jurisdiction, including the towns of West Sweden, Sterling, Luck, Bone Lake, McKinley, Eureka, Milltown, Johnstown, Balsam Lake, Beaver, Osceola, Lincoln, Clayton, Alden, Black Brook, and Clear Lake. The resolution defines a data center as any facility primarily containing computing, networking, storage, and management systems for digital data processing. Stated justifications include potential impacts on air quality, water resources, aquifer levels, electrical infrastructure, fire and emergency services, town roads, and property values, as well as the absence of consistent zoning and regulatory standards for the industry. Public comment at the July 15 meeting was unanimously opposed to data center development.

Source: Osceola Sun (Western) | https://osceolasun.com/news/polk-esc-approves-data-center-moratorium-resolution-sends-to-county-board/article_dff935d0-9975-4112-97c5-f531c9c21c50.html

County crafting new zoning district for data centers, large energy projects

Burnett County's Land Use and Information Committee spent approximately one hour on July 7, 2026, reviewing a draft ordinance that would create an I-2 Tech-Energy Industrial District, a floating zoning designation applicable countywide to large-scale data centers, energy storage facilities, and solar and wind energy systems. As drafted, the district requires a minimum 40-acre rezoning area, a 20-acre minimum lot size, solar panel coverage of at least 75 percent of a qualifying data center's roof space, and battery storage capable of meeting at least 50 percent of a facility's backup power needs. Land Services Department Director Jason Towne compiled the roof-solar language from multiple sources. The draft also mandates a formal decommissioning plan. Open items include setbacks, noise and light limits, screening standards, and potential groundwater monitoring requirements. No formal vote was taken. The committee will continue reviewing remaining draft sections before scheduling a public hearing, which members discussed targeting as soon as September, prior to forwarding a final ordinance to the full County Board.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/county-crafting-new-zoning-district-for-data-centers-large-energy-projects/article_8d9d9335-c17a-4dbd-bf1a-9b8dd072c7b8.html

Milton to consider 18-month data center moratorium

The Milton Common Council voted Tuesday to forward a moratorium resolution on data center development to the city's Plan Commission, extending the proposed pause from an initial draft of 12 months to at least 18 months. City Administrator Paul Hensch described the resolution as a yield sign rather than a hard stop, framing it as a preventative rather than reactionary measure. During the 18-month period the city intends to evaluate potential environmental, economic, health, and safety impacts to determine whether amendments are needed to its zoning code, comprehensive plan, or other regulations. Council President Derek Henze noted that no developers are currently seeking land in Milton for data center development. Alderperson Ken Smith expressed interest in including nondisclosure agreement language in any resulting ordinance. The Plan Commission, which meets next on August 4, will schedule the resolution for consideration, and a public hearing will follow that review before any final action is taken.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/milton-to-consider-18-month-data-center-moratorium/article_13dd8fbb-cb26-43bf-9573-d8a6bb6931a2.html

More Rock County townships are seeking data center moratoriums

Multiple Rock County townships are pursuing data center moratoriums as technology companies propose large-scale facilities in the towns of Beloit, Turtle, and Janesville. The Town of Fulton is actively drafting a moratorium resolution, and Clerk Laura Siclovan cited Wisconsin statute limiting such moratoriums to 12 months with an optional six-month extension, for a maximum of 18 months. The towns of Avon, Newark, Porter, and Spring Valley are also researching or drafting moratorium resolutions, while Milton Clerk Tiffany Chinn-Barsness plans to report findings to her board at an upcoming meeting. At the county level, Rock County Supervisor Philip Gorman's resolution restricting staff from signing nondisclosure agreements tied to hyperscale data centers, defined as facilities with at least 50 megawatts average annual electricity demand, a 100,000-square-foot footprint, or \$50 million in combined costs over 60 months, received approval from the Planning and Development Committee and proceeds to the Staff Committee on August 10, where a favorable vote would send it to the full county board.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/more-rock-county-townships-are-seeking-data-center-moratoriums/article_c7214f26-7749-4c17-9e60-73e66da327b7.html

Speakers implore Town of Beloit Board to 'say no' to data center project

The Town of Beloit Board of Supervisors voted at its July 21 meeting to table action on a cost reimbursement agreement with Panattoni Development Co., an Irvine, California-based firm proposing a 2-million-square-foot hyperscale data center campus valued at approximately \$1 billion on land off Prairie Avenue spanning both the towns of Beloit and Turtle. The sole agenda action item was discussion and possible action on the agreement, under which the company would provide the town an initial \$250,000 to retain specialized experts. More than 100 residents filled the meeting hall with additional attendees in hallways and outside, and 30 speakers addressed the board over nearly two hours. Beloit Turner School District Superintendent Dennis McCarthy disputed the company's projected \$2.2 million to \$2.3 million in annual school revenue, calling the figures impossible under Wisconsin school funding formulas. Board member Steve Walrath, elected in April, confirmed no vote had been intended before the meeting began. The next Board of Supervisors meeting is scheduled for August 3.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/local-news/speakers-implore-town-of-beloit-board-to-say-no-to-data-center-project/article_1c787dbe-d77c-48a2-a986-95730c53174f.html

In a Wisconsin land rush, data centers made them millionaires

A 672-acre data center under construction in Port Washington, a city of approximately 13,000 residents north of Milwaukee, has generated land transactions significantly above assessed fair market value, according to public records analyzed by Wisconsin Watch. Members of the Karrels family and their family farming business received at least \$20 million in total proceeds, and the largest single sale transferred 173 acres for \$10.2 million, or roughly \$59,000 per acre, against a fair market value of \$590,000, a ratio of approximately 17 to 1. Bonnie Schlenvogt sold her Lake Drive home and 65 acres for \$3.44 million against a fair market value of \$437,000. Former Town of Port Washington Clerk Jennifer Schlenvogt sold a nearly 3,000-square-foot home for \$1.87

million, more than four times fair market value. An adult group home with a fair market value of \$320,700 sold for \$6.5 million, with relocation of the facility included in the transaction terms.

Source: Racine County Eye (Southeastern) | <https://racinecountyeeye.com/2026/07/23/wisconsin-land-rush-ai-data-centers/>

Mapping rural data center development finds growing opposition

A Daily Yonder analysis of crowd-sourced FracTracker Alliance data, published July 24, 2026, documents the governance challenges rural Wisconsin communities face as data center development expands beyond metropolitan areas. As of June 2026, approximately 30 of 529 tracked operating data centers are located in rural counties, representing about 6 percent of operating facilities, while 16 rural data centers were recently approved or under construction, representing about 12 percent of all in-progress projects. In Port Washington, a community of approximately 13,000 residents, Vantage Data Centers is building a \$15 billion hyperscale campus serving OpenAI and Oracle; that single investment represents 50 percent of the community's tax base, according to local adviser Prescott Balch. Balch, a retired software developer residing in Caledonia, separately helped organize opposition that resulted in a Microsoft data center proposal being canceled in October 2025. The analysis notes that smaller municipal tax bases and fewer government staff leave rural communities with reduced capacity to negotiate development agreements or absorb revenue loss after facility closures.

Source: Barron News-Shield (Statewide) | https://news-shield.com/news/national/article_b45bae53-7201-5571-bb23-01ffd1b08501.html

Developers propose \$92M 'resort-style' Water's Edge condominium project in Caledonia

Lynn Development Group and Scott-Crawford Inc. presented a \$92 million, 119-unit housing development proposal to the Caledonia Village Board on Tuesday covering approximately 20 acres at 5915, 5919, and 5924 Erie St., within the village's Tax Incremental District No. 5. The proposed development includes 72 condominiums, 28 villas, and 19 townhomes, along with a clubhouse, pool, sun deck, tennis court, pickleball court, walking trail, and dog park. Developers outlined a four-phase approach, with Phase 1 comprising the first 28-unit condominium building, clubhouse, amenities, and initial infrastructure targeted for completion by the fourth quarter of 2027 if the village approves the project, and Phase 4 concluding by the fourth quarter of 2031. Village President Prescott Balch told residents the board would not act on the proposal that night and sought public input. In February the board voted to terminate a development agreement with Cardinal Capital Management, which had covered 93 condominium units in the same district. No vote date on the new proposal was announced.

Source: Journal Times (Southeastern) | https://journaltimes.com/news/local/government-politics/article_aebb57cc-a3f8-4558-ade4-2661481fc374.html

Housing takes center stage as Racine CDA weighs 3 big votes July 23

The Racine Community Development Authority was scheduled to vote on three housing resolutions at its 6 p.m. July 23 meeting in Room 303 of City Hall, with interim Executive Director Jeff Hintz as the named administrative actor on each item. Resolution 26-10 authorizes up to \$4 million from Tax Incremental District No. 31 to redevelop the roughly 11-acre former Geise School site at 5120 Byrd Ave., allocating approximately \$1.7 million for down-payment assistance and

the remainder for roads, utilities, sewer, water mains, and street lighting, with developer Neumann Homes constructing 34 single-family owner-occupied homes and infrastructure work starting March 2027. Resolution 26-11 adopts the operational rulebook for the Rehabbed and Ready program, funded at up to \$1.077 million from closed Tax Incremental District 8, offering \$25,000 reimbursement grants per vacant property rehabilitated for owner-occupancy. Resolution 26-12 authorizes acceptance of purchase offers on five Lincoln-King townhomes reserved for Racine Unified School District teachers, with SC Johnson providing down-payment assistance.

Source: Racine County Eye (Southeastern) | <https://racinecountyeve.com/2026/07/22/racine-cda-housing-projects/>

Shoop Park Golf Course Passes 15-0 Vote

The Racine Common Council voted 15-0, with one abstention, on July 21, 2026, to approve a lease agreement allowing the Johnson Leipold Golf Group, partnering with the Keiser Group, to redevelop the Shoop Park golf course and shoreline as a destination golf facility. The approved plan calls for a nine-hole course, a new clubhouse with a cafe, a new parking lot, and a family putting green on land originally donated to the City of Racine by Dr. Clarendon Shoop and Ida M. Shoop. City Attorney Scott R. Letteney confirmed the arrangement is legally permissible under the original deed, noting that golf has been part of the park for 100 years. District 5 Ald. Jens Jorgensen and District 6 Ald. Sandy Weidner both spoke in support before Mayor Cory Mason called the vote. The project remains subject to review by the Department of Natural Resources and other regulatory agencies before it can proceed.

Source: Racine County Eye (Southeastern) | <https://racinecountyeve.com/2026/07/21/shoop-park-golf-course-approve-vote/>

Green Bay sues developer after years of Shipyard delays and another extension request

The City of Green Bay and its Redevelopment Authority filed a civil lawsuit Thursday against Merge, LLC, an Iowa-based development firm, seeking termination of the parties' contract, return of the Shipyard district property to city ownership, and unspecified additional damages. The suit alleges Merge failed to construct the approved mixed-use waterfront project, which was to include 225 residential units plus retail and restaurant space along the Fox River's west bank north of the Mason Street bridge. The developer was contractually required to secure financing, complete construction, and create at least \$15 million in new taxable value, none of which was achieved. The Redevelopment Authority met with Merge in February in an attempt to restart the project, and Merge responded by requesting a further multi-year extension while acknowledging construction had not commenced. The suit states Merge received written default notice and multiple cure opportunities before the city took legal action. No court hearings have been scheduled and Merge has not filed a response.

Source: WTAQ 1360 AM / 97.5 FM Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://wtaq.com/2026/07/24/green-bay-sues-developer-after-years-of-shipyard-delays-and-another-extension-request/>

Madison OKs rent-restricted apartments ahead of federal deadline

Madison's Plan Commission approved by unanimous vote a DevCo proposal for 163 units of affordable housing across two four-story residential buildings at 1910 Roth St. and 1201 Huxley St. on the city's north side, replacing a former Madison Metro Transit hub. The rental units will be

reserved for households earning 50 to 70 percent of area median income, which equals approximately \$90,000 for a single person or \$130,000 for a four-person household. The unit mix includes 45 one-bedroom, 78 two-bedroom, and 40 three-bedroom apartments, plus more than 200 surface parking spaces. DevCo, a Washington-based developer, applied for low-income housing tax credits under the site's former qualified census tract designation; the site lost that designation in 2026, creating a year-end deadline for use of the associated federal funds. Trevor Martinez, DevCo's Midwest development manager, stated that significantly fewer affordable housing projects are likely in the area going forward. DevCo intends to break ground this winter.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-oks-rent-restricted-apartments-ahead-of-federal-deadline/article_8d2a98cb-0933-479e-81b6-87100d13dfde.html

Edgewood High stadium expansion can proceed after year of negotiations

Madison's Plan Commission voted unanimously to approve additions to Edgewood High School's Goodman Athletics Complex, ending a dispute between the school and neighboring residents dating to 2018. The approved plan expands the existing stadium from more than 400 seats to 1,200 and adds a permanent sound system with five speakers set to an initial output of 80 decibels, replacing the school's portable public address system. Permanent restroom facilities, locker rooms, office space, a ticketing office, concessions, and storage will also be constructed. Field lighting was excluded and athletic events remain restricted to daytime start times. Amplified sound is prohibited during practice and limited to Edgewood High games and approved events such as the Special Olympics. The Dudgeon Monroe and Vilas neighborhood associations issued a joint statement of support following a year of negotiations. Alderman Tag Evers requested a city staff review report one year after the facility opens to assess any operational issues.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/edgewood-high-stadium-expansion-can-proceed-after-year-of-negotiations/article_521a7804-bd1f-4153-bb75-4375d3998b63.html

Proposed Cottage Grove sports complex falls through

Developer Aaron Kahle of Kahle Builders and Creed Indoor LLC terminated his contract to purchase land in Cottage Grove's Commerce Park last week, ending a proposed \$20 million to \$22 million private sports complex under village consideration since early 2025. The Cottage Grove Village Board held a nearly six-hour meeting on July 20 to discuss the collapse, and no further development of the 32-acre site will proceed until another developer approaches the village. The parcel, annexed from the towns of Cottage Grove and Sun Prairie, remains in the village but reverts to a rural holding zoning classification, requiring a full rezoning process for any future project. The board had approved rezoning in March contingent on Kahle signing a developer's agreement, which never occurred. The failed complex had been projected to generate approximately \$150,000 in annual tax revenue. Board Member Paula Severson threatened to personally sue Village President Cindi Kelm-Nelson for libel over a social media post attributing the project's failure to process delays.

Source: Waterloo/Marshall Courier (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/leader_independent/news/local/proposed-cottage-grove-sports-complex-falls-through/article_c01c7a65-58d3-4d2c-94e1-8240e5a682f4.html

Recent land sales in EC open door to residential development

The Eau Claire City Council, at its July 14, 2026, legislative session, approved two agreements transferring city-owned excess land to facilitate residential development. The first agreement sells two undeveloped lots on Mappa and Bellinger streets, near Mayo Clinic Hospital, to Habitat for Humanity at \$1,000 per lot; the transfer is part of a multi-year Affordable Housing Initiative targeting construction of 10 to 15 new owner-occupied homes, with a joint city and nonprofit intent to transfer additional lots over the next five years. The second agreement sells approximately 31 acres on the city's north side to C&M Home Builders for \$700,000 to enable development of a mixed-use residential neighborhood to be named Linden Hills, described as likely the first phase of a multi-phase project. City Attorney Steve Nick spoke to both items at the council meeting. No construction timeline was reported for either project.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/recent-land-sales-in-ec-open-door-to-residential-development/article_2a8ce888-1028-47da-a14c-44a2ad838f8a.html

\$47 million senior living campus planned for Chippewa Falls

The Chippewa Falls Plan Commission voted unanimously to forward two land use actions to the City Council for the proposed \$47 million Sycamore Senior Living campus: a certified survey map for final approval and a rezoning recommendation to convert a 13.32-acre parcel at Chippewa Crossing from C-2 general commercial to R-3 multiple family residential. The applicants, CF QOZB LLC and Steward Wangard, are seeking a conditional use permit required because of setbacks and height, as noted by City Engineer Brandon Cesafsky. The campus would include 186 total residential units, comprising 100 licensed senior living units, 58 independent living units, six duplexes, and four fourplexes, managed by Ebenezer Management Services and designed by Evolve Architects. The project is projected to create 40 full-time jobs generating approximately \$2 million in annual wages. Construction is anticipated to begin in fall 2026, with occupancy targeted for late spring 2028. The City Council will hear the proposal at its 6:30 p.m. Tuesday meeting, where it will also set a public hearing date on the rezoning.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/front-page/47-million-senior-living-campus-planned-for-chippewa-falls/article_5b0a57ef-0cea-4094-b96e-80ea0681507d.html

City of Superior buys first home for land trust

The Superior City Council on July 21 authorized the mayor and city clerk to execute a deed purchasing the property at 1903 Banks Ave. for \$240,000 to seed the city's new Community Land Trust program. The house was built in 2018 by Western Lake Superior Habitat for Humanity, which foreclosed on the property and is selling it to the city. Under the program framework, drafted by Councilor Garner Moffat, the city retains ownership of the land while a buyer purchases the home and improvements. Upon resale, the homeowner keeps the initial down payment, principal paid, approved capital-improvement value, and 25 to 30 percent of market appreciation, while the land trust retains 70 to 75 percent of appreciation to maintain affordability for subsequent buyers. The program is being developed in partnership with the Northwest Wisconsin Community Services Agency. No timeline or process for reselling the Banks Avenue property has been established pending further program development.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegam.com/news/local/city-of-superior-buys-first-home-for-land-trust>

Manitowoc Approves Preliminary Plat For Second North Side Subdivision

The Manitowoc Common Council voted unanimously Monday to approve the preliminary plat for the Deerbrook Crossing Subdivision, a proposed residential development on the city's north side. The plat establishes 16 lots designated for home building on land located behind Vinton Construction. The project requires two street extensions: Deerbrook Lane would be extended into the new subdivision area, and Kellner Street would also be extended to connect with the development. The action was taken at the council's July 20 meeting. A drainage plan must still be submitted and reviewed before the final plat can receive approval, making that submission the next required procedural step before the subdivision can move forward.

Source: Seehafer News (Northeastern) | <https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/07/24/manitowoc-approves-preliminary-plat-for-second-north-side-subdivision/>

Accessible apartment complex proposed in Waukesha

The Waukesha Plan Commission held a consultation session Wednesday on a proposal by Milwaukee-based Cherry Faith Properties to build a 20-unit apartment complex on roughly three-quarters of an acre of vacant land at 918 Niagara St. The five-building development would include 16 one-bedroom and four two-bedroom units, with 11 of the 20 designated as affordable housing. Affordable rents would be set at \$1,027 per month for one-bedroom units and \$1,257 for two-bedroom units, while market-rate units would run approximately \$1,600 and \$2,000 respectively. Four of the 11 affordable units would include accessibility modifications for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Developer Dajuan Cherry stated the project is coordinating with the HOME Consortium for deferred-loan financing. The commission took no action. Before construction could proceed, the site, currently zoned general manufacturing, would require rezoning to residential, a variance from Waukesha County setback requirements, and potentially approval of a planned unit development overlay.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/news/cherry-faith-properties-development/article_8a67bbee-8ab2-51f1-b87e-6ef789047e4f.html

Brookfield Public Market faces short delay

The Brookfield Plan Commission approved a land division last week allowing property owner Irgens to split parcels and sell a 1.3-acre lot to Visit Brookfield, clearing the primary obstacle that had delayed groundbreaking by several weeks. The Common Council was expected to act on the land division this week, according to Brookfield Director of Development Dan Ertl. Visit Brookfield CEO Nancy Justman confirmed groundbreaking is now scheduled for October 10, with an anticipated opening in late fall 2027. The two-story, approximately 54,000-square-foot building along Bluemound Road near Brookfield Square will include hot food vendors, grocery-style vendors, Wisconsin handmade vendors, two bars, meeting space, and outdoor areas. The project will be financed through a tax incremental finance district, with property-generated revenue retiring the district before funds flow to general tax rolls. No public cost estimate is available; Visit Brookfield is finalizing a request for proposals for construction management, after which a cost figure is expected.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/business/brookfield-public-market-delayed/article_0ce5812d-260c-5289-ae80-c9283ca05b83.html

Parking study a possibility for proposed boutique hotel in downtown Hartland

The Hartland Joint Architectural and Plan Commission reviewed detailed plans Monday for a four-story, approximately 12,000-square-foot boutique hotel proposed for the southeast corner of East Capitol Drive and Cottonwood Avenue in downtown Hartland. Developers HF Hospitality Group of Delafield and Luther Group of Elm Grove, working with Cedarburg-based Groth Design Group, first presented the concept in April. The proposed hotel would contain 36 guest rooms and a roughly 2,000-square-foot rooftop lounge open to guests and the public. The site, previously occupied by a gas station and a boutique, would require demolition of two existing buildings and a parking lot. Village staff encouraged the developers to submit a parking operations plan and potentially commission a downtown parking study, and the site's proximity to the Bark River prompted a recommendation for early coordination with the Department of Natural Resources. The developers have not yet filed a planned unit development request. The Plan Commission continues its review August 17, with the Village Board set to consider the proposal August 24.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/business/hartland-boutique-hotel-plans/article_aaf1aa20-17cc-5af0-be07-6a394a907eb9.html

Community feedback reveals housing, jobs and community amenities are priority for GM site

The GM/JATCO Redevelopment Advisory Board reviewed public engagement results at its July 2026 meeting covering the 250-acre former GM and JATCO site on Janesville's south side. Stantec project manager Amy Worsham reported that a community visioning workshop drew approximately 200 attendees and a public survey generated 1,209 responses, together exceeding 1,400 total inputs. At the in-person workshop, industrial development ranked as the top priority, followed by housing, commercial use, and parks and recreation, while survey respondents ranked recreation, green space, and commercial uses higher than industrial. Residents identified trail connections, workforce and smaller-unit housing, and grocery retail as priorities, with Worsham describing the area as a food desert. Stantec has also completed seven market analysis interviews and five stakeholder and focus-group interviews, with additional confidential discussions planned. The next public engagement opportunity is a design workshop scheduled for October 14, at which residents will review potential development concepts.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/community-feedback-reveals-housing-jobs-and-community-amenities-are-priority-for-gm-site/article_1a1b681f-3079-4d22-9fce-315bb61b41ca.html

Janesville considering an update to affordable housing fund policy to broaden how money is distributed

The Janesville City Council is scheduled to review Monday proposed amendments to the city's Affordable Housing Fund policy, originally adopted in 2022, that would expand eligibility beyond new multifamily rental developments. The fund was established using tax-increment financing extension revenue after a tax increment district was paid off, a mechanism authorized under state law allowing municipalities to extend a district one additional year and dedicate proceeds to affordable housing. Since the 2022 policy was adopted the city has received no eligible projects meeting current program requirements, leaving funds largely unused despite continued demand. The proposed revisions would add single-family home construction, acquisition and rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, preservation, and infill development as eligible project types.

Eligible applicants would expand to include nonprofits, Community Housing Development Organizations, builders, and other qualified developers. The amendments would also introduce forgivable grants for qualifying nonprofits constructing or rehabilitating homes for income-qualified buyers, alongside existing deferred loan options. Assistant to the City Manager Nick Faust presented the proposal.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/janesville-considering-an-update-to-affordable-housing-fund-policy-to-broaden-how-money-is-distributed/article_a6fee441-b7da-4076-a29c-565d99f70147.html

Beloit looking to collect nearly \$60k from owner of unkempt Park Avenue house

The City of Beloit filed 40 collection cases in Rock County Court at the end of May 2026 seeking to recover nearly \$60,000 in unpaid property citations from Kevin L. Hill, owner of 311 Park Ave., a 1,928-square-foot, five-bedroom house. Citations against the property date to September 2019, when the city first fined Hill for overgrown vegetation, deteriorating siding, broken windows, and trash. Additional citations followed in March 2022 for deteriorating siding and a missing front porch guardrail, in August 2024 for overgrown vegetation, an unregistered motor vehicle, a deteriorating porch ceiling, and non-conforming garage doors, and again in December 2025 for persistent siding violations. Hill satisfied a land contract on the property in April, according to Rock County records, having purchased it in July 2019 for \$90,000. The city's stated goals are either collecting the debt or advancing toward a potential property lien and foreclosure under Wisconsin law.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/local-news/beloit-looking-to-collect-nearly-60k-from-owner-of-unkempt-park-avenue-house/article_d1705c90-e69c-4292-b394-93ee3ffb5e84.html

Man's 'home' is his castle; But apparently not for long

The City of Barron pursued a raze order against the property at 211 S. Mill St., a house built in 1904, after determining it was uninhabitable. Owner Lance L'Heureux contested the order for several months, attending city council meetings to request additional repair time, but the city denied his building permit application. On July 15, 2026, L'Heureux appeared before the Barron Board of Appeals seeking reversal of the permit denial and was again denied. Two days later, Mayor Rod Nordby met L'Heureux at the property to assess its condition. Following that walkthrough, L'Heureux stated he would no longer contest the raze order. He plans to apply for a raze permit himself, with the intent to salvage materials from the structure for use in a cabin on his son's land and to construct a new, code-compliant house on the existing city lot.

Source: Barron News-Shield (Western) | https://news-shield.com/news/top_stories/article_a51ac93c-9f3d-4c52-a9e4-5881044656c8.html

Governance and Elections

Absentee ballots cannot be changed despite shift in WI gubernatorial race

The Wisconsin Elections Commission issued guidance directing municipal clerks not to allow voters to spoil and recast absentee ballots after candidates withdraw from the August 11 primary, a determination affecting more than 80,000 ballots already returned statewide as of July 21, 2026. Rock County Clerk Lisa Tollefson confirmed that approximately 25 percent of Rock County voters

cast ballots by mail and that returned ballots cannot be retrieved by voters even when a candidate drops out; voters who have not yet submitted ballots may receive up to two replacement ballots, and only for marking errors. Wisconsin Democratic Party Chair Devin Remiker stated the party will submit a formal letter requesting the commission retract the guidance, characterizing it as improperly issued. Wisconsin law requires absentee ballots to be physically received by the clerk by 8 p.m. on August 11; postmarks are not accepted.

Source: WAOW ABC9 Wausau (Statewide) | https://www.waow.com/news/absentee-ballots-cannot-be-changed-despite-shift-in-wi-gubernatorial-race/article_c2b54dc8-9f19-5262-a6b5-1eabfe3e7920.html

Democrats ask WEC to end rule barring changes to mail-in ballots if candidate drops out

The Democratic Party of Wisconsin formally requested on July 21, 2026, that Wisconsin Elections Commission Chair Don Millis retract the commission's July 10 guidance barring absentee voters from spoiling already-returned ballots when a candidate withdraws from a race. Madison-based attorney Diane Welsh submitted the letter on behalf of the party, arguing the guidance conflicts with state statutes, prior commission guidance, and the Equal Protection Clauses of both the Wisconsin and U.S. Constitutions. The guidance was issued after absentee ballots for the August 11 primary had already been mailed. Welsh cited a 2022 court case in which the commission itself argued voters marking a ballot for a withdrawn candidate should be permitted to spoil it. Dane County Clerk Scott McDonnell separately advised voters to wait until approximately two weeks before Election Day to return absentee ballots.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/democrats-ask-wec-to-end-rule-barring-changes-to-mail-in-ballots-if-candidate-drops/article_92cc8ee3-5fc9-4f66-9ea8-5465f985bb48.html

Can Wisconsin voters void a returned absentee ballot? New lawsuit sends issue back to court

The Wisconsin Elections Commission voted 4-2 on July 9, 2026, to adopt guidance prohibiting voters from voiding a returned absentee ballot to cast a replacement, reversing the agency's previous legal position that voters could spoil returned ballots before Election Day deadlines. Democratic commissioners Mark Thomsen and Ann Jacobs voted against the guidance, while Democratic commissioner Carrie Riepl joined the three Republican commissioners in favor. Three Dane County residents filed suit against the commission on Thursday, arguing the guidance violates state absentee voting statutes and the state constitution. The Democratic Party of Wisconsin sent the commission a letter two days before the suit was filed urging rescission. The guidance reinstates a ban established by a 2022 lower-court ruling that was vacated in February 2026 on procedural grounds rather than on the merits. The lawsuit asks the court to intervene before the August 11 primary.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/07/wisconsin-voters-absentee-ballot-void-new-lawsuit-court-election-commission/>

Wisconsin voters sue to allow for vote to count if absentee ballot is late

A lawsuit filed July 24, 2026, in Dane County Circuit Court asks a judge to rule that Wisconsin voters whose absentee ballots have not arrived by Election Day may cast provisional ballots in person rather than have their votes go uncounted. The suit was filed by the Madison-based Law Forward and the Washington, D.C.-based Fair Elections Center on behalf of an individual voter

and the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, whose executive director is Debra Cronmiller. Under current Wisconsin law, provisional in-person ballots are prohibited. In the April 2026 election, more than 300 ballots in Milwaukee and more than 100 in Fond du Lac were rejected for late arrival, based on a Wisconsin Elections Commission survey of clerks. The bipartisan commission had previously warned the U.S. Postmaster General in May 2026 that postal delays could deprive citizens of their right to vote. No hearing date was reported.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Statewide) | https://www.news8000.com/news/politics/elections/wisconsin-voters-sue-to-allow-for-vote-to-count-if-absentee-ballot-is-late/article_0f57c4eb-d0da-5745-9311-a19281744019.html

Baldwin, Evers raise concerns about postal service ahead of elections

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Gov. Tony Evers sent a joint letter on July 24, 2026, to Postmaster General David Steiner and the USPS Board of Governors citing severe delays in mail delivery that caused absentee ballots to arrive to local clerks after Election Day during Wisconsin's April 2026 spring election, rendering those ballots uncounted. The letter also calls on the board to reverse implementation of a federal executive order creating a mail-in voting list containing the personal information of absentee voters. The officials noted that 500,000 Wisconsin voters, 15 percent of all state voters, used mail-in ballots in 2024. The Wisconsin Elections Commission sent its own letter to the Postal Service in May 2026, relaying survey results showing that two-thirds of the state's local election officials reported problems with mail delivery during the spring election. The commission has separately recommended that voters mailing ballots do so at least 10 days before the election. Early in-person voting for the August primary begins July 28, 2026.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (Statewide) | <https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/07/24/baldwin-evers-raise-concerns-about-postal-service-ahead-of-elections>

Postal Service defends mail delivery changes in Wisconsin amid complaints of delays

The U.S. Postal Service, through director and government liaison Michael J. Gordon, defended its Regional Transportation Optimization program in a letter to Sen. Tammy Baldwin, asserting the restructuring, which eliminated afternoon mail delivery at select post offices across nearly 400 Wisconsin locations, improves efficiency by reducing trips between post offices and regional processing facilities. Gordon reported that as of spring 2026 Wisconsin employed 11,058 field employees with 343 vacancies, a vacancy rate of approximately 3 percent, and that the agency hosted more than 99 job fairs over the past year. Employee retention rates improved from 2024 to 2025. Baldwin said constituent complaints have continued to grow since the response, with both rural and metropolitan residents reporting days without mail and weeks-long or months-long package delays. Wisconsin has three regional processing facilities, located in Madison, Milwaukee, and Green Bay.

Source: WiscNews (Statewide) | https://wiscnews.com/news/local/government-politics/article_8704f48f-3876-572f-8374-2798e4057cc2.html

Green Bay says it's committed to fair Aug. 11 primary amid clerk's leave

Green Bay City Clerk Celestine Jeffreys remains on administrative leave while the Wisconsin Elections Commission investigates why duplicate absentee ballots were sent for both the April and August elections. With the primary scheduled for August 11, 2026, Deputy City Clerk Stacy Menke is overseeing election operations in Jeffreys's absence. The city did not outline any additional election procedures or staffing changes when asked on July 24. Absentee ballot

requests must be submitted by August 6 at 5 p.m. for regular and overseas voters and by August 7 at 5 p.m. for indefinitely confined and military voters. In-person absentee voting runs August 3 through August 7, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., at City Hall. All absentee ballots must be returned to City Hall by 8 p.m. on Election Day. The commission's investigation into the duplicate ballot mailings is ongoing.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://fox11online.com/news/local/2026-august-primary-election-green-bay-city-clerk-celestine-jeffreys-leave-duplicate-absentee-ballots-wisconsin-governor-race>

De Pere, Fond du Lac near 40% of absentee ballots returned with Aug. 11 primary ahead

De Pere City Clerk Carey Danen reported that approximately 1,400 absentee ballots were sent out for the August 11 primary and more than 500 have been returned, a return rate of roughly 40 percent. Fond du Lac City Clerk Margaret Hefter reported a 43 percent return rate in that city. Both clerks said the current rate is comparable to the 2022 primary. The Wisconsin Elections Commission ruled earlier in July that voters who have already submitted absentee ballots may not spoil and change their vote, and three Democratic voters filed suit on July 24 seeking an order to allow such changes. Gov. Tony Evers and Sen. Tammy Baldwin also called on the U.S. Postal Service on July 24 to accelerate ballot delivery, following instances of ballots arriving too late in the spring election. Danen cautioned voters who plan to mail ballots not to wait too long given delivery delays.

Source: WTAQ 1360 AM / 97.5 FM Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://wtaq.com/2026/07/24/de-pere-fond-du-lac-near-40-of-absentee-ballots-returned-with-aug-11-primary-ahead/>

Madison ballot drop boxes now open for Aug. 11 primary

The City of Madison has activated 14 ballot drop boxes for absentee voters ahead of the August 11, 2026, primary election. Absentee voters may return completed ballots to any of the 14 locations distributed around the city. Completed ballots must be sealed in a certificate envelope with voter signature, witness signature, witness name, and witness address before deposit. Two sworn election officials retrieve ballots from the drop boxes daily, sealing them in a tamper-evident container and completing a chain of custody form at each collection. Retrieved ballots are delivered to the city clerk's office, where staff verify documentation and sort ballots for processing on Election Day. The clerk's office and the U.S. mail remain alternative return options. Ballots will be processed on Election Day, August 11, 2026.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/madison-ballot-drop-boxes-now-open-for-aug-11-primary/article_8c60a20a-8b80-4697-9801-df73fe69aa97.html

DMV offers information on obtaining an ID for voting

Ahead of Wisconsin's August 11 primary election, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Division of Motor Vehicles issued a public reminder that eligible citizens may obtain a state-issued photo identification valid for voting at no charge. The division specified that valid voting identification includes a driver license, identification card, military ID, or student ID card, and confirmed that a federally compliant REAL ID is not required for voting purposes. Citizens unsure whether their identification meets requirements are directed to the Wisconsin Elections Commission website. Applications can be initiated online or in person at a local DMV Customer Service Center. A provisional receipt is available to voters whose ID card cannot be produced

before Election Day. Questions about obtaining a qualifying ID may be directed to the division's toll-free hotline.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Statewide) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/dmv-offers-information-on-obtaining-an-id-for-voting,199175>

Trempealeau County Board censures supervisor for conduct during Flock debate

The Trempealeau County Board voted 15-1 on July 20, 2026, to censure Supervisor Andy Parrish for using profanity toward a fellow supervisor during a July 8 board discussion about the county's Flock camera system. Parrish had raised concerns that more than 5,000 outside organizations and agencies accessed the county's Flock cameras in a single month, and his conduct during that debate prompted the formal reprimand resolution. County Board Chair Andy Todd and Vice Chair Kevin Whalen each spoke in support of the measure, characterizing it as a corrective rather than punitive action. The resolution does not remove Parrish from office or restrict his voting rights on future county matters. Separately, Todd clarified in a prior statement that the sheriff, not the County Board, made the decision to reduce public access to the Flock camera system. The next Trempealeau County Board meeting is scheduled for August 17.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Western) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/trempealeau-county-board-censures-supervisor-for-conduct-during-flock-debate/article_e716e535-322d-58dc-9d9b-1eef161a0afb.html

Town of Turtle group looking to oust board chair Anclam

Dawn and Keith Haasl filed a Statement of Intent to Circulate Recall Petition on Friday, July 18, 2026, targeting Town of Turtle Board Chairman Roger Anclam, who has held the seat since 2009. The petition cites Anclam's vote as one of three supervisors approving a cost reimbursement agreement with a California development company pursuing a \$1 billion data center campus in the towns of Beloit and Turtle, an agreement that triggered a \$250,000 payment to the town for project review expertise. Petitioners also cite a nondisclosure agreement Anclam signed in fall 2025, disclosed through open records requests, and the board's 4-1 June vote to close and sell the Lathers Road Bridge to the Rock River Threshere. The petitioners have 60 days to collect signatures equal to 25 percent of Turtle voters in the last governor's race, a threshold Town Clerk and Treasurer Kristina Bennett was verifying with the Wisconsin Elections Commission; organizers estimate the target at approximately 300 signatures. Anclam has stated he will not resign.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/local-news/town-of-turtle-group-looking-to-oust-board-chair-anclam/article_01a06729-aacf-4be8-a910-6992ca0d1c1b.html

Grow Janesville Responsibly says it seeks to upend GM site referendum

A coalition called Grow Janesville Responsibly, backed by members of the Forward Janesville chamber and regional business and labor groups, announced Thursday at an invite-only meeting that it will campaign to defeat a citizen-led ballot referendum slated for the November 2026 election. The referendum, if approved, would require voter sign-off on any redevelopment project exceeding \$450 million at the city-owned former General Motors site on Janesville's south side. Coalition co-chair George Cullen, co-president of JP Cullen construction, said the referendum would constrain Stantec, a consultant the city is paying more than \$200,000 to guide the redevelopment advisory board's planning work. Cullen estimates light-industrial and mixed-use redevelopment scenarios could cost developers approximately \$2.5 billion, and housing-only

reuse could run \$450 million to \$540 million, all figures that would trigger the referendum threshold. The city allowed its letter of intent with Colorado firm Viridian Partners, which had proposed an 800-megawatt data center, to lapse earlier in July 2026.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/grow-janesville-responsibly-says-it-seeks-to-upend-gm-site-referendum/article_d73eac6b-5b81-4737-96e2-ce8300fcae99.html

Public comment will be added to Plan Commission's meetings

Janesville's Plan Commission, chaired by Kathy Voskuil, announced at its Monday, July 21, 2026, meeting that it will add a standing public comment period to its regular agendas beginning at its first meeting in August 2026. The comment period will differ from a public hearing in that speakers will not be required to address items on the agenda, and each comment will be limited to two minutes. Commissioner Paul Williams suggested limiting comments to matters within the commission's jurisdiction, while Commissioner Ed Madere argued the comment period should appear toward the end of the agenda. Council member and commissioner Michael Cass noted that the Community Development Authority and City Council place public comment after the consent agenda. Voskuil stated the commission may reassess the format in six months and could retain or discontinue the practice. The commission had not determined the placement of public comment within the standard agenda order as of the meeting date.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/public-comment-will-be-added-to-plan-commissions-meetings/article_40a320a0-02c9-4797-b901-d0cbba9762dc.html

Former mayor appointed to open council seat

The Stanley Common Council appointed Al Haas, a Ward 1 resident and former mayor of Stanley from 2020 to 2024, to fill the vacant Wards 1 and 8 alderperson seat through April 2027, carried under consent agenda item i at the council's Monday meeting. Mayor Ben Wald submitted the appointment in writing. The same consent agenda included the resignation of Firefighter Timothy Zimmerman, effective July 11, 2026. The council approved two pay applications to Haas Sons Inc. totaling \$404,383.24, comprising \$35,329.82 for the 345th Street road project and \$369,053.42 for Maple Street Reconstruction, along with a \$427,207.60 partial pay request from Hoeft Builders for the D.R. Moon Library Project. The council also passed Resolution 2026-005 authorizing issuance and sale of up to \$1,392,262 in Water System and Sewerage Revenue Bonds for Maple and Mill Street, and approved a \$20,900 variable frequency drive replacement for High Speed Pump 1 at the Northwest Treatment Plant following a motor burnout.

Source: Stanley Republican (Western) | <https://stanleyrepublican.com/stories/untitled,199605>

Former Municipal Judge Kay files notice of claim against Oconomowoc and attorney

Former Lake County Municipal Court Judge Tim Kay filed a notice of claim on June 29, 2026, against the City of Oconomowoc and Assistant City Attorney Jeff Ek, alleging defamation, interference with contract, and abuse of process. Kay, who served as judge for nearly 14 years before retiring April 24, 2026, is seeking \$356,000 for lost income, benefits, and pension covering 2026 through 2032, plus \$50,000 in attorneys' fees and unspecified damages for reputational harm. The claim stems from complaints Ek filed with the Wisconsin Judicial Commission in July 2025 and with the Lake County Municipal Court in March 2026 seeking Kay's removal; the municipal court took no action, determining that state law limits judge removal to the Legislature, the Judicial Commission, or a recall. The Oconomowoc Police Department referred a

misconduct-in-public-office charge to Waukesha County District Attorney Lesli Boese, who found a basis for the charge but declined to issue it after Kay resigned. The Oconomowoc Common Council was scheduled to meet in closed session Tuesday to discuss the notice of claim.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/news/kay-sues-ocomowoc-ek/article_e834526c-4538-5db1-b587-db82d930230f.html

Ranked-choice voting in Wisconsin primaries could boost candidates with broader appeal, experts say

The Badger Project examined whether Wisconsin primary elections could adopt ranked-choice voting, a system currently used in 51 U.S. jurisdictions including two states. Wisconsin primary elections are administered by the state, meaning any change to the voting method would require new state legislation. Derek Clinger, senior counsel for the State Democracy Research Initiative at the University of Wisconsin-Madison law school, noted that research suggests ranked-choice voting encourages consensus building and more civil campaigns. Under Wisconsin's current plurality system, a crowded primary field raises the possibility that a nominee could advance without majority support. No legislative action to adopt ranked-choice voting has been reported as pending or scheduled.

Source: The Badger Project (Statewide) | <https://thebadgerproject.org/2026/07/24/ranked-choice-voting-in-wisconsin-primaries-could-boost-candidates-with-broader-appeal-experts-say/>

Human Services

One year after the 'Big Beautiful Bill,' 7,441 Racine County residents face a new Medicaid work rule — and letters arrive next month

The federal Medicaid work requirement enacted in the budget law will affect 7,441 BadgerCare members whose cases run through Racine County, with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services estimating that 2,333 of them, roughly one in three, are at high risk of losing coverage. The rule applies to adults ages 19 to 64 with no children under 19 at home who are not pregnant, disabled, or otherwise exempt, and requires 80 hours per month of work, school, or volunteering. Department notification letters are expected in August or September 2026; new applicants must meet the requirement beginning January 1, 2027, while most current enrollees first face it at renewals on or after March 1, 2027. Racine County's Economic Support division, part of the multi-county WKRP consortium, will process the change with existing staff despite two current vacancies. County Human Services Deputy Director Kristin Latus confirmed that four temporary positions funded under 2025 Act 116 are dedicated solely to FoodShare accuracy and will not support Medicaid work-rule implementation.

Source: Racine County Eye (Southeastern) | <https://racinecountye.com/2026/07/25/medicaid-work-requirement/>

Some county residents could lose Medicaid benefits; But work, volunteer hours may still qualify current recipients

At the Barron County Commission on Aging's monthly meeting on July 21, 2026, Leanne Grover, supervisor for the county Aging and Disability Resource Center, informed commissioners that an estimated 1,485 childless adults in Barron County stand to lose Medicaid coverage under new federal work requirements. The rules apply to Medicaid recipients ages 19 to 64 who are not

pregnant, not caring for a child, and not exempt due to disability or severe medical condition, requiring 80 hours of monthly work, school enrollment, or volunteer service to maintain eligibility. Beginning in August 2026, the county Department of Health and Human Services will mail notices to all affected childless adults on Medicaid. County officials are also beginning individual reviews to identify recipients whose physical conditions or disabilities qualify them for exemptions. The Commission on Aging's next meeting, scheduled for August 18, will include presentation of a tentative 2027 budget.

Source: Barron News-Shield (Western) | https://news-shield.com/news/free_news/article_5a2a21ac-f760-4361-8bea-91bbe5b10051.html

In Wisconsin, Medicaid now offers postpartum coverage for a year

Wisconsin's extended postpartum Medicaid coverage law took effect in July 2026, expanding coverage from 60 days to one full year after pregnancy. Wisconsin Department of Health Services Secretary Kirsten Johnson announced that approximately 16,000 Wisconsin residents who use Medicaid will gain extended coverage over the next year. Wisconsin had previously been one of only two states, alongside Arkansas, that had not adopted the 12-month extension. Gov. Tony Evers included the proposal in all four of his state budgets over seven years before passage, and Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, who had blocked prior votes on the measure, voted in support of the bill in February 2026. Medicaid covers two in five births in Wisconsin, according to the state health department. State epidemiologist Dr. Jasmine Zapata noted that states with extended postpartum coverage recorded more than a 50 percent greater decline in infant mortality rates than states without it. Nearly half of pregnancy-related deaths in Wisconsin occur within the year after pregnancy ends.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Statewide) | <https://www.wpr.org/health/2026-07-23/in-wisconsin-medicaid-now-offers-postpartum-coverage-for-a-year>

How opioid settlement funds are being used around Wisconsin

Wisconsin local governments have received more than \$160 million in opioid settlement payments from drug makers, distributors, and pharmacies, with the state and 87 local governments projected to receive more than \$874 million total by 2038, according to a Wisconsin Watch investigative report published July 20, 2026. Settlement funds flow to 71 Wisconsin counties and 16 municipalities, which began receiving payments in 2022; Polk County is excluded after its board declined to join Wisconsin's lawsuit. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services receives 30 percent of the state's settlement share and reports spending to the Legislature quarterly. The remaining funds go directly to counties and municipalities, each tracking and spending the money differently. All local governments must submit annual reports to the Legislature and the Wisconsin Department of Justice. The reporting compiled a database of the most recently reported local government spending figures and noted that millions in settlement funds remain unspent across jurisdictions.

Source: PBS Wisconsin WHA21 (Statewide) | <https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/how-opioid-settlement-funds-are-being-used-around-wisconsin/>

After-school programs lose thousands each month as child care stabilization funding ends

The Wisconsin Legislature's one-year Child Care Bridge Payments Program expired last month, ending stabilization funding for approximately 90 Milwaukee Public Schools-based before- and after-school programs that collectively received \$1.2 million in 2025. Journey House, the South Side nonprofit operating H.W. Longfellow School's Community Learning Center, received over \$6,300 from the state in 2026 before the program ended. Randy Neve of the Wisconsin Out of School Time Alliance estimates more than 500 before- and after-school programs statewide serving school-aged children are losing monthly payments. Milwaukee Recreation, which operates Community Learning Centers at district locations, may now cut supplies and activity funding, eliminate staff bonuses, and reduce positions beyond Wisconsin Department of Children and Families required ratios. State Sen. LaTonya Johnson introduced SB 322 to support child care providers, but the bill did not receive a hearing. The alliance is currently educating policymakers to advocate for restored funding.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Southeastern) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/07/wisconsin-milwaukee-child-care-stabilization-funding-after-school-programs/>

Eau Claire celebrates National Deflection Week

Eau Claire County's deflection program, administered through a partnership among Eau Claire County Human Services, the Eau Claire City-County Health Department, law enforcement, treatment providers, and At The Roots LLC, provides voluntary, no-cost pathways for residents experiencing substance abuse, mental health concerns, or other high-risk factors. Brianna Marsden, Recovery and Justice Services Manager, oversees the program, which is designed as a preventative alternative to traditional reactive intervention systems. At The Roots LLC, a peer support partner, has served 45 individuals and logged more than 400 hours of one-on-one contact time since joining the program. Sarah Dillivan-Popisil, Public Health Specialist for the Eau Claire City Health Department, described the multi-agency referral structure as essential to the program's operation. Officials stated that program expansion depends on increased public awareness and continued community engagement. No governing body vote, budget figure, or formal resolution was reported.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/23/national-deflection-week-recognizes-eau-claires-deflection-program/>

Updated income eligibility guidelines announced for school and day care meals

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service updated annual income eligibility guidelines for federally funded school and day care meal programs, effective July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027, with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction issuing the announcement in coordination with the federal release. Under the new guidelines, a household of four with annual income at or below \$42,900 qualifies for free school meals, and households of the same size with income between \$42,900.01 and \$61,050 qualify for reduced-price meals. The guidelines govern eligibility for the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Special Milk Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Automatic eligibility extends to participants in FoodShare, Wisconsin Works cash assistance, certain Medicaid programs, the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, and to foster, homeless, migrant, and runaway children. One application per household is required for families not automatically eligible.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (Statewide) | <https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/07/21/updated-income-eligibility-guidelines-announced-for-school-and-day-care-meals>

Research: Some Rural Residents Are Trading Nutrition for Shelter | The Daily Yonder

A study by the Rural Livability Project at the University of Wisconsin-Madison finds that housing financial stress negatively affects rural health outcomes in high-poverty rural places, with elevated county-level prevalence of obesity, diabetes, stroke, and coronary heart disease. Nationally, among households earning below \$35,000 annually, housing stress, defined as spending more than 30 percent of income on housing, ranges from 68 to 96 percent, according to American Community Survey 2019 to 2023 estimates. Wisconsin interview subjects reported traveling more than 45 minutes to reach grocery stores, relying instead on convenience stores and gas stations for food, and food pantry users reported that donated supplies consist primarily of canned and packaged goods with limited fresh items. The research identifies a dual-stressor amplification effect: counties ranking in the top quartile on both housing stress and food insecurity show worse average chronic-condition prevalence than counties experiencing either stressor alone. Stigma in small rural communities was identified as an additional barrier to seeking available assistance.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (Statewide) | <https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/07/23/research-some-rural-residents-are-trading-nutrition-for-shelter-the-daily-yonder>

How wildfire smoke impacted Milwaukee Zoo animals and Apostle Islands economic activity

Wildfire smoke from Canada and Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness drove nearly all of Wisconsin to record-setting hazardous air quality last week, prompting operational responses from two public facilities. The Milwaukee County Zoo, a facility of Milwaukee County government, canceled multiple outdoor activities for staff safety while remaining open to visitors, required all staff to wear masks during smoky conditions, and activated a 24-hour animal-monitoring protocol. Tracy Dolphin, the zoo's Director of Animal Management and Health, confirmed that primates were kept entirely indoors while other species were evaluated individually based on preexisting respiratory or cardiac conditions. Near the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, extreme smoke caused several local outdoor events to cancel entirely, and a Bayfield boat charter operator reported visibility dropping to only a few hundred feet. The Wisconsin State Climatology Office attributed increased wildfire likelihood to human-caused climate change and shorter winters. No formal emergency declaration was reported.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Statewide) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/canada-minnesota-wisconsin-wildfire-smoke-impact-milwaukee-zoo-animals-apostle-islands>

HealthNet of Rock County CEO Kerry Swanson to retire at year's end

HealthNet of Rock County announced July 22, 2026, that CEO Kerry Swanson will retire effective January 1, having led Rock County's only free clinic since March 2024. Swanson's tenure spans approximately two and a half years at HealthNet and 42 years total in healthcare, including a prior role as regional chief operating officer at SSM Health in Janesville. The HealthNet board of directors has formed a search committee to identify her successor; Board President Don Handrow announced the committee without specifying a timeline. During Swanson's tenure HealthNet undertook a capital campaign for its Franklin Street facility and launched a behavioral

health service practice, which the agency acknowledged significantly affected its bottom line due to underestimated startup requirements. Swanson described the organization as financially stable at the time of her departure. The chief executive search is ongoing with no candidate or appointment date reported.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/healthnet-of-rock-county-ceo-kerry-swanson-to-retire-at-years-end/article_5cc7d0b5-57da-4840-a6a8-41cc0b527df0.html

As air quality clears, smoke leaves economic mark

Wildfire smoke from fires in northeastern Minnesota and Ontario blanketed the Ashland Bay Area for three days beginning July 15, 2026, triggering a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources statewide air quality advisory that remained in effect until noon July 17. Air quality reached the hazardous, or maroon, category on the federal Air Quality Index on July 16, a level designating emergency conditions for all exposed persons. Ashland County Health Officer Liz Kulbacki reported that multiple residents required increased rescue inhaler use during the event, though no specific health emergencies were formally reported to her office. Big Top Chautauqua postponed a concert to 2027, a decision Executive Director Garry Schalla attributed to performer health concerns, and 14 boat tours were canceled regionally. An interagency incident management team briefing held July 20 in Ely, Minnesota, reported that smoke volume had dropped significantly but cautioned that dry conditions and winds up to 35 mph could renew smoke generation.

Source: Ashland Daily Press (Central/Northern) | https://apg-wi.com/ashland_daily_press/paywall/as-air-quality-clears-smoke-leaves-economic-mark/article_32a345c4-b06e-437b-bfad-c4a1b9702d9c.html

School Districts

Beloit schools referendum talk to heat up

The School District of Beloit Board of Education held a special meeting Monday, July 21, 2026, to debate placing a fourth referendum on the ballot this decade, but reached no decision. The board's three previous referendums, in April 2023, 2024, and 2025, each failed, with margins of 403 votes, 958 votes, and 141 votes respectively; the 2025 measure would have authorized \$40.25 million in additional revenue over three years. New interim superintendent Leah Gordon, who succeeded retired interim superintendent Wayne Anderson, now leads referendum planning after former superintendent Willie Garrison II resigned last October. The board discussed whether to target a November 2026 ballot, which would require finalizing a ballot question and adopting a referendum resolution by the end of August, or to defer to April. District enrollment has fallen from more than 7,000 students in 2014 to fewer than 4,800 in the most recent year. The board's next discussion is scheduled for the following Monday.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/education/beloit-schools-referendum-talk-to-heat-up/article_b3f712d5-badb-4abd-9810-ab37a13f870d.html

Racine Schools set new limits on student cellphone use this school year

The Racine Unified School District Board of Education adopted a revised student cellphone policy on a 4-1 vote, with board member Scott Coey casting the lone dissenting vote, alongside approval of the district's interim budget. The policy prohibits device use during instructional time for all

students and imposes stricter storage requirements for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. District officials will review the policy during the school year to assess implementation. On the budget side, the state's special education reimbursement rate is now projected at 39.5 percent against a 45 percent target, yielding an additional \$1.8 million for the district. The interim budget carries the previously reported property tax rate of \$8.07 per \$1,000 of assessed value for 2026-27 and the district's projected \$51 million structural deficit by 2031. Final budget and levy adoption is scheduled for October.

Source: Racine County Eye (Southeastern) | <https://racinecountyeve.com/2026/07/23/racine-schools-new-limits-cellphone/>

Siren School town hall set for July 28 as districts hear options

The Siren School Board scheduled a public town hall for Tuesday, July 28, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. to discuss issues facing the district, including potential referendum questions, athletics, and extracurriculars, using small breakout discussion groups. The meeting follows a joint committee-of-the-whole session held July 21 in the Siren auditorium, where board members from the Siren, Frederic, and Webster school districts heard Wisconsin Association of School Boards presenter Ben Niehaus outline options including whole-grade sharing, tuition agreements, open enrollment, and shared services. No formal action was taken at the July 21 meeting. Siren School Board President Katie Tewalt and Superintendent Kevin Shetler are accepting community topic submissions by noon Tuesday. Frederic Superintendent Kyle Luedtke said no changes are anticipated before the 2026-27 school year begins, though 2027-28 modifications remain possible. The three districts already share staff and sports co-ops across several programs.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/siren-school-town-hall-set-for-july-28-as-districts-hear-options/article_39944110-d4a4-479d-b7a4-78f160a08987.html

Milwaukee Public Schools weighs sending more students on county buses to cut transportation costs

Milwaukee Public Schools is evaluating a transportation overhaul that would shift more high school students from yellow buses to Milwaukee County Transit System routes to close a roughly \$3.5 million budget gap in the fiscal year that began July 2026. Senior Director of Transportation Services David Fifarek told the school board in June that most changes will not take effect until the 2027-28 school year to allow for community engagement. Approximately one-fifth of district high schoolers currently ride the transit system to school; students living more than seven miles from their high school are assigned to county buses while those within seven miles ride yellow buses. A district-commissioned analysis by 4MATIV found that 73 percent of trackable district bus trips arrive on time, though less than half of all trips could be confirmed on schedule. The transit system proposed on July 15 cutting bus service by 25 percent in 2027 to address its own \$14 million deficit. Fifarek said the district's final plan will depend on the outcome of a 12-to-15-month system redesign process.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Southeastern) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/07/milwaukee-public-schools-county-buses-students-transportation-costs-long-waits/>

Homeschooling growing faster than participation in Wisconsin's public or private schools

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction released enrollment data showing 32,891 children were homeschooled in the state, a nearly 6 percent increase since 2025. Over the same period, private school enrollment rose 0.1 percent while public school enrollment fell 1.7 percent, a loss of 14,087 students. The Wisconsin Policy Forum published an accompanying School DataTool allowing comparison of all public school districts across metrics including finances, graduation rates, test scores, demographics, and chronic absenteeism. Deputy Research Director Sara Shaw noted that homeschooling stood at 966 students in 1985, fluctuated between roughly 18,000 and 21,600 from 2000 to 2020, then surged by more than 10,000 during the pandemic, with those students not returning to traditional schools. Wisconsin's high school graduation rate has reached 92 percent, the highest since 2012, while math and reading scores remain below 2019 levels. Shaw identified Wisconsin's Black-white achievement gap as the largest in the country after Washington, D.C.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Statewide) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/homeschooling-growing-faster-in-wisconsins-public-private-schools>

D.C. Everest students will return to school early this year

The D.C. Everest Area School District Board of Education approved a calendar change moving the 2026-27 school year start date to August 25, approximately one week earlier than the district's normal schedule and ahead of the standard September 1 floor set by Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction rules. The department granted the authorization required under state regulation for the earlier start. A calendar committee comprising students, staff, and community members selected the new date, citing two rationales: reducing the number of days the district must separately fund transportation for private and parochial school students, a statutory obligation, and distributing student and staff breaks more evenly across the year. Superintendent Casey Nye stated the district will maintain the same total number of instructional minutes. The calendar committee is scheduled to reconvene in winter to evaluate the change and begin planning the following school year's calendar.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/07/20/dc-everest-students-will-return-school-early-this-year/>

Former DC Everest employee pleads guilty to child sex crimes

Bennet Schmitz, a former Recreation Coordinator at the Greenheck Turner Community Center within the D.C. Everest Area School District, pleaded guilty on July 22, 2026, in Milwaukee County court to one count of child enticement involving sexual contact and one count of sexual assault of a student by school staff. A third charge was dismissed but remains eligible for consideration at sentencing. Schmitz was hired by the district on July 1, 2024, after passing a required criminal background check, and was separated from employment on October 25, 2025, following his October 20, 2025, arrest by the Greenfield Police Department. Superintendent Casey Nye stated the district was not aware of any investigation into Schmitz prior to his arrest. Upon learning of the arrest, the district locked Schmitz's electronic equipment, disabled his key card access, and placed him on leave. Sentencing is scheduled for September 24, 2026.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/07/22/former-dc-everest-employee-pleads-guilty-child-sex-crimes/>

Here are the 29 renaming proposals for two Madison elementary schools

The Madison Metropolitan School District is advancing renaming processes for two elementary schools after the School Board approved establishing two ad hoc renaming committees in March 2026. Lindbergh Elementary and Elvehjem Elementary are each under review. Two separate virtual public hearings were scheduled for Thursday, July 23, from 6 to 7 p.m. for Elvehjem and 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. for Lindbergh, streamed on the School Board's video channel. A combined 29 community proposals are under consideration: 17 honor deceased individuals, six are geographic references, and six are conceptual names. Three names appear on both schools' lists. Following the hearings, each committee may submit up to four names to the School Board no sooner than 14 days later, and the board's next eligible full meeting is August 24.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/education/here-are-the-29-renaming-proposals-for-two-madison-elementary-schools/article_d80b564d-e5b3-46b6-a26b-9bb104238568.html

Madison Metropolitan School District invites community to help rename Chávez Elementary School

The Madison Metropolitan School District announced a virtual public hearing on July 30, 2026, from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. to gather community input on renaming César Chávez Elementary School. The hearing is the next formal step in the district's community-driven naming process, overseen by a Citizens' Naming Committee and the district Board of Education. During a prior public submission period, community members proposed 76 names, of which 16 have been advanced for public consideration. Associate Superintendent of Educational Programming Chelsey Tubbs is identified as the district spokesperson for the process. Students, staff, and families connected to the school are invited to participate. Following the public hearing, the Board of Education is expected to make a final naming decision.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/07/24/madison-metropolitan-school-district-invites-community-help-rename-chvez-elementary-school/>

Separate girls wrestling program could be coming to Kaukauna High School

The Kaukauna Area School District Board of Education is scheduled to vote Monday, July 27, on authorizing a head coach position for a new high school girls wrestling program. The staff memo supporting the action projects a minimum of six to 10 girls participating in the program's first year, and the head coach position carries a cost of \$5,197. The district already fields a girls wrestling program at the middle school level. Girls wrestling was sanctioned by the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association as a championship sport in June 2020, and more than 150 Wisconsin schools currently have girls teams. The board meeting is set for 6 p.m. at the district offices at 1701 County Road CE, Kaukauna.

Source: Kaukauna Community News (Northeastern) | <https://kaukaunacommunitynews.com/2026/07/24/separate-girls-wrestling-program-could-be-coming-to-kaukauna-high-school/>

Message not delivered

The Gilman School Board, at its July 20 meeting, took up policy action in response to Wisconsin Act 89, which requires school districts to adopt policies regulating communication between students and staff. The board worked to align district policy with the state mandate while addressing student safety. The published text does not report a final vote count, specific policy identifiers, or the precise policy language adopted, but confirms the board was actively

responding to the Act 89 compliance requirement as of the July 20 meeting. Act 89 establishes a statewide regulatory floor for student-staff communication standards that districts must meet. The next procedural step was not specified.

Source: Medford Star News (Central/Northern) | <https://www.centralwinews.com/a-main/2026/07/22/message-not-delivered/?destination=star-news>

New assistant principal brings tech-forward approach to Siren

The Siren School District introduced two new administrative personnel at a board of education committee-of-the-whole meeting on Monday, July 21, 2026. Aaron Fezzey was hired as the district's new PreK-12 principal, and Kiera Bridley was appointed as the new assistant principal. Both administrators attended the meeting as their first official appearance before the board in their new roles. No vote counts, salary figures, or contract terms are reported. The next procedural step referenced is a Siren School town hall set for July 28.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/fezzey-bridley-web-jpg/image_e04f41aa-96e6-4178-949f-945dcc8e552b.html

Education Department limits civil rights investigations into racial disparities in schools

The U.S. Department of Education announced Thursday a regulatory change prohibiting its Office for Civil Rights investigators from using broad demographic statistics, including discipline rates, Advanced Placement enrollment figures, and school admissions data, as the sole basis for finding civil rights violations. Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Kimberly Richey announced the change, which eliminates disparate impact analysis as a primary investigative tool across federally funded schools nationwide. The policy shift has direct Wisconsin precedent: a 2016 Office for Civil Rights investigation cited a disparity in the Madison Metropolitan School District where approximately 40 percent of white middle school students were identified as advanced learners, compared with 9 percent of Hispanic and 6 percent of Black middle schoolers, resulting in a settlement requiring the district to review its advanced programs. Critics including the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law assert the agency bypassed standard notice-and-comment rulemaking procedures in adopting the change.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (Statewide) | <https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/07/24/education-department-limits-civil-rights-investigations-into-racial-disparities-in-schools>

A Wisconsin school district made summer school fun. Now 2,600 kids show up.

The Pulaski Community School District operates a six-week summer school program that enrolls more than 2,600 students, representing 68 percent of the district's total enrollment. The free program, administered through Pulaski Area Community Education under Director Mark Heck, is held at Pulaski Community Middle School. The program launched 22 years ago as a small multi-site offering limited by state funding rules that previously restricted reimbursable programming to a few hours per day. After the state changed its rules to allow funding for eligible programs throughout the full day and summer, Heck expanded the model to include elective courses such as cooking, swimming, knitting, science experiments, and American Sign Language alongside structured reading and math remediation for students performing below grade level. Every classroom is staffed by at least a two-adult team. The program also addresses a logistical barrier

by providing on-site child care for participating educators. No upcoming vote or formal approval action was reported.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Northeastern) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/07/wisconsin-summer-school-pulaski-district-child-education-classroom-fun/>

State-Local Interface

PSC fires back in rate rule fight with Oracle

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission on July 9 filed a motion in Ozaukee County Circuit Court asking Judge Sandy Williams to dismiss Oracle America Cloud Services LLC's June 19 lawsuit challenging the commission's credit standards for electrical customers consuming 100 megawatts or more. The commission argued that the suit seeks to exempt Oracle's dealings with Wisconsin Electric Power Co. from commission oversight entirely and would overturn more than 100 years of established case law. Wisconsin Electric has now intervened in support of Oracle's position, placing the regulated utility opposite its own regulator, while the Citizens Utility Board and Clean Wisconsin are seeking party status in opposition. The commission separately allowed a related petition by Wisconsin Electric, Vantage Data Centers, and Cloverleaf Infrastructure to expire without action. The disputed very large customer tariff and bespoke resource tariff require companies rated below A- to post financial guarantees Oracle has said could exceed \$100 million annually.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Statewide) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/psc-fires-back-rate-rule-fight-oracle>

New pilot program seeks to make domestic abuse restraining order requests easier to file

The Wisconsin Court System launched a pilot program to streamline online filing of domestic abuse temporary restraining order petitions, beginning with eight counties before a planned statewide rollout. The mobile-first, plain-language portal allows users to generate circuit court forms and submit them electronically without requiring in-person courthouse visits. Participating pilot counties are Adams, Barron, Brown, Dane, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Sauk, and Waukesha. Chief Justice Jill J. Karofsky and Director of State Courts Audrey K. Skwierawski were identified as lead officials overseeing the initiative. Feedback collected from the eight pilot sites will be used to refine the portal prior to statewide deployment. The Wisconsin Court System has set the end of August 2026 as the target date for full statewide availability.

Source: WXPB 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Statewide) | <https://www.wxpr.org/crime-courts/2026-07-23/new-pilot-program-seeks-to-make-domestic-abuse-restraining-order-requests-easier-to-file>

Wisconsin eases nursing school faculty requirements

Gov. Tony Evers approved an emergency rule change on July 20, 2026, easing faculty qualification requirements for Wisconsin nursing school clinical courses. The change, which follows a recommendation from the Governor's Task Force on the Healthcare Workforce, replaces the previous general requirement of a master's degree in nursing for clinical instructors. Under the new pathway, qualified faculty must hold a bachelor's degree in nursing, hold a current and unencumbered Wisconsin registered nurse license, and have at least two years of clinical experience relevant to the specific area they would teach. Faculty must also meet one of three

additional conditions: enrollment in a graduate program with steady progress toward completion, completion of graduate-level courses in clinical best practices, or possession of a national certification in a relevant nursing specialty. Faculty teaching under this pathway must practice under the supervision of a registered nurse meeting traditional qualifications. The published announcement does not report a specified expiration date for the emergency rule.

Source: WKOW ABC27 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.wkow.com/news/wisconsin-eases-nursing-school-faculty-requirements/article_99ee17bd-2265-44b1-a5db-a7ef1830eb0c.html

Gov. Evers Appoints Judge Todd Ziegler to the Court of Appeals – District IV

Gov. Tony Evers appointed Monroe County Circuit Court Judge Todd Ziegler to the Wisconsin Court of Appeals District IV, filling the vacancy created by Judge Chris Taylor's election to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. Ziegler will serve a term ending July 31, 2027. He has served as a Monroe County Circuit Court judge since 2007, a tenure of 19 years, and has been deputy chief judge of the 7th Judicial District since 2023. He currently serves as the presiding judge of Monroe County. Earlier in his career he practiced as a general practice attorney in Sparta. He implemented Monroe County's first OWI Treatment Court and received the Wisconsin Association of Treatment Court Professionals' Hero Award in 2023 and Jack Aulik Award in 2026. Ziegler is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and the University of Wisconsin Law School.

Source: Monroe County Herald (Sparta) (Statewide) | <https://monroecountyherald.com/stories/gov-evers-appoints-judge-todd-ziegler-to-the-court-of-appeals-district-iv,175257>

Wisconsin, coalition of states, win lawsuit against Trump administration cutting federal grants

U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani of the District of Massachusetts ruled Friday that the White House Office of Management and Budget acted illegally when it revoked federal grants awarded to states. Talwani found that the office lacked authority to cancel grants on the basis of policy priorities announced after those grants had already been awarded. Wisconsin, joined by 22 other states and Washington, D.C., filed the lawsuit after the federal agency pulled back grant funds. The Wisconsin Department of Justice reported the state lost tens of millions of dollars in federal grant funding across multiple programs, including grants to supply Wisconsin-grown food to local food banks, modernize the state's unemployment system, and fund research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul announced the ruling in a press release. No immediate next procedural step was reported, and the ruling's effect on restoring the revoked grant funds was not specified.

Source: Racine County Eye (Statewide) | <https://racinecountyeeye.com/2026/07/23/wisconsin-wins-lawsuit-trump-grant/>

WI DNR Offers Grants to Expand E-Recycling

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is accepting applications for electronic recycling grants through its E-Cycle Wisconsin program, with up to \$150,000 available in the current funding round. Eligible applicants include businesses, local governments, tribal government bodies, and nonprofits. Individual awards are capped at \$5,000 per collection event and \$15,000 per permanent collection site, and grant funds may be used for staffing, transportation, and advertising costs. The department will give funding priority to projects in eleven counties that currently lack a permanent E-Cycle Wisconsin collection site open to all

residents: Calumet, Crawford, Florence, Forest, Green Lake, Iowa, Iron, Jackson, Marquette, Price, and Taylor. Both one-time collection events and permanent sites are eligible for funding. The published announcement does not specify an application deadline or award announcement date.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Statewide) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/23/wi-dnr-offers-grants-expand-e-recycling/>

Green Bay announces UW system's first reduced-credit bachelor's degree

UW-Green Bay will launch the Universities of Wisconsin system's first reduced-credit bachelor's degree beginning fall 2026, offering a computer science degree requiring 100 credits instead of the standard 120. The UW Board of Regents voted in March to authorize all 13 Universities of Wisconsin institutions to offer shorter degrees after the Higher Learning Commission released new guidelines in 2024 for reduced-credit programs. UW-Green Bay spokesperson Kristin Bouchard stated that students completing the 100-credit path will save approximately \$8,200 in tuition and fees compared with the full program. Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Kate Burns said the shorter degree allows students to enter the workforce faster while preserving access to the full 120-credit pathway, and both tracks will remain available simultaneously. UW-Milwaukee has publicly expressed interest in three-year degrees as a member of the College-in-3 initiative. No additional campus launch dates were announced.

Source: WiscNews (Statewide) | https://wiscnews.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_3b26a57b-945d-512e-96cc-09b699d9b68c.html

Groups fear endangered species in Wisconsin are at risk under regulatory rollback

The Trump administration on Friday finalized a rule narrowing the definition of harm under the 1973 Endangered Species Act, limiting it to direct killing or injury and removing habitat degradation as a covered harm for the first time since 1975. Wisconsin has 25 federally threatened or endangered species affected by the change, according to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, including the northern long-eared bat, Karner blue butterfly, and piping plover. Department of Interior Secretary Doug Burgum announced the decision, citing concerns about federal overreach and costs to families and businesses. Conservation groups filed lawsuits this week challenging the rule. Wisconsin's Green Fire executive director Meleesa Johnson and University of Wisconsin-Madison emeritus professor Stan Temple both identified habitat loss as the primary threat to listed species. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service spokesperson stated the agency will vigorously defend the rule in litigation.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Statewide) | <https://www.wxpr.org/energy-environment/2026-07-24/groups-fear-endangered-species-in-wisconsin-are-at-risk-under-regulatory-rollback>

Invasive vines found in Oconto, Shawano counties

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources announced the confirmed presence of pale swallow-wort, an invasive vine, in Oconto and Shawano counties, marking the first known populations of the species in the state. The sites were discovered on the outskirts of the town of Krakow along the shared county line and were initially reported by the Timberland Invasives Partnership through the Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System. Pale swallow-wort is classified as a prohibited invasive species under Wisconsin's Invasive Species Rule, ch. NR 40, established in 2009 and last revised in 2015, which makes it unlawful to transport, transfer,

introduce, or possess the species in the state. The department identified the find as requiring rapid response to prevent establishment. Members of the public who believe they have located the species are directed to report sightings, including location, photos, population size, and landownership information, to the department.

Source: EagleHerald (Statewide) | https://www.ehextra.com/community/invasive-vines-found-in-oconto-shawano-counties/article_37c434b1-31da-4f5f-b374-07533bd22a8a.html

GAO says fraud risk high in \$1.1T of state-run federal programs

The U.S. Government Accountability Office reports that 20 federal programs routing nearly \$1.1 trillion through state governments, including Medicaid, SNAP, and disaster relief, carry high fraud risk due to multi-layer fund distribution through states, subrecipients, contractors, and subcontractors. Federal audits from 2020 to 2024 found severe and persistent findings in 18 of the 20 programs. In SNAP alone, more than \$360 million in benefits were stolen from recipients between 2022 and 2024, affecting more than 753,000 households. The office estimates government-wide fraud losses at \$233 billion to \$521 billion annually, or roughly 3 to 7 percent of average federal obligations. It has issued approximately 50 recommendations to strengthen fraud controls; agencies have adopted 28, while 22 remain open at the Environmental Protection Agency, the Energy Department, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development. The office urged Congress to fund a permanent fraud-analytics center to address AI-assisted fraud schemes filing thousands of simultaneous claims.

Source: Barron News-Shield (Statewide) | https://news-shield.com/news/national/article_89a7ca6f-582b-5922-88a1-9f7cc8bb8eff.html

Bad River tribe, groups sue over waterway crossing approvals for Enbridge's Line 5 reroute

The Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Clean Wisconsin, 350 Wisconsin, and the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin filed suit Wednesday in Ashland County Circuit Court challenging Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources decisions authorizing Enbridge to conduct work at four waterway crossings along the Line 5 reroute. The department granted Enbridge one permit to cross Beartrap Creek and permit exemptions for Little Beartrap Creek, Bay City Creek, and an unnamed tributary to the Brunsweler River. Plaintiffs argue Enbridge lacked the adjacent land ownership required for eligibility at those crossings. In May a Bayfield County judge allowed reroute construction to proceed everywhere except those four waterways. Midwest Environmental Advocates represents 350 Wisconsin and the League of Women Voters. The \$450 million, 41-mile reroute crosses approximately 200 waterways and affects roughly 100 acres of wetlands in Ashland and Iron counties. A separate wetlands and waterway permit remains under litigation, and the department said it is reviewing the new lawsuit.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Statewide) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/bad-river-tribe-groups-sue-waterway-crossing-approvals-enbridge-line-5-reroute>

Wisconsin and other states notch win in lawsuit over soot pollution standards

A judge in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California ruled Friday that Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin must designate whether geographic areas meet fine particulate matter standards by February 6, 2027. Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul and a coalition of states filed the lawsuit in April after the agency missed a February

2025 statutory deadline to identify nonattainment areas under Clean Air Act requirements. The tighter soot standards, finalized in 2024, restrict fine particulate matter at 2.5 microns. The agency had projected the rule would prevent up to 4,500 premature deaths nationally and deliver up to \$46 billion in health benefits by 2032, and the environmental group Clean Wisconsin estimated the standards would avoid 40 deaths in Wisconsin. A separate federal appeals court upheld the tighter limits last month. The February 6, 2027, court-ordered deadline for nonattainment designations is the next operative milestone.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Statewide) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/wisconsin-win-lawsuit-soot-pollution-standards-epa>

Mining company's project in Wisconsin takes part in fast-tracked federal permitting process

The Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council announced Friday that GreenLight Metals' Bend project in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in Taylor County has been added to the federal FAST-41 permitting dashboard, a voluntary program established under the 2015 FAST Act to improve transparency and efficiency in infrastructure permitting. The Bend deposit contains approximately 4.2 million tons of ore consisting primarily of copper-bearing sulfides with significant gold and small amounts of silver. GreenLight, a Canadian company operating as GreenLight Wisconsin, is currently drilling 26 holes at the site and is seeking a prospecting permit from the Bureau of Land Management, with the Forest Service serving as lead agency. Under FAST-41 a dedicated advisor will be assigned and a permitting timeline developed, with quarterly compliance reports submitted to Congress. GreenLight's state drilling plans, submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in March, remain under review; department metallic mining coordinator Molly Gardner confirmed the company has not yet submitted a wetlands permit application.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Statewide) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/mining-companys-project-wisconsin-fast-tracked-federal-permitting>

WI DNR Offers Grants for Hunting Projects

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is offering cost-sharing grants through its Hunter Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation program, targeting local clubs, schools, and organizations seeking to recruit new hunters or reactivate former ones. The program operates as a reimbursement grant, though grantees may request partial quarterly reimbursements during a project's active period. Applications focus on funding education, training, and development of safe and ethical hunters and mentors. The department requires approximately one year for application approval, as the agency must first receive funding authorization before issuing official approval letters, and project work may not begin until an official approval letter is received. Applicants seeking preliminary feedback on project ideas may contact Emily Iehl, Hunting and Shooting Sports Specialist for the department. No grant dollar amounts, funding caps, or application deadlines were specified in the announcement.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Statewide) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/22/wi-dnr-offers-grants-hunting-projects/>

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.
