

Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing

July 11 to July 18, 2026

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

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Budgets and Finance

County bank account is in a healthy spot

Ozaukee County held nearly \$47.7 million in cash reserves as of June 2026, up more than \$5.2 million from the same point in 2024 and more than double the \$22.1 million held in June 2019, according to County Administrator Jason Dzwinel. The county received \$17.3 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funds, distributing more than \$3 million to municipalities for emergency medical services and more than \$1 million to nonprofits. Interest earnings through June totaled \$880,736, per County Treasurer Sandi Tretow, compared with \$1.82 million for all of 2025, and sales tax collections through April reached \$4.28 million, up from \$3.59 million in the same period of 2025. The County Board approved in February paying off approximately \$1.2 million in bonds, a step Dzwinel said will save more than \$4 million in future debt service. Dzwinel noted a portion of current reserves represents property tax collections held on behalf of municipalities.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/county-bank-account-healthy-spot>

Fees going up

The Medford City Council is planning a 15 percent increase in garbage and recycling fees, effective in 2027, prompted by the pending expiration of the city's current solid waste contract, as discussed during the committee-of-the-whole portion of the July 14, 2026 meeting. The council separately voted to purchase the building at 136 W. Broadway Ave. in downtown Medford, which previously served as offices for Industrial Credit Union and most recently as rental offices. Mayor Laura Holmes said the city intends to demolish the building to improve sight lines along the Highway 64 corridor and is evaluating future redevelopment options for the site. A church currently renting the building will remain in occupancy through November 30, 2026. No purchase price was reported. Formal council action on the garbage and recycling rate increase will occur ahead of the 2027 budget cycle.

Source: Medford Star News (Central/Northern) | <https://www.centralwinews.com/a-main/2026/07/15/fees-going-up/?destination=star-news>

Marathon County confronts rising infrastructure costs

The Marathon County Infrastructure Committee met July 9, 2026, to address budget pressures across highway, parks, and forestry operations. Highway Commissioner Eric Burmeister reported the county budgeted \$1.5 million for snow and ice removal and has spent approximately \$1.46 million, leaving a combined balance of roughly \$260,000, including a \$132,000 Wisconsin Disaster Fund reimbursement, to cover November and December operations. Burmeister announced cancellation of a planned \$380,000 chip seal project to protect the county roads and bridges special revenue fund, which was also drawn down by a DNR-mandated cofferdam requirement on the County Trunk C bridge over the Wausaukee River. Forestry Administrator Ryan Bourassa warned timber revenues will likely fall well short of the county's \$4.2 million projection, with June preliminary figures of \$325,000 compared with \$587,000 in June 2025 and a mill shutdown expected in August. The forestry department has already eliminated a scaler technician position and will tighten overtime and redirect state-assisted labor toward forest inventory if markets remain weak.

Source: EagleHerald (Central/Northern) | https://www.ehextra.com/news/marinette-county-confronts-rising-infrastructure-costs/article_2fb66b55-6cf8-4837-833e-0c1460436f95.html

Chippewa County approves borrowing package, filling treasurer and board vacancy

The Chippewa County Board on July 15, 2026, unanimously approved a \$7.5 million borrowing package for highway improvement projects on a 19-0 supermajority vote, as required for debt authorization. The board also voted unanimously to appoint rather than hold a special election for a replacement to County Treasurer Patricia Schimmel, who will retire in October after 42 years, because a special election could not have been held before April 2027; the appointed position carries a salary of \$83,713 for 2026, rising to \$87,095 for 2028, with the appointee required to win re-election in November 2028. County Administrator Andy Albarado outlined a timeline to bring a hiring vote to the board in September. Separately, the board voted 18-1 to appoint Les Danielson to the Sixth District supervisor seat vacated by the death of Tim Goettl, with Danielson serving through April 2028. The board also unanimously approved broadband expansion agreements with Ntera LLC and CTC Telecom/Mosaic Technologies.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/daily-updates/chippewa-county-approves-borrowing-package-filling-treasurer-and-board-vacancy/article_ef9f0fd5-404a-49d0-adcf-2bfa1ffd328d.html

Chippewa County to meet with accounting firm on hospital feasibility study

The Chippewa County Executive Committee will meet July 22, 2026, to begin an independent review of the feasibility study supporting a \$10 million loan request from Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative, which seeks to reopen the former HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls. County Administrator Andy Albarado engaged Baker Tilly for the review at a cost of \$45,000, funded from the county's Land Development Fund. Baker Tilly will assess assumptions in a feasibility study previously prepared by Wipfli for the cooperative, analyze regional health care competition, and evaluate the financial impact of federal legislation including HR1. The county's loan structure would channel funds from the Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands State Trust Fund through the county to the cooperative, with the county retaining ultimate liability for repayment. The cooperative purchased the former hospital building in July 2025, and the total estimated cost to fully reopen is \$30 million, with a targeted operational date of spring 2027. Baker Tilly's review is expected to conclude within six weeks, and no county board vote date has been announced.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/front-page/chippewa-county-to-meet-with-accounting-firm-on-hospital-feasibility-study/article_b6e33c33-b41b-41d6-9f28-a820c77fccf3.html

Council rejects two library change orders, approves third

The Stanley Common Council, meeting in a July 9, 2026 special session, rejected two change orders from contractor Hoeft related to an ongoing library project and approved a third. Change Order 17, valued at \$28,154.28, was rejected on the recommendation of Library Director Elizabeth Miniatt and the library board, who argued acoustical tile work had been specified in the original bid documents but omitted by Hoeft's subcontractor, making it ineligible for a change order. Change Order 21, totaling \$3,208.90 for garbage disposal installation at two sinks, was also rejected as the library board deemed the work optional and cited the cumulative cost impact of prior and anticipated change orders. Change Order 20, for \$3,133.73 covering light fixtures, was approved

contingent on credit verification for returned trim items. The special meeting was called because the items had not appeared on the preceding Monday's regular agenda, requiring formal renoticing.

Source: Stanley Republican (Western) | <https://stanleyrepublican.com/stories/untitled,198415>

ANNOUNCEMENT: Collective Bargaining Training

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Workforce and Labor

Wisconsin Valley Library Service director to retire after 45-year career

Marla Sepnafski, director of Wisconsin Valley Library Service, will retire July 24, 2026, ending a 45-year career with public libraries in north-central Wisconsin. Sepnafski has led the Wausau-based regional system since 2007, having begun with Wisconsin Valley Library Service in 1981 as a part-time mail clerk and been promoted to assistant director in 1996. The regional system supports 33 public libraries across Clark, Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, and Taylor counties. Sonja Ackerman, a member of the Wisconsin Valley Library Service Board of Trustees, is quoted in the coverage. No successor appointment, interim arrangement, or next procedural step in the succession process is reported.

Source: Wausau Pilot & Review (Central/Northern) | <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/07/17/wisconsin-valley-library-service-director-to-retire-after-45-year-career/>

Wausau HR director Lisa Nowak resigns

Wausau Human Resources Director Lisa Nowak has submitted her resignation, effective July 31, 2026. Nowak was appointed to the position in April 2025, giving her approximately 15 months of service to the city. Her departure creates a vacancy in a senior executive role responsible for citywide human resources functions. The city stated it will begin planning for a permanent successor and prioritize a smooth transition, though no interim appointment, search timeline, or recruiting-process details were specified.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/07/14/ausau-hr-director-lisa-nowak-resigns/>

Rhineland City Administrator officially resigns

Rhineland City Administrator Patrick Reagan formally resigned at a City Council meeting on July 13, 2026, with his departure effective in August 2026, to assume the City Manager position in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Alderperson Thomas Barnett stated on the record that council members learned of the resignation through local media rather than official administration communication, calling the omission unprofessional and noting that the City Council holds formal authority over hiring the city administrator. At the same meeting, the council approved two ordinances: one establishing a no-turn-on-red restriction at the intersection of Oneida Avenue and Lincoln Street, and one permitting UTVs and ATVs on Lincoln Street between Oneida Avenue and Eisenhower Parkway. No successor or interim administrator was named, and the council's next steps regarding the vacancy were not reported.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhineland (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/rhineland-city-administrator-officially-resigns/article_8e8402cf-32a9-49f2-aa38-e9e7bde4d836.html

Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee appoints new chief operations officer

The Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee appointed Zena Farah as its new chief operations officer, the agency announced July 17, 2026. Farah will lead the authority's public housing, affordable housing, and Housing Choice Voucher programs, with responsibility for strategic oversight of housing operations, regulatory compliance, and resident services. She brings more than 16 years of prior experience at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, where she held multiple leadership roles supporting public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, and multifamily housing programs, and most recently served as regional property manager with KMG Prestige. Secretary-Executive Director Harold S. Ince Jr. announced the appointment. No start date was specified beyond that Farah will begin her role with her accumulated experience in affordable housing and property management.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/milwaukee-county/housing-authority-of-the-city-of-milwaukee-appoints-new-chief-operations-officer>

Infrastructure and Utilities

Grafton residents call for dam to be repaired

The Grafton Village Board is holding a decision on the fate of the Bridge Street dam until a public hearing at 6 p.m. Monday, August 3, 2026, at Village Hall, following a June vote in which the board unanimously postponed action for 60 days to research whether to repair or remove the structure.

The dam's hydraulic cylinder failed on the night of May 1, draining the millpond and exposing mudflats along the Milwaukee River. A study by dam consultant J.F. Brennan Co. of La Crosse attributed the failure to a faulty hydraulic cylinder; village staff estimated repair costs at \$154,000 using a refurbished cylinder or \$180,000 using a new one, and recommended purchasing a new cylinder. Village Administrator Tim Wellnitz confirmed that competitive bids will be among options the board considers at the August 3 meeting, which state and village law require for projects costing \$50,000 or more. Village President Dan Delorit stated the village will hold a public hearing before any final decision.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/grafon-residents-call-dam-be-repaired>

Group claims power lines application incomplete

Responsible Energy Alliance, a citizen coalition representing residents of Saukville, Trenton, Fredonia, and Farmington, filed an expedited motion with the Wisconsin Public Service Commission asking the agency to rescind its December 15 determination that American Transmission Company's application to extend high-voltage power lines to the Vantage Data Centers Lighthouse Campus in Port Washington was complete. The group contends the application violates Wisconsin law requiring new lines to follow existing utility corridors absent extenuating circumstances, and argues the company has not justified its preferred and preferred-contingent routes through ecologically sensitive greenfields. The motion requests that if the commission declines to rescind its completeness finding, it instead order the company to permanently withdraw those two greenfield routes. Similar motions were filed by Restoring Lands and Town of Saukville residents Tom and Mary Uttech. A July 17 deadline to file direct testimony makes the matter time sensitive; if the commission rescinds its completeness finding, the company would be required to file a new application and restart the review process.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/group-claims-power-lines-application-incomplete>

Marinette approves \$8.8 million city hall/police department project

The Marinette Common Council voted 5-1 at a special meeting July 15, 2026, to accept an approximately \$8.8 million plan to remodel the former National Guard armory on Mary Street into a combined city hall and police department. Council President Dorothy Kowalski presided in place of excused Mayor Steve Genisot, and three alderpersons were also excused. The Boldt Company's base construction bid is \$7,587,787, covering the city hall and police department remodel but excluding a police garage; with soft costs and selected alternates, the working project total is \$8,802,378. A precast attached garage previously bid as an add alternate came in at approximately \$1.47 million and was removed from Boldt's scope after the first bid round exceeded earlier budgets, and the council separately approved a storm sewer line alternate at approximately \$90,130 to accommodate a future garage. The project addresses facility deficiencies in the city's 1957-era city hall, a priority first identified in a 2014 facilities plan.

Source: EagleHerald (Northeastern) | https://www.ehextra.com/news/marinette-approves-8-8-million-city-hall-police-department-project/article_e1bb36a5-9384-436f-bf15-000e46595e7e.html

Dane County to hold public meeting on County AB improvements

The Dane County Highway and Transportation Department will hold a public involvement meeting July 22, 2026, at the McFarland Municipal Center, to present planned improvements for 1.5 miles of County Highway AB between Millpond Road and County Highway MN. Proposed improvements include lowering two hills by approximately five and ten feet for sight-distance gains, widening paved shoulders from three feet to five feet, adding right-turn lanes at the Siggelkow Road intersection, and pulverizing existing asphalt to install five inches of new hot-mix asphalt surface. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2027, and permanent and temporary real estate acquisitions are anticipated. Separately, at the July 14 McFarland Village Board meeting, trustees voted unanimously to accept 30 percent design plans for improving Siggelkow Road from Catalina Parkway to County AB, with both design options including a ten-foot-wide off-road bike path on the road's south side. No definitive construction timeline for Siggelkow has been established.

Source: Waterloo/Marshall Courier (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/leader_independent/news/local/dane-county-to-hold-public-meeting-on-county-ab-improvements/article_7c2ed33e-5aa2-402d-9967-5fd4b3b535e6.html

Local costs a factor in I-794 removal proposal

Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson announced on July 8, 2026, that he does not support the partial removal of Interstate 794, favoring instead ramp reconfiguration options estimated by WisDOT at \$675 million to \$1 billion and requiring two to four years to complete. City Engineer Kevin Muhs told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel that the removal alternative would likely strip I-794 of its interstate classification, shifting a significant share of surface-street upgrade costs, including a new Clybourn Street lift bridge over the Milwaukee River, to the city. The freeway removal option is estimated at \$850 million to \$1.25 billion and would take four to six years. WisDOT regional communications manager Trevor Fannon said cost-sharing responsibilities have not been determined and will be established during final design. Rethink 794 spokesman Taylor Korslin called on WisDOT to pause \$9.6 million in ongoing maintenance work on the removal section and redirect those funds to city street repairs. Common Council members Alex Brower, Robert Bauman, and Sharlen Moore publicly support the removal option.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Southeastern) | <https://dailyreporter.com/2026/07/17/milwaukee-mayor-local-costs-i-794-removal-proposal/>

City of Eau Claire says they are 'on track' for paid parking this August

The Eau Claire City Council voted July 13, 2026, on ordinance items tied to the city's paid on-street parking launch, including removal of the Block Face Parking system, implementation of Quick Stop Parking, and extension of paid parking rules to the City Hall lot. Parking Administrator Aaron Roths confirmed the city has received all 25 kiosks, which accept coin and card payments, and that concrete pads were poured for installation ahead of an August 1 effective date. Hourly rates will be \$1.00 for core downtown streets and \$0.50 for adjacent streets including South Dewey, Doty, Seavers, and Emery, with parking free before 1 p.m. and all day Sunday and holidays. The system establishes 28 designated Quick Stop Spots allowing free parking for 15 minutes or less, and business employees may purchase monthly permits for the Gibson ramp's top floor at \$5 per month. The city plans a two-week grace period of warnings before citations are issued, with payment accepted through the Passport Parking mobile app.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/city-of-eau-claire-says-they-are-on-track-for-paid-parking-this-august/article_2fe94d51-b53f-4778-b486-7d2cd555bed6.html

Sheboygan Eyes State Funding for Stoplight Replacements

Sheboygan's Public Works Committee unanimously approved two resolutions authorizing Mayor Ryan Sorenson to enter into State/Municipal agreements with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to replace traffic signals at two intersections along 14th Street, at North 14th Street and Erie Avenue and at South 14th Street and Indiana Avenue. WisDOT awarded approximately \$1.7 million for the projects, with the city required to provide a local match of just under \$200,000. City Engineer Kevin Jump told the committee that Department of Public Works staff have responded to 27 total incidents damaging existing traffic signals at both intersections since 2020, establishing the replacement need. The approved resolutions cover new stoplight installation and intersection reconstruction at both locations, and the matter now advances to the Common Council for final approval.

Source: Seehafer News (Southeastern) | <https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/07/18/sheboygan-eyes-state-funding-for-stoplight-replacements/>

Wausau Police Department could move to former UWSP-Wausau building

Wausau's Committee of the Whole voted 9-1 on July 14, 2026, to direct staff to prepare a response to Marathon County's Request for Proposals to relocate the Wausau Police Department to the former UW-Stevens Point Wausau campus. Police Chief Matt Barnes presented the proposal, citing capacity constraints at the current headquarters where closets have been converted to offices and a bathroom repurposed as a drug-testing ventilation area. Barnes identified the campus's North and South Hall as potential space for training, investigations, and community engagement, and said the existing police building could be converted into a central fire station. A firm specializing in public safety facilities quoted \$25,000 for a comprehensive needs assessment and renovation cost estimate for North/South Hall, with a parallel fire station conversion assessment estimated at \$10,000 to \$15,000. The Wausau School District has expressed interest in co-locating administrative offices on the campus to help offset operating costs. A budget modification will be handled separately through the finance committee and full council in August.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/07/15/wausau-police-department-could-move-former-uwsp-wausau-building/>

Dane County Regional Airport now eligible for federal noise mitigation funding

The Federal Aviation Administration approved the Noise Compatibility Program for Dane County Regional Airport and posted the determination to the Federal Register, making the airport eligible to request federal noise mitigation funds. The airport had withdrawn from federal funding in 2025 to gather additional community input and improve its competitive position for future funding. The approved program allows the airport to request federal dollars for two categories of expenditure: land acquisition, and individual home improvements including upgraded windows, HVAC systems, doors, and insulation. Executive Director Mark Papko and County Executive Melissa Agard credited U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin and Representative Mark Pocan with securing FAA acceptance of community-requested additions to the noise plan. The airport had set a single-year passenger record prior to the 2025 withdrawal and will now proceed with submitting formal federal funding requests under the approved program.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/07/16/dane-county-regional-airport-now-eligible-federal-noise-mitigation-funding/>

Water utility arguments aired at first public meeting

The City of Superior held its first public meeting July 15, 2026, at Billings Park Civic Center to present multiple perspectives on the city's potential acquisition of the drinking water utility currently operated by Superior Water, Light and Power. Mayor Jim Paine represented the city's position in favor of acquisition, while Bill Fennessey of the Superior Community Coalition, a former Superior Water, Light and Power employee who retired 11 years ago after 40 years, presented opposing arguments centered on cost, risks, and timeline. Eric Callisto, leader of Callisto Regulatory Advisors and a former member of the Public Service Commission, also spoke; the Public Service Commission is the state regulatory body that holds authority to approve or deny the acquisition. Each presenter was allotted 15 minutes, followed by a public question period. The next city-sponsored public informational meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. July 30 at the Superior Public Library.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/water-utility-arguments-aired-at-first-public-meeting>

City of Menomonie provides update Friday regarding water system

The City of Menomonie lifted its Precautionary Boil/Bottle Water Advisory for most of the city on July 17, 2026, after bacterial testing returned negative coliform results on all but one sample, following a loss of water pressure caused by high demand during hot, dry conditions. A targeted advisory remains in effect for the municipal water system serving Grand View Heights Court and Meadow Hill Drive west of Wilson Creek, where one sample tested positive for coliform bacteria; city crews are conducting door-to-door delivery of the advisory and 10 cases of bottled water per household on those streets. A full irrigation ban, imposed after low pressure at higher elevations reduced water available for firefighting, remains in effect citywide until August 1, 2026, and carries civil forfeitures of up to \$150 per day for continued non-compliance after reminders. Mayor Matthew Crowe confirmed that city crews, community services, and volunteers distributed nearly 1,000 cases of bottled water donated by Walmart and Kwik Trip, and crews are canvassing the system for leaks. Questions on the irrigation ban may be directed to Public Works Director David Schofield.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/17/city-menomonie-provides-update-friday-regarding-water-system/>

Public Safety

District Attorney clears Eau Claire County deputy in deadly May shooting

The Eau Claire County District Attorney's Office determined on July 16, 2026, that Deputy Joseph Wollum's use of deadly force on May 4, 2026, constituted reasonable acts of self-defense and defense of others, and that no criminal charges would be filed. The incident occurred just before 7:25 a.m. at the intersection of Highway 312 and Highway 12 in the Town of Union, where Wollum and Deputy James Haworth responded to a reported traffic crash that damaged three vehicles and injured one person. The subject, identified as Kelly M. Whalen, 34, fled on foot and was found armed with a knife. According to the District Attorney's report, Whalen was given at least seven commands to drop the weapon before Wollum fired his handgun four times when Whalen closed to ten feet or less; all four rounds struck Whalen, who died at the scene. Investigators found a self-inflicted wound and noted Whalen's father told investigators his son had been depressed following

a felony arrest in St. Croix County the previous week. Supporting materials including body camera footage and surveillance video were released to the Wisconsin Department of Justice website.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/front-page/investigation-clears-deputy-in-fatal-shooting/article_20ef5010-f55e-4eba-a0e9-6420c8ccc936.html

Homicides, shootings and carjackings fall as Milwaukee violence prevention efforts show progress

Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson and county officials presented first-half 2026 violent crime data at a July 7 press conference at the Milwaukee Police Administration Building, documenting declines across three major categories compared with the first half of 2025: homicides fell 30 percent, nonfatal shootings fell 27 percent, and carjackings fell 34 percent. Present alongside Johnson were Milwaukee County District Attorney Kent Lovern, Sheriff Denita Ball, Police Chief Jeffrey Norman, and Karin Tyler, director of the Milwaukee Department of Community Wellness and Safety, who attributed the reductions to multi-year collaboration among law enforcement, violence prevention organizations, community groups, and residents. Reggie Moore of the Comprehensive Injury Center at the Medical College of Wisconsin cited reductions in retaliatory shootings, group-based gun violence, and youth-related gun violence, pointing to the 414LIFE program as targeting highest-risk individuals and neighborhoods. Bridget Whitaker, executive director of Safe and Sound, noted residents continue to report concerns about reckless driving, youth conflicts, and neighborhood safety.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Southeastern) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/07/milwaukee-violent-crime-decline-homicides-shootings-carjackings-prevention-efforts-progress/>

Suspended Milwaukee detective accused of misusing license plate camera database makes first court appearance

Milwaukee Police Department internal affairs Detective Tehrangi Chapman, 51, made his first court appearance July 17, 2026, on a felony charge of misconduct in office stemming from alleged misuse of the Flock Safety license plate-reading camera database, entering "test" or "training" as the stated purpose for each search. A court commissioner set a \$1,000 signature bond. Prosecutors allege Chapman tracked two victims a total of 20 times using the system, conduct that occurred approximately one year before he was assigned to investigate former MPD Officer Josue Ayala for the same type of offense; Ayala, who used the database to track his ex-girlfriend and her dating partner more than 170 times, was sentenced this week to one year of probation after pleading guilty to a misdemeanor. Chapman additionally faces a misdemeanor charge for allegedly placing a GPS tracking device on a victim's car. Following Ayala's charge, Milwaukee Police reduced the number of officers with Flock Safety access, required a signed user agreement, and instituted monthly audits. Chapman's next court date is scheduled for August 6.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/milwaukee-county/suspended-milwaukee-detective-accused-of-misusing-license-plate-camera-database-makes-first-court-appearance>

Mayor Justin Nickels: Warning Siren Change Takes Burden Off Fire Department

Manitowoc's Public Safety Committee approved a policy change aligning the city's weather warning siren protocol with Manitowoc County's Emergency Management Department rules. Under the new policy, Manitowoc County Joint Dispatch will activate tornado sirens only when the National

Weather Service issues a tornado warning, replacing a prior arrangement in which Manitowoc Fire Rescue served as an intermediary in the activation decision. Fire Rescue Chief Ben Kraynek and Mayor Justin Nickels both noted that firefighters are not meteorologists. The change eliminates discretionary activation by the fire department and synchronizes Manitowoc's siren activations with those of neighboring municipalities, including Two Rivers. Monthly siren tests will occur on the first Wednesday of each month beginning in August 2026, and the policy takes operational effect with that first scheduled test. No vote count or resolution identifier was reported.

Source: Seehafer News (Northeastern) | <https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/07/18/mayor-justin-nickels-warning-siren-change-takes-burden-off-fire-department/>

Manitowoc County Executive Eliminates Workgroup Making Policies For Emergency Communications

Manitowoc County Executive Tyler Martell signed an executive order on July 16, 2026, dissolving the Radio System Advisory Workgroup, which had been responsible for establishing policies, procedures, and capabilities related to public safety radio communications countywide. Martell cited unnecessary administrative barriers and delays in decisions relating to radio encryption and communications security as justification, framing the action as an effort to increase efficiency. Under the order, any authority previously held by the workgroup over access to encrypted radio channels transfers directly to the Manitowoc County Emergency Management Director, acting on recommendations from chiefs or appointed leaders of law enforcement, EMS, or fire agencies. Former Manitowoc County Emergency Management Director Travis Waack, now a state employee, publicly stated the change endangers lives, noting the workgroup was created specifically to establish interoperability between fire/EMS and law enforcement encrypted channels during traffic accidents and events such as school shootings. No next procedural step was reported.

Source: Seehafer News (Northeastern) | <https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/07/17/manitowoc-county-executive-eliminates-workgroup-making-policies-for-emergency-communications/>

National program aimed at job training, education starts at Milwaukee County Jail

Milwaukee County Sheriff Denita Ball announced July 14, 2026, that the Milwaukee County Jail has launched the IGNITE (Inmate Growth Naturally and Intentionally Through Education) program, making the facility the first IGNITE site in Wisconsin and the 38th in the nation. The program, created by the Genesee County, Michigan sheriff and administered in partnership with the National Sheriffs' Association, offers incarcerated people access to educational classes, job training, life skills instruction, GED and high school diploma preparation, and tablet-based learning. The jail houses a maximum of 960 people at a time, all of whom will be eligible to participate voluntarily. Captain Telia Evans said the jail is in the early stages of implementation and is still seeking additional community partners, and Ball said her office has pursued the program for more than three years. The National Sheriffs' Association holds monthly networking meetings so participating counties can share programming approaches across the national network.

Source: WPR News Madison (Southeastern) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/national-job-training-education-milwaukee-county-jail>

City of Sheboygan Suspends Outdoor Work, Offers Free Relief Rides on Shoreline Metro

The City of Sheboygan suspended all outdoor work on July 17, 2026, in response to an Air Quality Advisory for hazardous conditions that remained in effect until at least noon that day, with the Sheboygan Public Works Department among the operations affected. Garbage collection was exempted and continued as scheduled, and the recycling center remained open. City officials reported no expected interruptions to other city departments and services. Shoreline Metro extended free rides to all customers for two days, July 17 and July 18, to provide relief and transportation to shelter for residents affected by the smoky air. No additional procedural steps or end dates for the outdoor work suspension were reported beyond the noon advisory threshold.

Source: WHBL 1330 AM Sheboygan (Southeastern) | <https://whbl.com/2026/07/17/city-of-sheboygan-suspends-outdoor-work-due-to-smokey-air/>

\$25K grant helps train aspiring firefighters in Polk County

The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services awarded a \$25,000 Youth Firefighter Training grant to the Osceola Junior Firefighter Program, with DSPS Secretary Dan Hereth presenting the award July 14, 2026. Osceola was one of four grant recipients in the latest DSPS award round, and the funding will be applied to turnout gear for youth participants. The program is a three-way collaboration among the Osceola School District, Allied Emergency Services, and Northwoods Technical College, where students can earn academic credit for fire training and serve as active volunteer firefighters. Allied Emergency Services logged 173 fire calls in 2025, with an average of only 12 firefighters available to respond per call. The grant is intended to address declining volunteer firefighter numbers by supporting youth recruitment and training infrastructure.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/14/25k-grant-helps-train-aspiring-firefighters-polk-county/>

Land Use and Development

Developers renew plans to replace historic Wonder Bar with housing

Range Hill Partners has proposed a seven-story, 190-unit market-rate apartment building at 222 and 232 E. Olin Ave. in Madison, on the site of the former Wonder Bar and Coliseum Bar at the intersection of John Nolen Drive and Olin Avenue. The proposal includes studio through three-bedroom units, two stories of enclosed parking, and 1,600 square feet of ground-floor commercial space, and would require demolition of both bars, which have sat vacant since 2021. Two prior redevelopment proposals for the same site failed: a 2021 McGrath Property Group plan for an 18-story, 292-unit building was rejected by the city's Plan Commission following public opposition, and a subsequent 12-story, 192-unit proposal passed the Plan Commission in 2022 but did not proceed. A public meeting has been held, drawing roughly ten commenters, several of whom raised concerns about bike and pedestrian connectivity. The proposal's next step before the Plan Commission has not been announced.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/developers-renew-plans-to-replace-historic-wonder-bar-with-housing/article_e83dcd2-35e0-4756-a486-4b86ffcf1457.html

County approves data center pause

Green County enacted a 12-month moratorium on data center development, with the full county board voting 30-1 on July 15, 2026, to approve the measure. The Green County Land Use and Zoning Board had recommended approval by unanimous vote the preceding day, July 14. The sole dissenting vote came from District 20 representative Casey Jones of Brodhead, who argued that a blanket ban on a single business type was inconsistent with zoning law. No data center proposals exist in Green County at the time of passage. County Board Chairman Jerry Guth stated the pause is intended to allow the county to gather information and hear all sides of the issue, and officials plan to use the 12-month period to study whether any land in Green County is suitable for data center development and to gauge public appetite for such use. Green County joins Dane and Dodge counties among Wisconsin counties that have enacted similar moratoriums.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | <https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/county-approves-data-center-pause/>

Industrial, business and housing growth in Pleasant Prairie

The Pleasant Prairie Plan Commission approved Waukegan Steel's relocation to Lakeview Corporate Park, with Village Board support confirmed by Village President Dave Klimisch. Waukegan Steel, founded in 1928, will occupy a 100,000-square-foot manufacturing facility and bring 70 jobs to the village, with potential expansion of up to 20 percent, and its move is scheduled for September 2026. Klimisch stated that businesses account for approximately 50 percent of the village's tax base. The approval accompanies continued corporate-park activity in the village: Smurfit WestRock completed a \$140 million redevelopment of the former We Energies coal-fired power plant site in 2025; Eli Lilly is finishing a Kenosha County facility targeting 600 employees as part of a \$3 billion expansion; Uline's fourth headquarters building at 9900 128th Ave. spans 366,000 square feet and could house up to 1,300 employees; and Zilber Property Group purchased a former EMCO Chemical Distributors warehouse for \$10 million.

Source: Kenosha News (Southeastern) | https://www.kenoshanews.com/news/community/article_f7f52632-e4b6-59ee-9497-039d27cae345.html

Solar project open house draws a crowd

MN8 Energy held a public informational open house July 9, 2026, at the Dallas park pavilion in Barron County for its proposed Sandhill Solar Project, a 100-megawatt solar array paired with a 50-megawatt Battery Energy Storage System to be sited on approximately 900 acres in the Town of Dallas. The company has not yet submitted permitting documents to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission; its timeline projects state permit applications in 2026, construction in 2028 to 2029, and operations beginning in late 2029. As a utility facility, the project would be exempt from property taxes and instead generate shared-revenue utility payments projected at \$570,000 annually, split two-thirds to Barron County and one-third to the Town of Dallas, compared with current property tax revenue of \$10,610. MN8 project manager Charlie Hooley also announced a \$20,000 annual charitable pledge to the Barron Area School District. Over the 35-year project life, total revenues are projected to reach \$19,650,000, and MN8's next step is filing for state permits with the commission.

Source: Barron News-Shield (Western) | https://news-shield.com/news/top_stories/article_3504aaea-4044-4e34-b2a6-d4b1ad63a497.html

Lake Geneva approves permit for proposed supper club

The Lake Geneva City Council voted 5-3 on July 13, 2026, to approve a conditional use permit filed by David Scotney, owner of Oakfire restaurant, to construct and operate the Swan Creek Supper Club near the northeast corner of Interchange North and Center Street. Alderpersons Joel Hoiland, Mary Jo Fesenmier, and Brian Smith voted no. The Lake Geneva Plan Commission had unanimously approved the permit application on May 18. The proposed facility is designed to seat approximately 300 people and would include a restaurant, bar, and banquet rooms, with a projected workforce of 50 to 80 employees. Walworth County officials have already approved a proposed access point off Sage Street for the site, and City Attorney Dan Draper stated the city cannot require Scotney to purchase additional parcels for alternate access. Before construction may begin, the City Council must separately approve a general development plan and a precise implementation plan.

Source: Lake Geneva Regional News (Southeastern) | https://lakegenevanews.net/news/local/government-politics/article_00cedf83-d54f-4b1b-b2f9-32b845127ad2.html

Prescott Plan Commission to hold public hearing on proposed zoning ordinance amendments

The Prescott City Council approved a resolution at its July 13, 2026 meeting authorizing the Plan Commission to hold a public hearing on proposed amendments to Chapter 635, Zoning, of the City of Prescott Code of Ordinances, scheduled for 6 p.m. Monday, August 3, 2026, in the City Council Chambers. The proposed amendments would remove Large-Scale Solar Farms as a conditional use in the C-1 Central Commercial, I-1 Light Industrial, and I-3 Mixed Industrial districts, and would remove Airports, Airstrips, and Landing Fields; Railroads and Railroad Facilities; and Large-Scale Solar Farms as conditional uses in the I-2 Heavy Industrial District. Residential zoning updates would standardize accessory structure provisions across the R-1 through R-5 districts and add Accessory Dwelling Units as a conditional use in the R-5 Single-Family Residential District. The amendments were prepared under Wis. Stat. sec. 62.23(7)(d) and Chapter 985, and full amendment text is available at Prescott City Hall and on the city website.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/prescott-plan-commission-to-hold-public-hearing-on-proposed-zoning-ordinance-amendments,198249>

Prescott Council gives final approval to assisted living facility

The Prescott Common Council unanimously approved two resolutions at its July 13, 2026 meeting authorizing development of a 59-unit assisted living facility at 445 Court St. Resolution 34-26 authorized the site's development plan, and Resolution 35-26 granted the conditional use permit required for the facility. Both votes followed a July 8 recommendation from the Prescott Plan Commission, which had voted unanimously to approve the conditional use permit and site plan for the 67-bedroom, three-story project proposed by Prescott Properties LLC and Nottingham Construction on a 2.24-acre vacant parcel previously occupied by a sanatorium and later a daycare center. City Administrator Matt Wolf identified stormwater management as the most significant issue addressed during review, citing the site's topography and slope. The approved plans incorporate revisions made in response to city feedback, including enhanced stormwater management systems and expanded parking of 80 spaces against a city requirement of 67. The two resolutions constitute the final municipal authorizations required for the project to proceed.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/prescott-council-gives-final-approval-to-assisted-living-facility,198247>

Council to take on final vote on new restaurant, changes to fence ordinance

The River Falls Plan Commission forwarded two land use items to the City Council for a final vote at the July 28, 2026 meeting. The first is the Specific Implementation Plan for The Creamery at Cedar, a proposed three-story mixed-use development at River and Cedar streets featuring a ground-floor restaurant and tap room, second-floor event space, and four third-floor short-term rental units; the City Council approved the project's General Development Plan in April. City code requires 177 parking spaces for the building, and the applicant has secured 214 spaces through agreements with Moose Lodge and Jensen Automotive recorded with Pierce County. The second item, forwarded with a positive recommendation, would remove the residential fence ordinance's three-foot street-side setback and associated landscaping requirements, last updated in 2018. Both items proceed to the July 28 City Council meeting for final votes.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/council-to-take-on-final-vote-on-new-restaurant-changes-to-fence-ordinance,198234>

Rockwell's New Berlin proposal gets initial approval

The New Berlin Plan Commission voted unanimously on July 15, 2026, to recommend rezoning land between West Grange and West College avenues, east of South Moorland Road, to accommodate Rockwell Automation Inc.'s planned 810,000-square-foot manufacturing facility and office on a 185-acre site. The commission also unanimously endorsed a corresponding amendment to the city's comprehensive plan, according to Community Development Director Greg Kessler, and the Architectural Review Subcommittee separately and unanimously recommended approval of the project's architectural design the same date. The project is estimated to cost between \$211 million and \$246 million and would create hundreds of new jobs. Both the rezoning recommendation and comprehensive plan amendment are scheduled for consideration by the Common Council at its July 28 meeting, and a separate Common Council vote would be required to establish a tax incremental financing district to fund public infrastructure improvements. Construction is expected to begin in early to mid-2027, with completion anticipated in late 2028.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Southeastern) | <https://dailyreporter.com/2026/07/16/rockwell-automation-new-berlin-manufacturing-approval/>

Eau Claire City Council approves land purchase for future industrial development

The Eau Claire City Council voted 7-4 on July 15, 2026, to approve a resolution authorizing a \$1.75 million purchase agreement for eight parcels totaling 237 acres along County Highway EE in the Town of Union, intended for light industrial development. A motion by Council Member Andrew Werthmann to postpone the vote failed 5-6. Council members Larry Mboga, Joyce Orth, Joshua Miller, and Jessica Schoen voted against the purchase, citing concerns over watershed and trout-stream impacts near Elk Creek Lake. Of the 237 acres, approximately 110 are considered buildable for light industrial use; Community Development Director Aaron White identified the remainder as known wetlands that could be designated conservancy or parkland. The purchase will use borrowed funds and capital budget allocations rather than the city's operational budget. The final closing date is October 1, after which the city will annex the parcels while maintaining existing agricultural leases until development proceeds.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/eau-claire-city-council-approves-land-purchase-for-future-industrial-development/article_2e80be45-bfc1-46ba-858b-6144a76a43f1.html

Home construction planned for former Manitowoc mall site

The Manitowoc Plan Commission approved the final plat for the Mariner Lux Subdivision earlier in July 2026, covering the former Mid-Cities Mall and Edgewater Plaza site at 828 Memorial Drive, with the full City Council scheduled to vote on the plat July 20. The approximately \$70 million mixed-use development is being undertaken by Green Bay-based Tycore Built LLC, which the city selected after acquiring both properties in 2024 and completing demolition and site preparation in 2025. Community Development Director Adam Tegen stated that apartment permits are expected to be pulled in July 2026, with construction anticipated to begin in August 2026, and Mayor Justin Nickels said the first phase of housing construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2026. The plat must be approved and recorded by the full City Council before Tycore Built can begin pulling home permits.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Northeastern) | <https://dailyreporter.com/2026/07/17/home-construction-planned-for-former-manitowoc-mall-site/>

City of Wausau Approves Data Center Specific Language in their Zoning Code

The Wausau Common Council voted 11-0 to add data-center-specific language to the city's zoning code, making Wausau among the first Wisconsin municipalities to proactively regulate the land use category. The ordinance, developed with input from Assistant City Planner Carrie Edmondson drawing on statewide experience, limits data center development to medium or heavy industrial zoning districts and imposes a minimum 200-foot setback from residential areas. Any prospective data center operator must also obtain a conditional use permit before development may proceed. Alders characterized the ordinance as a starting point subject to revision based on outcomes in other communities. The city is not currently fielding any data center proposals and has not been contacted by a potential developer, and the conditional use permit requirement establishes the formal review pathway for any future applicant.

Source: WDLB 1450 AM Marshfield (Central/Northern) | <https://wdlbam.com/2026/07/17/city-of-wausau-approves-data-center-specific-language-in-their-zoning-code/>

Sheboygan's Data Center Moratorium Awaiting Common Council Approval

The Sheboygan City Plan Commission unanimously approved a proposed one-year temporary zoning moratorium on data centers, advancing the measure to the Common Council for final approval. The moratorium, if enacted, would halt the issuance of permits and approvals for data centers operating as a principal or primary use when those facilities contain at least 10,000 square feet of floor area within a single building or collection of buildings on a single parcel. The Commission had previously referred the measure back from the Common Council before this unanimous vote. The city states the pause is intended to give staff sufficient time to develop regulatory standards protecting public health, safety, and general welfare, with the City Attorney's Office and the Department of Planning and Development leading the drafting. The moratorium next goes before the Common Council for final approval, with no date specified.

Source: Seehafer News (Southeastern) | <https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/07/17/sheboygans-data-center-moratorium-awaiting-common-council-approval/>

Sartori Cheese expansion projected to bring 25 new jobs

Plymouth's Plan Commission approved creation of the city's 11th tax incremental finance district at its July 9, 2026 meeting to support a planned expansion by Sartori Foods at the company's County PP location. The proposed district is designed to facilitate the expansion, which is projected to bring 25 new jobs. The action now advances to the Plymouth City Council for final approval. No vote count, dollar figures, or resolution identifiers were reported.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | <https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/sartori-cheese-expansion-projected-to-bring-25-new-jobs/>

Marathon City revitalization project receives \$250K grant for major infrastructure development

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation awarded the Village of Marathon City a \$250,000 grant to fund infrastructure development on the 400 block of Main Street, a corridor previously designated as a blighted neighborhood. Village Administrator Steve Cherek confirmed the grant is financing two new businesses: a health clinic called Integrate Functional Health, an expansion of Stittleburg Restorative Healthcare, and a farm-to-table market offering locally sourced food products. Cherek described the project as the first large-scale infrastructure development the village has undertaken in decades. The grant does not specify a total project cost beyond the \$250,000 award, and completion of the development is expected by the end of fall 2026.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/marathon-city-revitalization-project-receives-250k-grant-for-major-infrastructure-development/article_6adc39b8-0eba-4dbf-abb6-3d0cc8667c49.html

Marathon County executive committee reviews proposed wind farm report

The Marathon County Executive Committee reviewed the Hub City Wind Farm report at its July 15, 2026 meeting, taking no formal action but directing staff to compile additional information before reconvening. The proposed project, advanced by Alliant Energy, involves construction of between 25 and 45 wind turbines in the southern portion of the county. The report documented resident feedback encompassing concerns about wildlife impact, property values, and public health. The committee requested a pros-and-cons list addressing agreement options, intervention possibilities, applicable health and safety regulations, and information from at least one other county with comparable experience. Town of Day Chairperson Joe Brueggen, who attended the meeting, expressed support for the committee's decision to seek deeper review before acting. The executive committee is scheduled to reconvene August 13, 2026, when it is expected to consider the additional information.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/07/15/marathon-county-executive-committee-reviews-proposed-wind-farm-report/>

Ahead of the July 20 launch, Altoona leaders preview the city's \$1.5M Safe Steps program

The city of Altoona will launch its Safe Steps Home Improvement Program on July 20, 2026, a \$1.5 million initiative funded from the \$6.5 million the city has allocated toward affordable housing from the River Prairie tax increment district. The program, administered by Grants and Housing Program

Manager Julian Emerson, offers interest-free loans in two categories: up to \$7,500 for critical home repairs with a five-year repayment period, and up to \$12,000 for energy efficiency improvements with a ten-year repayment period. Additional services include yard cleanup and disabled vehicle removal. Eligibility requires Altoona homeownership and household income at or below 80 percent of the area median income of \$84,552, and the city projects 20 to 24 projects annually. Partner organizations include Chippewa Valley Habitat for Humanity, Focus on Energy, Xcel Energy, Eau Claire Energy Cooperative, and Western Dairyland. The program uses a revolving loan structure, reinvesting repayments to fund future projects, and an official program website will go live July 20.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/14/ahead-july-20-launch-altoona-leaders-preview-citys-15m-safe-steps-program/>

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Governance and Elections

Madison District 1 alder resigning

Madison Common Council District 1 Alder John W. Duncan announced his resignation effective July 31, 2026, citing a planned relocation out of Madison with his husband. Duncan was first elected to the Common Council in April 2023, making his tenure approximately three years and three months. His departure creates a vacancy on the Common Council representing District 1. The City of Madison stated that details on the timeline and process for filling the District 1 vacancy

will be announced, but no specific procedure or appointment authority was identified in the announcement.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/madison-district-1-alder-resigning/article_cabddbc6-6488-442a-a76b-779f16dcd25b.html

8,000 Signatures Supporting 'Local Healthcare Action Plan' Submitted to City of Eau Claire

Community Action Wisconsin submitted 8,163 resident signatures to the Eau Claire City Clerk on July 13, 2026, in support of placing a Local Healthcare Action Plan on the November ballot; the city requires a minimum of 4,476 verified signatures for the proposal to be considered. The submission is part of a broader effort totaling more than 13,000 signatures across Eau Claire and La Crosse. The plan calls for each city to form a Citizen's Advisory Healthcare Action Committee composed of local citizens, leaders, and experts, which would hold public hearings, gather data, and recommend two years of actions addressing healthcare accessibility at local, state, and federal levels. As of July 14, the City Clerk was still verifying the submitted signatures. City Council President Jeremy Gragert stated that if sufficient signatures are verified, the Council could discuss forming the committee and placing the measure on the November ballot as soon as its July 28 meeting. The article's language is partly advocacy-oriented.

Source: Volume One (Western) | <https://volumeone.org/articles/2026/07/14/395798-8-000-signatures-supporting-local-healthcare-action-plan-submitted-to-city-of-eau-claire-community-action-wisconsin>

Ousted Shorewood Hills Village Board president challenges his removal

Former Shorewood Hills Village Board President John Imes filed a legal challenge on July 7, 2026, in Dane County Circuit Court seeking to reverse his removal from office by the village board. The board voted 4-3 on May 12 to remove Imes following a more than five-hour quasi-judicial hearing, finding he had violated fiduciary duty and the duty of honesty in the conduct of public affairs in connection with development proposals, including a rejected plan to purchase the Lodgic Building at 2801 Marshall Court for use as a village hall. Imes' attorneys argue the board applied an incorrect legal standard under a rarely-used state removal statute that permits removal only for physical incapacity or gross neglect of duty, and further contend that board members Brian Utschig and Rocky Van Asten should have recused themselves due to alleged bias; both voted yes. The Village Board has until July 27 to file a court response.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/ousted-shorewood-hills-village-board-president-challenges-his-removal/article_1d1565d3-171f-4b32-a6fa-ec6770b7ae2a.html

Milwaukee says it will enforce anti-masking ordinance against federal officers, rejecting DOJ request

Milwaukee City Attorney Evan Goyke announced on July 17, 2026, that the city will enforce Milwaukee Code of Ordinances sec. 105-140 against federal law enforcement officers, rejecting a July 10 U.S. Department of Justice request for assurances that the ordinance would not be applied to federal agents. The ordinance prohibits local, state, and federal officers from wearing facial coverings that obscure their identity during public interactions and requires officers to display identification or, upon request, provide their agency affiliation, last name, and badge or identification number. Goyke conveyed the city's position in a letter to Assistant Attorney General

Brett A. Shumate and First Assistant U.S. Attorney Brad D. Schimel, stating his office would prosecute any valid citation issued under the ordinance. Goyke contested federal arguments that the ordinance violates the Supremacy Clause and intergovernmental immunity doctrine, acknowledging that preliminary rulings elsewhere have favored the federal government but noting no binding final court ruling has invalidated a comparable ordinance.

Source: WISN 12 ABC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.wisn.com/article/milwaukee-says-it-will-enforce-anti-masking-ordinance-against-federal-officers-rejecting-doj-request/73173933>

Rhodes-Conway to seek third term as Madison mayor

Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway announced on July 16, 2026, that she will seek a third term, with the spring primary scheduled for February 16, 2027, and the general election on April 6, 2027. Rhodes-Conway, who took office in 2019 as Madison's 58th mayor and won reelection in April 2023, stated her priorities for a third term include property tax relief, housing, and public safety, along with support for small and local businesses and climate pollution reduction. Her campaign cited tripling the city's Affordable Housing Fund and launching the Bus Rapid Transit line as accomplishments of her tenure, and noted her administration facilitated creation of the CARES mobile crisis response team and construction of Madison's first purpose-built homeless shelter. No other declared candidates were named.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/07/16/rhodes-conway-seek-third-term-madison-mayor/>

Brookfield Mayor Ponto set to return to office in August

Brookfield Mayor Steve Ponto is scheduled to return to office on August 24, 2026, following a leave of absence that began in late May 2026. In a letter submitted to the city clerk at the time of his departure, Ponto cited personal issues that he stated in good faith may impair his current ability to act or perform the duties of mayor, invoking language related to physical or mental disability or absence. City Attorney Jenna Merten confirmed the August 24 return date. Common Council President Gary Mahkorn has been serving as acting mayor and temporarily assuming mayoral duties during Ponto's absence. The coverage does not report a Common Council vote or formal resolution authorizing the leave arrangement, and Ponto's return on August 24 represents the next procedural milestone in the transition back to regular mayoral authority.

Source: Oconomowoc Enterprise (Southeastern) | https://oconomowocenterprise.com/the_freeman/news/brookfield-mayor-ponto-return/article_812e268a-d7f1-4c0c-842d-48155e3dba50.html

Retired county attorney Thomas Farley nominated as interim Waukesha County executive

Waukesha County Board Chair and Acting County Executive Jim Heinrich nominated former Corporation Counsel Thomas Farley to serve as interim county executive following the July 7 death of County Executive Paul Farrow. Farley retired in 2016 after a 31-year career with Waukesha County, including 25 years as corporation counsel, and currently serves as an alternate on the county's Ethics Board. The Executive Committee was scheduled to review the appointment, with the full County Board set to consider it July 28. If approved, Farley will serve until the December 15 countywide special election; candidates seeking the permanent position must file nomination paperwork by 5 p.m. on October 20 to appear on the December 15 ballot. State Sen. Chris Kapenga, R-Delafield, announced he will seek the county executive seat.

Source: Oconomowoc Enterprise (Southeastern) | https://oconomowocenterprise.com/the_freeman/news/thomas-farley-waukesha-interim-executive/article_2de01f59-3c99-4bd5-b9e1-1fe10d536010.html

Human Services

Madison refugees will suffer under Trump's food stamp ban

A new federal eligibility rule enacted as part of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act will remove approximately 5,800 legally present noncitizens statewide, including refugees, asylees, and other legal residents, from Wisconsin's FoodShare program, according to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. The change affects SNAP recipients whose next enrollment renewal date triggers the new restrictions, meaning benefit losses will occur on a rolling basis beginning as early as August 2026. In Dane County, more than 43,000 residents received FoodShare benefits as of January, and Jewish Social Services has resettled more than 500 refugees in the county since 2021. The Congressional Budget Office estimates approximately 90,000 people nationwide will lose food assistance under the noncitizen eligibility limits. River Food Pantry in Madison, which currently serves an average of 4,000 people per week, is preparing for increased demand as displaced recipients seek alternative food resources. The article's language is partly advocacy-oriented.

Source: Capital Times (Statewide) | https://captimes.com/news/health/madison-refugees-will-suffer-under-trump-s-food-stamp-ban/article_356c3c43-3d4a-4827-bdda-b79294e3a1f4.html

Newcap closure leaves 10 Wisconsin counties scrambling to prevent homelessness

The closure of anti-poverty nonprofit Newcap, a federally designated Community Action Agency, eliminated nearly 250 shelter beds spanning emergency to permanent housing, cut 90 jobs, and left more than 100 low-income households at risk of homelessness across 10 northeastern Wisconsin counties: Brown, Florence, Marinette, Menominee, Oconto, Shawano, Forest, Langlade, Oneida, and Vilas. Newcap filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, disclosing it owed nearly \$4 million to creditors, after former CEO Cheryl Detrick was placed on leave shortly before closure. As a Community Action Agency, Newcap controlled Coordinated Entry access and state funding for partner organizations, including \$12,000 still owed to Shawano Area Matthew 25. Shawano County now lacks a year-round homeless shelter, as SAM25 operates only October 15 through May 15. Safe Haven, SAM25, and Shawano Area United Way have formed an unfunded coalition to manage Coordinated Entry sign-ups and apply for grants to fund a housing coordinator, and no agency has been identified to permanently absorb Newcap's domestic violence housing grants.

Source: WPR News Madison (Northeastern) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/newcap-closure-homelessness-safe-haven-shawano-county>

Outreach team connects with Eau Claire's unhoused population

Eau Claire County has formed a street outreach team as part of the Housing Our Neighbors Planning Collaborative, an intergovernmental initiative uniting the county, the City of Eau Claire, and local partners to reduce homelessness in Eau Claire County. The collaborative operates under six main strategies, one of which transfers the primary point of contact for the unhoused population from law enforcement officers to a dedicated civilian outreach team. Team members Diane Hofstedt, Elyse Harvey, and Dianna Ruiz are among the staff, and the team includes individuals with lived experience of homelessness. The outreach model prioritizes housing

placement first, followed by access to food, clothing, and other support services. Harvey noted that some individuals required nearly a year of sustained contact before engaging with services, and the collaborative is also pursuing homelessness prevention and affordable housing expansion as additional strategies.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/15/outreach-team-connects-with-eau-claires-unhoused-population/>

School Districts

Beloit schools may have buyer for Wright Elementary

The School District of Beloit School Board held a special meeting July 14, 2026, in part to discuss a reported offer on the Wright Elementary School building at 1033 Woodward Ave. Board President Tia Johnson confirmed an offer exists but disclosed no terms. Wright, a 26,159-square-foot building constructed in 1950, has a listed sale price of \$325,000; the district placed it on the market in fall 2025 alongside McNeel Intermediate School following more than a decade of declining enrollment. McNeel, at 114,000 square feet, sold in late March 2026 to Rock County Christian Schools for \$710,000. Wright closed as an elementary school in 2011 and has been vacant since the 2022-2023 school year. No buyer has been publicly identified, and the board had not yet voted on any sale agreement as of the special meeting date.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/local-news/beloit-schools-may-have-buyer-for-wright-elementary/article_f598e372-b330-4530-b034-d47e60402bfb.html

Madison school district weighs revisiting student discipline policies

The Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education reached general consensus at a June 2026 retreat to form an ad hoc committee to review the district's Behavior Education Plan for the first time since the 2018-19 school year. The plan, implemented in the 2014-15 school year, uses five incident-severity levels to guide discipline responses and permanently banned out-of-school suspensions for elementary students in summer 2023. Racial and disability-related disparities in discipline persist: approximately 1 in 10 middle and high school students received out-of-school suspensions in 2024-25, compared with roughly 2 in 10 students with disabilities and 3 in 10 Black students. Board member Martha Siravo requested the review, and Board President Savion Castro confirmed the board has agreed in principle to launch the committee, though its charge, membership, and timeline remain undetermined. District spokesperson Ian Folger said the committee will include significant school leadership and is expected to begin meeting at the end of summer or the start of the next school year.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/education/madison-school-district-weighs-revisiting-student-discipline-policies/article_4f8cf9f4-e527-42c1-99be-f2555ad57d31.html

District principals share annual Behavior Data Review

The Rice Lake Area School District Board of Education met July 13, 2026, to receive the annual Behavior Data Review covering the 2025-26 school year across all building levels. Tainter Elementary recorded 5,147 total discipline referrals, comprising 1,898 majors and 3,249 minors, a reduction of 90 referrals from the prior year, with 84.93 percent of elementary students receiving zero to one major referral, exceeding the district's 80 percent target. Rice Lake Middle School

recorded 1,596 referrals in 2025-26, down from 2,233 the prior year, and 93.39 percent of middle school students received zero to one major referral. The high school reported a suspension rate of 2.5 percent in 2025-26, declining from 4.1 percent and 6.2 percent in the two preceding years. The board also approved resignations from four staff members and accepted employment of three new hires, including a kindergarten teacher at Tainter and two coaching positions.

Source: Rice Lake Chronotype (Western) | https://apg-wi.com/rice_lake_chronotype/news/district-principals-share-annual-behavior-data-review/article_cce29119-1419-4d32-83fd-c6d543be163e.html

RUSD projects \$8.07 Tax mill rate, faces \$51M deficit by 2031

The Racine Unified School District is projecting a tax mill rate of \$8.07 per \$1,000 of assessed property value for the 2026-2027 school year, up from the prior year and incorporating the increase authorized by the \$190 million referendum approved by voters in April 2025. The district's first post-referendum five-year fiscal forecast projects a \$51 million structural deficit by fiscal year 2031, driven in part by declining enrollment. Enrollment is projected to fall by 129 students from 2025-26, producing an estimated revenue loss of \$1,582,447, as state revenue limits require the district to reduce expenses by \$12,267 per student lost. Health insurance premiums rose 7.5 percent, prompting a \$3.2 million increase over the prior year's healthcare budget, and the district has realized \$2 million in savings from open positions. Chief Finance Officer Jeff Serak indicated the district will continue searching for efficiencies, with budget and levy adoption scheduled for October.

Source: Racine County Eye (Southeastern) | <https://racinecountyeve.com/2026/07/15/rusd-projects-8-07-tax-mill-rate/>

KUSD board approves new name for Chavez Learning Station

The Kenosha Unified School District Board of Education voted July 17, 2026, to rename the Chavez Learning Station at 6300 27th Ave. to the Irene Santos Learning Station, effective immediately, and also voted to rename the building's community room the Florence Parry Heide Community Room. The renaming followed an April board vote to form a committee that reviewed 20 name submissions, evaluating each for alignment with district policy and connection to the district and community. Irene Santos, who died Aug. 21, 2022, served as executive director of the Kenosha Spanish Center for more than three decades and was a member of the League of United Latin American Citizens. The facility houses the district's Head Start program and serves children ages three to five. KUSD Chief Communications Officer Tanya Ruder stated the district will update the Learning Station's website and social media immediately, while building signage will require bids and scheduled installation, with a goal of completion before the start of the school year.

Source: Lake Geneva Regional News (Southeastern) | https://lakegenevanews.net/news/local/education/article_a730d6a0-23fb-5f87-a204-49df7bead9f3.html

Bloomer School District to pursue capital referendum in November

The School District of Bloomer Board of Education voted at its July 15, 2026 meeting to approve referendum language placing a \$77 million capital referendum question before voters in November 2026. If approved, the funds would finance construction of a new high school with a community performing arts center, maintenance and safety improvements at Bloomer Middle and Elementary Schools, and district-wide site, fixture, and furnishing upgrades. The Board's decision followed more than two years of facility planning, financial analysis, and community engagement, including

input from a Community Facility Planning Committee. A community survey conducted in fall 2025 indicated that a new high school and performing arts center was a clear priority among residents who responded. Superintendent Joshua Isaacson is the district's lead administrative voice on the proposal, and the referendum question will appear on the November 2026 ballot.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/07/16/bloomer-school-district-pursue-capital-referendum-november/>

RFSD approves bid for high school parking lot, pedestrian safety improvements

The School District of River Falls Board of Education voted at a July 6, 2026 special meeting to accept an \$870,799 base bid from Total Excavating and Grading for pedestrian safety improvements and an additional parking lot at River Falls High School, funded with excess dollars from the district's 2024 referendum. With a bad-soils contingency and general contingency applied at worst-case estimates, the total project cost reaches \$1,110,299. Director of Finance and Facilities Lynette Coy and Superintendent David Bell confirmed the project qualifies under the referendum question's language covering district-wide safety, security, building systems, and infrastructure improvements. The bid was the only one received after the district solicited seven recommended contractors, and architect Matt Wolfert of Bray Architects stated the lone bid aligned with the expected project cost. Scope includes vehicle rerouting for events, walkway improvements, and a retaining wall, with approximately \$800,000 remaining in the referendum fund after the project.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/rfsd-approves-bid-for-high-school-parking-lot-pedestrian-safety-improvements,198252>

New SHS phone policy allows use outside classrooms

The Superior School Board unanimously adopted a new personal communication devices policy on July 13, 2026, governing Superior High School students' use of phones and other digital devices during the school day. The policy was developed in response to a state law requiring school districts to enact policies limiting device use during instructional time. Under the updated policy, students may access cellphones, smart watches, tablets, portable gaming systems, and other personal communication devices during lunch and passing time, but devices remain prohibited during classroom instruction and may not be on students' persons during class. The change eases the away-for-the-day requirement in place since the 2023-2024 school year, which required devices be turned off and out of sight from the first to the final bell. Principal Ryan Haroldson recommended the policy update, and District Administrator Amy Starzecki confirmed Haroldson will monitor implementation and may return to the board with further recommended amendments. Middle and elementary schools retain the existing away-for-the-day requirement.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/new-shs-phone-policy-allows-use-outside-classrooms>

Milwaukee's Lincoln Avenue School community hopeful for upcoming move to Pulaski

Milwaukee Public Schools Superintendent Brenda Cassellius announced July 17, 2026, that the 450 students from Lincoln Avenue School, destroyed by a five-alarm fire, will relocate to Casimir Pulaski High School at 25th Street and Oklahoma Avenue for the fall term. Pulaski High School, approximately 1.5 miles away, is large enough to house both the incoming K3 through fifth grade students and its existing 950 high school students, with Lincoln Avenue students and staff to have

separate entrances, exits, offices, cafeteria space, and green areas. Lincoln Avenue School, built in 1917, had smoke alarms but lacked sprinklers in portions of the building. Cassellius noted that only about 28 percent of the district's 144 buildings have sprinkler systems and estimated retrofitting costs at \$1 million to \$2 million per school. She also stated Wisconsin is one of only a few states without a School Building Authority and called for a statewide conversation on aging school infrastructure. The Milwaukee Fire Department has not yet released the cause of the fire.

Source: WPR News Madison (Southeastern) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/milwaukeees-lincoln-avenue-school-community-move-pulaski>

State-Local Interface

Elon Musk likely broke the law by giving voters \$1 million, Wisconsin board says

The Wisconsin Elections Commission voted 5-1 in closed session on July 10, 2026, to refer two complaints to the Brown County District Attorney's office, finding probable cause that Elon Musk violated Wisconsin's election bribery statute during the 2025 state Supreme Court election. The bipartisan commission, composed of three Democrats and three Republicans, found that Musk's social media post offering \$1 million to voters in order to induce them to vote constituted a probable violation of state law. Three Wisconsin voters received \$1 million checks from Musk, two of them in person at a Green Bay rally days before the April 2025 election, and Musk and groups he supported spent at least \$20 million on that race, which Democratic-backed candidate Susan Crawford won by 10 percentage points. Brown County District Attorney David Lasee, a Republican, has 40 days to report back on whether to bring criminal charges. Musk additionally faces a civil suit filed by the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, and state Reps. Amaad Rivera-Wagner and Lee Snodgrass held a July 17 press conference urging Lasee to act.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/wisconsin-lawmakers-activists-brown-county-da-elon-musk-election-case>

Regents concerned about UW system's aging infrastructure

The UW Board of Regents, meeting virtually on July 17, 2026, expressed concern about deteriorating infrastructure across the University of Wisconsin System's 13 public universities, prompted by a June 17 water main fracture at UW-Madison's Charter Street Heating and Cooling Plant that released more than 40,000 gallons of lake water and forced temporary closure of nearly three dozen campus buildings. Regent Jim Kreuser called for alerting the Wisconsin Legislature to the system's infrastructure needs, while Regent Edmund Manydeeds directed universities to identify and present specific improvements required. More than 83 percent of UW-Madison's main campus buildings are at least 25 years old and 79 percent are at least 35 years old. During the last state budget cycle, the Legislature appropriated \$1.2 billion of the \$1.7 billion the UW System requested for capital projects. Repairs to the ruptured pipe, four feet in diameter and 20 feet underground, are expected to be completed before the academic year begins September 2, 2026.

Source: WiscNews (Statewide) | https://wiscnews.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_4cdc4413-513d-50a4-979e-b6bf2141a260.html

Evers, DWD award \$890,000 in Fast Forward job training grants

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development awarded more than \$890,000 in Wisconsin Fast Forward Program grants on July 14, 2026, to nine organizations training more than 340 workers across healthcare, customer service, technology, and manufacturing sectors. The department's Office of Skills Development awarded more than \$5.2 million in Fast Forward grants in state fiscal year 2026, training an estimated 2,847 people statewide, with individual grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$400,000. Named recipients include Life Point Counseling LLC in Sheboygan County (\$193,635), Trade Tech Inc. in Washington County (\$168,357), and the City of Milwaukee Department of Emergency Communications (\$84,200) to train 36 unemployed and 88 current workers in 911 dispatch with Emergency Medical Dispatch certification. Since the program launched in 2013, more than \$58 million has been awarded to 516 projects supporting over 31,000 workers, and participating employers must ensure 85 percent of participants complete training and 75 percent of incumbent trainees receive pay raises.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Statewide) | https://chippewa.com/news/community/article_518f8ce1-081d-52de-acc8-0d61bcbf129a.html

Oracle credit rating drops amid Wisconsin fight over data center credit rules

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission declined to reconsider credit requirements it had set for data center operators seeking electric service from We Energies, maintaining an AAA- credit rating threshold that requires lower-rated companies to post collateral as a ratepayer backstop. S&P Global Ratings downgraded Oracle's credit rating from BBB to BBB- on July 9, placing the company one notch above junk status. Oracle, which is co-developing a data center campus in Ozaukee County, estimates the collateral requirement could cost \$100 million or more annually as a condition of receiving electric service. Oracle has sued the commission in Ozaukee County Circuit Court before Judge Sandy Williams, asking the court to set aside the credit requirements; the commission filed a response accusing Oracle of seeking preferential terms that bypass commission oversight. The Citizens Utility Board and Clean Wisconsin filed position statements in Ozaukee County Circuit Court supporting the commission's requirements.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/07/wisconsin-oracle-data-center-credit-rating-drop-rules-fight-tech-energy-ai-utility/>

Callahan appointed Chairman of Study Committee on Cemeteries

The Wisconsin Joint Legislative Council appointed State Representative Calvin Callahan, R-Tomahawk, as Chairman of the Study Committee on Cemeteries. The committee's mandate covers two distinct areas: recodifying and updating language in Wisconsin's existing cemetery statutes, and reviewing current laws governing abandoned cemeteries and burials on non-cemetery property. The committee will include citizen members drawn from subject-matter experts in the field. Callahan cited conversations with constituents, stakeholders, and legislative attorneys as establishing broad consensus that Wisconsin's cemetery laws require updates. No specific legislation, hearing dates, or committee membership roster was disclosed. The next procedural step is the convening of the study committee, at which point expert citizen members will present testimony to inform potential statutory revisions.

Source: Tomahawk Leader (Statewide) | <https://www.tomahawkleader.com/stories/callahan-appointed-chairman-of-study-committee-on-cemeteries,345032>

Each edition reflects ongoing refinement of the underlying workflow, and I expect the product to keep improving. Source articles are not independently verified beyond the curation process, and errors in source reporting may occur. Some Wisconsin news outlets restrict automated access to their content, which can limit coverage in any given edition. If you notice an inaccuracy, a story of statewide governance significance that was missed, or have feedback on how this briefing can better serve your work, I welcome hearing from you. Forward this edition to a colleague who works in Wisconsin local government if you find it useful. Reach me at patrick@boldpathconsulting.com or (920) 522-2413.
