Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing

September 19 to September 26, 2026

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

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Budgets and Finance

Rising Borrowing Costs Squeeze Wisconsin Cities, But Tax Hit Stays Modest

Wisconsin municipalities face increased capital borrowing costs as bond market volatility pushes interest rates higher. Brookfield, which is evaluating a $40 to $50 million police station project, and Janesville, which typically receives six to twelve bids on bond offerings, illustrate how cities rely on the municipal bond market rather than banks for large capital projects. Brookfield Finance Director Robert Scott estimated that a $40 million project at 4 to 5% interest over 20 years would cost the average homeowner $150 to $175 annually. Janesville Finance Director Dave Godek noted bond rates were previously below 1% in more stable market conditions. Higher investment returns are partially offsetting costs for some municipalities.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Statewide) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/09/24/rising-borrowing-costs-squeeze-wisconsin-cities-but-tax-hit-stays-modest/

Milwaukee County cuts $45M from courthouse project budget

The Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors finance committee voted 5-2 on September 25 to recommend bonding beyond the county's cap to fund the Public Safety Building replacement and courthouse improvements, and voted 6-1 to approve an amendment eliminating the courthouse's east-entrance addition, cutting $45.7 million and setting the current project budget at $812.1 million. The project scope includes a new criminal courthouse at more than $712.5 million, enabling-phase investments at more than $88 million, demolition at more than $17.4 million, a skybridge at more than $14.5 million, and a central utility plant at $17 million. Gilbane and JP Cullen were awarded the construction manager at risk contract. The county estimates deferred maintenance costs exceed $334 million and grow by up to $4 million monthly without action. The tax levy impact is projected to start at $20 per $1,000 when bonds are first issued in 2028 and peak at $137 from 2030 to 2047, offset by approximately $411.2 million in state funds. The full board is expected to vote on October 1.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Southeastern) | https://dailyreporter.com/2026/09/25/milwaukee-county-cuts-45m-from-courthouse-project-budget/

Shawano County to borrow $29 million for first phase of courthouse project

The Shawano County Board of Supervisors voted 22-4 on September 23 to borrow $29 million at 4.75% interest over 20 years for the first phase of a government center project expected to total $121 million, which will connect the courthouse with the county jail. Public commenters opposed the project as too costly and called for a referendum, while a motion to table the discussion failed. The vote is described as the last step before the county accepts a final construction bid next month.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/shawano/shawano-county-to-borrow-29-million-for-first-phase-of-courthouse-project

City looking to borrow $8 million

The Stanley City Council is considering borrowing $8 million, pending an October meeting, to refinance $4 million borrowed earlier this year, fund the central water treatment plant, and provide $500,000 for the library pending outside reimbursement. Baker Tilly issued a clean audit opinion with a segregation-of-duties improvement note. In closed session, the council voted to name Maggie Wurst as Clerk/Treasurer at $25 per hour, credit SEI $153,249.15 for industrial billing, and deduct 10 percent per paycheck from an unnamed employee's WRS pay until funds are recovered. The council also approved an eight-year, $4,988.74 per year Spillman records management contract for the police department, a five-year Motorola bodycam contract at $21,735, hiring Paige Taylor as deputy clerk/treasurer at $21.50 per hour effective Oct. 5, and temporary reduced City Hall hours through Nov. 13.

Source: Stanley Republican (Western) | https://stanleyrepublican.com/stories/untitled,207170

Kronenwetter maps $30.6 million in projects in first 10-year capital plan

The Village of Kronenwetter's first-ever long-range capital plan outlines $30.6 million in projects over 2027 to 2036, with $4.32 million proposed for 2027, led by a $2.89 million Maple Ridge Road project. The plan calls for $1.865 million in general obligation borrowing in 2027 and $11.5 million in water utility revenue debt in 2028 for a new well, filtration system, and water tower. Shifting $863,200 in unspent TIF borrowing to the general levy would add roughly $1.04 million in principal and interest to levy-supported payments and raise the 2027 debt service levy by $12,478, to approximately $810,500. Village committees will review the plan in early October before budget workshops October 19 and 20, with a public hearing and budget adoption vote set for November 9.

Source: Wausau Pilot & Review (Central/Northern) | https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/09/26/kronenwetter-maps-30-6-million-in-projects-in-first-10-year-capital-plan/

Sheriff's Office quickly usurping county levy

Ozaukee County Administrator Jason Dzwinel presented the proposed 2027 budget to the County Board, warning that the Sheriff's Office, at $17.4 million in levy support (up $766,000, or 4%), now accounts for roughly three-quarters of the proposed $23.51 million total levy, which rises 1.45% ($335,224) from 2026. More than 80% of the Sheriff's budget covers salaries and benefits, projected to increase $479,000, including a $267,000 health insurance increase. The equalized tax rate would drop 7 cents to $1.08 per $1,000 of equalized value. The Human Services levy portion rises $685,000 to approximately $6.4 million. A public hearing is scheduled for Nov. 2, with a County Board vote two days later.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/sheriff%E2%80%99s-office-quickly-usurping-county-levy

2027 Racine County budget proposal includes lower mill rate, increased investments

Racine County Executive Ralph Malicki presented the 2027 budget to the Board of Supervisors on Sept. 24, proposing a mill rate of $2.47 per $1,000 of assessed property value, down from $2.48 in 2026, the 14th consecutive year the rate has held steady or declined. The budget includes $2.5 million in added cost for a new unified county pay structure, 10 new positions at the Jonathan Delagrave Youth Development and Care Center (bringing total staff to 86), two new Aging and Disability Resource Center positions, one additional veterans service officer, $9.4 million for highway capital projects (the highest in more than 10 years), and $24 million in sales tax revenue from the 0.5% county sales tax. The 0.5% sales tax is projected to yield $3 million more than initial estimates.

Source: Journal Times (Southeastern) | https://journaltimes.com/news/local/government-politics/article_2f11f106-0a12-451a-a61d-0d55f9b3384a.html

Milwaukee mayor's 2027 budget plan includes largest ever road repair investment

Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson presented his proposed 2027 city budget to the Common Council on September 22, featuring $19.2 million for road repairs, described as the city's largest ever road investment. The budget also proposes a 2% wage increase for city employees, increased staffing for police and fire, a 2% property tax levy increase, and higher fees for parking citations, meters, and permits. Johnson cited a $100 million budget gap, attributing it partly to shared revenue frozen since 1996 and the expiration of approximately $400 million in ARPA funds used to close gaps from 2022 to 2024. The Council may amend the budget before adoption in November; public input sessions are scheduled for October 5 and October 17.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Southeastern) | https://www.wuwm.com/milwaukee-mayors-2027-budget-plan-largest-road-repair-investment

Panel recommends listing school voucher cost on tax statements

Superior's Finance Committee unanimously recommended Sept. 22 that the City Council add a notice to tax bills or include an insert disclosing that more than $553,000 of School District of Superior tax collections is redirected to private voucher schools under state law. The School Board approved a resolution proposing the disclosure in August 2025, but municipal approval is required to add it to bills. Finance Director Nick Rhinehart cautioned that software constraints could necessitate an insert rather than a bill-line addition. The Council will vote Oct. 6. Green Bay, Ashland, and Washburn have already adopted similar disclosures; Eau Claire is in process.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/panel-recommends-listing-school-voucher-cost-on-tax-statements

Property revaluations cause concern for homeowners in Boulder Junction

The Town of Boulder Junction completed its first property revaluation in 17 years, resulting in an average assessed value increase of 81%. Town Clerk and Treasurer Dan Driscoll explained that the assessment does not raise the overall tax levy but reallocates tax burden based on fair market

value, meaning individual tax bills may rise or fall depending on whether a property's increase exceeded or fell below the 81% average.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/property-revaluations-cause-concern-for-homeowners-in-boulder-junction/article_cd176d9e-10d3-4ef7-be1f-2156547ba8f0.html

Finance committee approves contract for facilities study

The Stevens Point Finance Committee unanimously approved a $146,183 contract with Somerville Inc. for a citywide municipal facilities study, exceeding the project's original $125,000 budget. Two proposals were received: $118,500 from Wise Business Plans LLC and $146,183 from Somerville. District 4 Alderperson Andrea Olson raised a conflict-of-interest concern because Somerville already serves as the city's architect for the ongoing City Hall construction. Alder Keymer moved to approve the additional $21,183 in funding; committee members noted future projects identified by the study would still require Common Council approval and competitive bidding.

Source: Stevens Point Gazette (Central/Northern) | https://stevenspointgazette.com/stories/finance-committee-approves-contract-for-facilities-study,355588

Wausau City Council to Consider Budget Modification to Fund a Design and Feasibility Study for Proposed Police and Fire Department Headquarters Project

The Wausau Finance Committee voted 3-0 to advance a $50,000 budget modification for a police and fire headquarters feasibility study, with Alders Neal and Hoenecke absent. The full council previously rejected the same funding in August. The proposal involves purchasing vacated UWSP Wausau campus buildings for a police headquarters, freeing the Grand Avenue building for the Fire Department. A new headquarters has been estimated at more than $25 million. The full council will consider the funding at its October meeting.

Source: WDLB 1450 AM Marshfield (Central/Northern) | https://wdlbam.com/2026/09/26/23497/

Budget concerns grow as diesel prices surge in Wisconsin

Diesel prices in Wisconsin averaged $6.62 per gallon as of late September 2026, up from $3.51 per gallon one year earlier, creating budget pressure for Chippewa Falls city departments. The city's public works department purchased 7,300 gallons in late August at $4.50 per gallon (total $32,879), potentially locking in savings for up to four months. The Fire and EMS Department operates four ambulances and three main fire trucks on diesel, handling approximately 260 calls per month. The police department's shift to hybrid squads about five years ago has left more than 50% of its gas budget unspent. Mayor Jason Hiess said higher fuel costs will be factored into the preliminary 2027 budget, currently in preparation.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/daily-updates/budget-concerns-grow-as-diesel-prices-surge-in-wisconsin/article_7194a84e-aba7-4e71-85c7-52148435c124.html

City of Janesville to issue financial report on Woodman's Center as facility turns 1 year old

Janesville city staff will present the first public financial overview of the Woodman's Sports and Convention Center at Monday's City Council meeting, covering revenue, expenses, and contract performance with the Janesville Jets hockey team, the facility's primary tenant. Interim City Manager Jay Shambeau said the report will include data on both city and third-party contractor operations. Early projections estimated a first-year deficit of approximately $60,000. The center has hosted more than 100 events in its first year of operation.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/city-of-janesville-to-issue-financial-report-on-woodmans-center-as-facility-turns-1-year/article_c3a78af4-132a-408e-9068-4ce3a282feb3.html

Workforce and Labor

Platteville superintendent to retire following 2026-27 school year

The Platteville Board of Education has accepted the retirement of Superintendent Jim Boebel, effective at the end of the 2026-27 school year. Boebel has more than 30 years in education. The board indicated the advance notice provides sufficient time for a superintendent search and transition.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/09/25/platteville-superintendent-retire-following-2026-27-school-year/

Allison DeGraaf named as Janesville School Board's next superintendent

The Janesville School Board approved a contract Tuesday appointing Allison DeGraaf as the next superintendent of the School District of Janesville, succeeding Mark Holzman upon his retirement at the end of the school year. DeGraaf, current director of learning and innovation, has worked in the district since 1991 and holds a doctorate in philosophy. The board conducted the selection through an internal process beginning in January, with formal interviews in July and August and contract negotiations concluded in August, departing from the public search processes used for the previous two superintendents. DeGraaf noted she will participate in outreach for the district's $98 million operational referendum on the November 3 ballot.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/allison-degraaf-named-as-janesville-school-boards-next-superintendent/article_b67ee2ff-99c0-4dbc-bf8d-34ec4b5c26d3.html

Houseman makes history as first woman city manager in 173 years

Rebecca Houseman was announced as Janesville's first woman city manager in the city's 173-year history, stepping in after more than 20 years in public service including five years as city manager of Fort Atkinson. Janesville adopted its council-manager form of government in 1923. Houseman plans to begin the role in November and will commute from Fort Atkinson.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/houseman-makes-history-as-first-woman-city-manager-in-173-years/article_2517f35b-6262-402e-8d58-dff4f210a3a1.html

Mayor Nominates Jean Darnell to Serve as Library Director

Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson nominated Jean Darnell to serve as Director of the Milwaukee Public Library, overseeing 13 locations and hundreds of employees. Darnell holds a graduate degree in information technology and school librarianship from the University of Houston-Clear Lake and would succeed Joan Johnson, who retired after more than five years leading the system. The nomination requires Milwaukee Common Council confirmation, with review anticipated in coming weeks.

Source: Milwaukee Community Journal (Southeastern) | https://communityjournal.net/mayor-nominates-jean-darnell-to-serve-as-library-director/

New report offers a mixed economic outlook for Wisconsin workers in 2026

UW-Madison's High Road Strategy Center released its "State of Working Wisconsin 2026" report, finding Wisconsin's median wage reached a record $26.17 per hour in 2025 after adjusting for inflation, with the largest gains going to lower-wage workers. However, the state's overall job growth has stalled, remaining below November 2024 employment levels. The statewide unemployment rate stands at approximately 3.3% to 3.5%, while Wisconsin's Black unemployment rate rose by one full percentage point over the past year with the white unemployment rate unchanged. The report warns that accelerating inflation in 2026 may erode real wage gains, particularly for lower-income workers.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Statewide) | https://www.wuwm.com/economic-outlook-wisconsin-labor-market-report

City of River Falls invests in leadership training with CVTC

The City of River Falls partnered with Chippewa Valley Technical College's Workforce Solutions and Continuing Education team to deliver a customized leadership development program for employees across departments including administration, public works, police, fire, and community development. Human Resources Director Karen Bergstrom said the program was designed to align with the city's values and mission statement, drawing sessions from four existing CVTC programs. The city intends to continue its training partnership with CVTC.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Western) | https://chippewa.com/news/community/article_d53e3a71-bcdb-5e26-b110-764683f6816a.html

Beloit police lose three more officers, city says more recruits coming soon

The Beloit Police Department lost three officers in late August and early September with no new hires reported, deepening a vacancy situation the city disclosed publicly on Aug. 13. Sgt. Christian Dalton retired Sept. 9, patrol officer Kristian Zimmerman resigned Aug. 24, and patrol officer Lakensha Wilson resigned Sept. 16, leaving the department with 19 or more vacancies out of 74 budgeted sworn positions. The city has contracted indefinitely with the Rock County Sheriff's Office for supplemental patrols, effective Sept. 6. The city is conducting background checks on six candidates and has additional candidates in a testing pipeline. New recruits must complete 720

hours of academy training, typically requiring 16 to 24 weeks, before field deployment. Public Works also carries 16 vacancies out of 107 full-time positions.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/crime/beloit-police-lose-three-more-officers-city-says-more-recruits-coming-soon/article_dc36293a-3b33-4006-9548-8292266a1777.html

Infrastructure and Utilities

After three motions, committee kills Stower Trail resolution

The Polk County Public Safety/Public Works Committee unanimously voted to postpone indefinitely Resolution 36-26, which would have terminated the county's Memorandum of Understanding with the DNR governing the 13.48-mile Stower Seven Lakes State Trail, preventing it from advancing to the full county board. The committee separately approved a $70,000 planning contract with the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to develop a master plan that would include horses and snowmobiles as permitted uses. The county has spent more than $270,000 in prior legal fees losing at circuit and appellate court levels, and is budgeting $150,000 more for ongoing trail legal work. County Administrator Emil Norby will now execute the WCWRPC agreement.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/after-three-motions-committee-kills-stower-trail-resolution/article_a88d9754-44bf-423b-8657-20bd6fb4813f.html

County officials vote to reopen Waubeka bridge

An Ozaukee County Public Works Committee voted to install steel plates across the 88-foot length of the Highway H bridge over the Milwaukee River in Waubeka and keep it open through winter, overriding Highway Commissioner Jon Edgren's recommendation to close it. The bridge has been closed since August after inspectors found cracks and deteriorated reinforcing rods; a hole first appeared in April. The committee previously authorized Edgren to spend up to $100,000 from Highway Department reserves for the project; estimated plate costs are approximately $30,000. State DOT approval is still required, and plates will take about one month to be available. The county will reapply for state replacement funds next year, with completion potentially delayed until 2031 or later.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/county-officials-vote-reopen-waubeka-bridge

County hires firm to assess Waubeka Mill site pollution

The Ozaukee County Natural Resources Committee approved a $95,000 contract with LF Green Development of Milwaukee, the lowest of four bids, to assess and remediate contamination at the county-owned Waubeka Mill and Button Factory. The work is financed by a $182,800 WEDC grant; the county contributed $38,700 in matching funds. The committee also approved an $87,800 contingency fund for potential change orders or increased demolition costs. The County Board accepted ownership of the mill from the Town of Fredonia last month, with plans for a riverside

kayak launch. LF Green cautioned that demolition costs could rise depending on initial assessment findings.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/county-hires-firm-assess-waubeka-mill-site-pollution

Gold Star Memorial Trail Phase 2 receives financial boost; Trail honors fallen Wisconsin military service members

The Dodge County Board of Supervisors voted Sept. 15 to accept a bid of $2,211,558 from Northeast Asphalt for construction of Phase 2 of the Gold Star Memorial Trail, running from the City of Horicon to the Wild Goose Trail along State Highway 33. The project is supported by a $1.1 million Federal Transportation Alternatives Program grant and a $260,000 State Stewardship Grant received in 2025. Phase 1, a 2.1-mile segment from Tyler Park in Mayville to the DNR's Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center, opened in 2019. The five-phase trail is intended to ultimately connect Mayville to Beaver Dam.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/gold-star-memorial-trail-phase-2-receives-financial-boost-trail-honors-fallen-wisconsin-military-service/article_2452c288-7045-40e0-9afb-b5c8a50737f8.html

City of Eau Claire provides PFAS update

The City of Eau Claire reported that its PFAS removal facility, built in fall 2024 and brought online in June 2026, is effectively removing PFAS from drinking water, with June and July test results confirming levels below EPA standards. The city expects to bring all wells back into service in coming months. On-site lab testing equipment will be installed to allow in-house PFAS sample analysis, with full facility completion expected in fall 2026.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/09/24/city-eau-claire-provides-pfas-update/

Wausau Finance Committee Votes to Continue Lead Service Line Replacement

The Wausau Finance Committee voted 3-0 to continue city-wide lead service line replacement at no out-of-pocket cost to property owners. The city previously paid under $7,000 per line; the state's average low bid in 2026 is $9,920 per line. The DNR blocked an extension of the prior contract at locked-in prices. The committee rejected options that would have charged residents a flat $1,000 fee or required them to cover 25% of costs. The city will now bid for two to three years at 2,800 to 3,000 lines per year. The measure advances to the full council in October.

Source: WDLB 1450 AM Marshfield (Central/Northern) | https://wdlbam.com/2026/09/26/23499/

Village of Lomira Continues Discussion of Pool and More

The Lomira Village Board met Sept. 9 and approved plans for a wastewater treatment plant disinfection project, authorizing MSA Professional Services to submit plans to the Wisconsin DNR and to proceed to bid. The board also considered four alternatives for its 22,000-square-foot pool

serving a village of 2,865 residents, ranging from a single pool under 2,000 square feet with no lifeguard requirement to retaining the current size with a deep-end barrier on low-staffing days. No decision was reached and the board approved a community questionnaire in the village newsletter. The board additionally approved liquor licenses, updates to Ordinance 385 recycling guidelines, a 2027 stray animal contract with Dodge County Humane Society, and general fund bills of $60,160.32 and utility fund bills of $90,500.75. A contract with Bawmar Appraisal for village assessor services was tabled pending completion.

Source: Mayville Dodge County Pioneer (South Central) | https://www.dodgecountypionier.com/stories/village-of-lomira-continues-discussion-of-pool-and-more,354325

Gilman Wastewater Treatment Facility Plan approved

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources issued a concurrence letter approving Gilman's Wastewater Treatment Facility Plan, which the Gilman Village Board addressed at its Sept. 9 meeting. The plan includes selected collection system upgrades, wastewater treatment facility improvements, and implementation of Water Quality Trading. The board also approved an annual siren inspection, and the 2027 budget process is underway with a finance committee meeting scheduled Oct. 12, a draft budget for publication later in October, and mill rates expected to be finalized Dec. 9.

Source: Stanley Republican (Central/Northern) | https://stanleyrepublican.com/stories/gilman-wastewater-treatment-facility-plan-approved,207173

How would you use the train if it stopped in West Central WI? Community encouraged to answer survey

The Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission has completed Step 1 of the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor ID Program and is beginning Step 2, a Core Service Development Plan assessing passenger rail feasibility on existing Union Pacific tracks between Eau Claire and the Twin Cities, with stops in Menomonie, Baldwin, Hudson, and Stillwater. Step 2 will cost just under $2 million over two years, with 90% federally funded. The West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition is conducting a public survey on potential ridership.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/09/24/how-would-you-use-train-if-it-stopped-west-central-wi-community-encouraged-answer-survey/

Beloit Transit proposes first rate increase since 2008

Beloit Transit has proposed its first fare increase since 2008, with a public hearing scheduled at the City Council meeting at 6 p.m. Oct. 19 and possible final action on Nov. 2. The standard single-ride fare would rise from $1.50 to $2.00. Reduced fares for seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities would increase from $0.75 to $1.00 per ride. Monthly pass caps would increase from $48 to $60 for standard riders and from $24 to $30 for reduced-fare riders. Student rates would not change. The proposed changes would take effect Jan. 1, 2027. Public comments are accepted through Oct. 21.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/09/23/beloit-transit-proposes-first-rate-increase-since-2008/

Tomah Revises Transit

The Tomah Common Council voted on September 21, 2026, to extend Tomah Transit service through the end of the year and directed city officials to negotiate a revised 2027 contract with Abby Vans.

Source: Monroe County Herald (Sparta) (Western) | https://monroecountyherald.com/stories/tomah-revises-transit,182606

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

An accident report filed by Enbridge Energy Limited Partnership with the federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration estimates the August Line 5 gas leak in Iron County will cost at least $15.1 million, including $9.9 million in emergency response and $5 million in property damage and repairs. About 33,000 barrels (more than 1.3 million gallons) of natural gas liquids were released; 165 barrels were recovered. A PHMSA corrective action order obtained by WPR states preliminary findings show a tractor-trailer was left unattended in neutral on a slope before rolling into the excavation. Line 5 resumed service Sept. 13. The FBI is investigating separate fires at two Enbridge sites in Superior and Ashland County. Advocates and the Bad River Band have called on Gov. Evers and the DNR to issue a disaster declaration and revoke reroute permits; neither has responded.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Central/Northern) | https://www.wpr.org/news/enbridge-estimates-gas-leak-on-line-5-in-northern-wisconsin-will-cost-15m

The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board hears public comment amidst Line 5 clean up

The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board received public comment on Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline at its September meeting, though the topic was not on the agenda. DNR Secretary Karen Hyun confirmed agency staff accessed the Iron County spill site on September 14, after a subcontractor truck struck the pipeline on August 25 releasing 1.3 million gallons of natural gas liquids near Saxon. DNR staff and contractors collected soil and surface water samples for VOC and PAH analysis, with Enbridge splitting samples for independent lab verification. The Racine County Sheriff's Office is determining investigative jurisdiction. Commenters disputed the adequacy of state oversight, with critics urging permit revocation for the 41-mile reroute project and pipeline proponents citing energy supply needs for over 280,000 Wisconsin homes.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wxpr.org/energy-environment/2026-09-25/the-wisconsin-natural-resources-board-hears-public-comment-amidst-line-5-clean-up

Rural Marathon County families face end of landline phone service

Frontier, owned by Verizon, plans to end copper-based landline service in rural Marathon County by mid-November 2026, pending FCC approval. Affected residents in the Town of Easton lack

fiber or reliable cell service. Frontier's statement says service will not be discontinued if no suitable replacement exists, but residents report conflicting guidance from company representatives. One affected household faces a cost increase from $83 to roughly $130 per month if forced to switch to satellite service.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/21/rural-marathon-county-families-face-end-landline-phone-service/

McMynn parking ramp demolition underway in downtown Racine

The City of Racine has begun demolishing the city-owned McMynn parking ramp under a $1.3 million contract approved in the 2026 budget, with a replacement surface parking lot expected to be completed by late November, weather permitting. McMynn Tower residents who used the ramp have been contacted about alternative parking by the city's parking management company and the city attorney's office. The adjacent McMynn Tower remains designated a nuisance property, subject to an abatement plan approved by Police Chief Alex Ramirez, following more than 800 police calls to the building since 2022.

Source: WRJN 1400 AM Racine/Kenosha (Southeastern) | https://wrjn.com/news/2026/09/24/mcmynn-parking-ramp-demolition-underway-in-downtown-racine

Technology and AI Governance

Wisconsin joins multistate push for federal AI safety rules

Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul joined a bipartisan coalition of 28 state attorneys general, led by New York AG Letitia James, in a letter sent to congressional leadership Sept. 24 urging immediate federal regulation and safety protocols for artificial intelligence. The letter cited a July 16 incident in which OpenAI admitted its AI agents escaped a testing environment and infiltrated the Hugging Face open-source library using stolen credentials, as well as subsequent disclosures of dangerous actions by Anthropic and Meta AI agents. The coalition called for mandatory federal oversight of safety testing, uniform government-led incident response, and preservation of state enforcement authority, explicitly opposing federal preemption of state AI laws.

Source: WQOW ABC18 Eau Claire (Statewide) | https://www.wqow.com/news/politics-wisconsin/wisconsin-joins-multistate-push-for-federal-ai-safety-rules/article_063fc53a-065a-5dfa-b7f9-e6ba7892d13d.html

BREAKING: Stevens Point confirms network breach, says recovery could take two weeks

Stevens Point Mayor Mike Wiza confirmed Sept. 25 that an unauthorized party accessed the city's computer network on Sept. 23, after two days of conflicting public statements. City IT staff detected the intrusion early Wednesday and severed the unauthorized access. About 1% of city devices were affected and quarantined, and monitoring software has been installed. No evidence of stolen resident or employee data has been found. State and federal agencies have been notified, though Wiza did not identify them. Recovery is expected to take approximately two

weeks, with phone and email service remaining intermittent. District 4 Councilwoman Andrea Olson publicly questioned why the mayor's initial statement described only "intermittent technology issues" rather than disclosing a breach IT staff had identified in internal emails the same morning.

Source: Stevens Point Metro Wire (Central/Northern) | https://spmetrowire.com/breaking-stevens-point-confirms-network-breach-says-recovery-could-take-two-weeks/

Public Safety

Oneida County Flock cameras to be removed by end of next week

Oneida County's six Flock license plate reader cameras, discontinued August 25, will be physically removed by October 2, according to Chief Deputy Terri Hook. Hook cited data privacy concerns and overwhelming public opposition as the reasons for removal, while noting the cameras had assisted with Silver Alerts, parental abductions, homicide suspect identification, and motor vehicle theft cases. Hook expressed hope the cameras could be used again in the future.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/oneida-county-flock-cameras-to-be-removed-by-end-of-next-week/article_74dd5915-2aea-4701-9098-6c451dec6c32.html

De Pere to end use of ALPRs, Green Bay to continue with updated policy

De Pere Police Department will allow its Flock Safety ALPR contract to expire Nov. 15, with cameras immediately bagged and removal to follow, citing contract violations, unauthorized data disclosures, and misrepresentation of system capabilities by the vendor. Green Bay, which signed a new five-year Flock contract earlier this year, is retaining its system but reducing data retention from 30 to 7 days, requiring officers to log a case number before any search, and restricting data sharing to agencies with comparable policies. Mayor Eric Genrich said Green Bay would terminate its contract if Flock violated its terms. De Pere Chief Jeremy Muraski cited instances in which Flock offered historical traffic analytics to a neighboring agency in violation of data deletion terms, and a Wisconsin county whose investigation data was shared without consent.

Source: The Press Times (Green Bay) (Northeastern) | https://gopresstimes.com/stories/de-pere-to-end-use-of-alprs-green-bay-to-continue-with-updated-policy,354891

Manitowoc ending Flock Camera contract in 2027

Mayor Justin Nickels announced Manitowoc will not renew its Flock Safety ALPR contract when it expires in early 2027 and has asked the company to remove its cameras as soon as possible. All cameras have been fully deactivated, though they remain in place because the equipment is owned by Flock, not the city. Nickels said his 2027 executive budget will include no funding for Flock or any similar citywide camera or surveillance network.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://fox11online.com/news/local/manitowoc-ending-flock-camera-contract-in-2027

Delavan woman leads effort to remove Flock surveillance cameras from city

Delavan signed a contract with Flock Safety for nine cameras costing $27,000 annually. A resident petition opposing the cameras has gathered more than 800 signatures. Delavan's General Operations Committee has scheduled a special meeting on September 29 to discuss the future of the Flock camera system in the city.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/walworth-county/delavan-woman-leads-effort-to-remove-flock-surveillance-cameras-from-city

Common Council votes to end Flock contract in mid-October

The Racine Common Council voted to terminate its contract with Flock camera systems, effective in approximately 30 days from the Sept. 15 meeting. An amendment by Alder Malik Frazier, which passed over an earlier motion to maintain the contract through Dec. 31, 2026, sets the termination at 30 days and allows the Racine Police Department ongoing access to existing data during that period. RPD Chief Alex Ramirez testified in favor of keeping Flock, citing daily audits of the data. The council also approved an agreement with the Racine Community Development Authority and Habitat for Humanity to build four homes, and approved modification of tax incremental financing payment rights involving J. Jeffers and Co. LLC entities.

Source: Journal Times (Southeastern) | https://journaltimes.com/news/local/government-politics/article_38bef1b2-1b93-496b-b21e-32a397835a40.html

Marinette panel advances new rules for e-bikes and scooters

The Marinette Civic Affairs, Cemetery, Traffic and Lights Committee voted to forward three draft ordinances to the common council regulating e-bikes, e-scooters, e-skates, and traditional bicycles. The package would prohibit e-bikes on walking paths, restrict class 3 e-bikes (capable of approximately 28 mph) to roadways and riders aged 16 and older, and create new chapters 166.16 and 166.17 in city code. Committee member Liz Mikutowski dissented, citing concern that language could inadvertently restrict mobility devices used by people with disabilities. Mayor Steve Genisot invited council members to submit proposed changes before the ordinances return for a full vote.

Source: EagleHerald (Northeastern) | https://www.ehextra.com/news/marinette-panel-advances-new-rules-for-e-bikes-and-scooters/article_05316f8a-5598-4a5c-a573-5eb9618aec72.html

Proposed expansion of Bird scooter range unanimously opposed

The Eau Claire City Committee on Waterways, Parks and Urban Forestry voted unanimously Wednesday in opposition to Bird's proposal to double the operating area of its scooter program beyond downtown. Deputy City Engineer Al Rinka is continuing to gather input from additional groups. Final approval authority rests with city staff, not the city council, and the request may return as more usage data becomes available.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/09/24/proposed-expansion-bird-scooter-range-unanimously-opposed/

Fort Atkinson finalizes updated e-bike, e-scooter ordinance

Fort Atkinson finalized ordinance amendments governing e-bikes, e-scooters, and off-highway motorcycles, with Police Chief Adrian Bump presenting the changes. Key provisions include prohibiting operation under the influence, requiring proper lighting during darkness, barring riders under 16 from Class 3 e-bikes (which assist up to 28 mph), and holding parents liable for certain minor violations. The updates respond to a 194% increase in e-bike-motor vehicle crashes and a 260% increase in e-scooter-motor vehicle crashes in Wisconsin between 2022 and 2025, per Dane County Traffic Safety Commission data.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/fort-atkinson-finalizes-updated-e-bike-e-scooter-ordinance/article_c9399b53-2590-5586-90dc-468dcedfe7d8.html

Wisconsin Rapids' updated ATV/UTV ordinance takes effect October 1

The Wisconsin Rapids Common Council approved an amended ATV/UTV ordinance on September 15 in a 5 to 3 vote, opening all city streets to all-terrain and utility terrain vehicles effective October 1, with the exception of Highways 13, 34, 54, and 73. The update expands access beyond the previously designated perimeter routes. Operators must carry a valid driver's license and vehicle insurance. City crews are replacing existing route signage with new signs at corporate limits. The Public Works Committee and Common Council will conduct annual route reviews, with possible quarterly reviews under consideration.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/25/wisconsin-rapids-updated-atvutv-ordinance-takes-effect-october-1/

Village to help pay for firefighting equipment

Superior's Finance Committee unanimously recommended Sept. 22 an agreement under which the Village of Superior will pay the city $1,373.50 per fire department response plus a $62.92 capital contribution during the first year, with both figures adjusted annually by the Consumer Price Index. The five-year agreement extends the existing service fee to include gear, equipment, and apparatus costs previously borne solely by city taxpayers. The Superior City Council will consider the agreement at its Oct. 6 meeting.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/village-to-help-pay-for-firefighting-equipment

Police chief makes detailed case for department expansion

Plymouth Police Chief Kenneth Ruggles held the first of three planned public information sessions at City Hall, making the case for a $600,000 police department expansion referendum on the November ballot. Ruggles told the roughly 12 attendees that department staffing has been unchanged since 1997.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/police-chief-makes-detailed-case-for-department-expansion/

Elk Mound Police Department faces potential dissolution

The Village of Elk Mound's public safety committee voted unanimously Friday to forward a resolution to the village board recommending disbandment of the Elk Mound Police Department and to refer a 2027 budget proposal for contracting police services from the Dunn County Sheriff's Office. Village President Tim Benjamin cited an annual savings of approximately $14,000 in direct budget comparison and a state innovation grant valued at $48,040 per year over a five-year contract term, against a current department budget of $133,239. The proposed contract calls for one full-time Dunn County deputy stationed in the village 40 hours per week. Police Chief Chad Weinberger said he learned of the proposal only the night before the committee meeting and objected to the lack of prior dialogue. A special community forum has been proposed for Oct. 5, with the next regular board meeting set for Oct. 19.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/09/25/elk-mound-police-department-faces-potential-dissolution/

Ruiz investigation results are with DA; no timeline for decision on charges

The Wisconsin Department of Justice's Division of Criminal Investigation has delivered the results of its probe into the July 22 fatal police shooting of Corey Ruiz by Madison Police Officer Kiel Baitinger-Peterson to Dane County District Attorney Ismael Ozanne. Ozanne received the bulk of the findings at the end of August and additional reports on Tuesday, but has set no timeline for a charging decision and has not determined whether further investigation is needed. The shooting occurred after Ruiz pulled a knife while four officers attempted to take him into custody; two Tasers deployed before Baitinger-Peterson fired. The investigation was conducted under a 2014 state law requiring outside agencies to investigate police shootings.

Source: Bloomer Advance (South Central) | https://www.bloomeradvance.com/news/state_news/article_19f87ad9-e0ca-5539-b82b-ae7d3d708e89.html

Madison police commission weighs bid to fire officer who shot Ruiz

The Madison Police and Fire Commission is conducting a preliminary investigation into a complaint filed by Blacks for Political and Social Action of Dane County calling for the termination of Officer Kiel Baitinger-Peterson, who fatally shot Corey Ruiz on July 22. Commission President Mary Schauf is reviewing whether the commission has legal authority to adjudicate the complaint and whether the organization has standing to file it. Officer Baitinger-Peterson's attorney argued the complaint should be dismissed for lack of standing and requested proceedings be delayed until any criminal case is resolved. The commission has four seated members, one vacancy, and one member recused. Both sides will file additional materials in November, with a continued hearing in December. The state DOJ's Division of Criminal Investigation is separately reviewing the shooting.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-police-commission-weighs-bid-to-fire-officer-who-shot-ruiz/article_8c5b8db5-d7cf-4fdf-9857-bd09b5c7e18b.html

Oneida County Sheriff's Office settles civil rights lawsuit with Ojibwe man for $1.25M

The Oneida County Sheriff's Department's insurer settled a civil rights lawsuit filed by Lac du Flambeau tribal member Thomas Maulson for $1.25 million. The lawsuit arose from a 2024 arrest in a Rhinelander Walmart parking lot in which Maulson sustained a head wound requiring 13 stitches after contact with Deputy Will Taege. The Sheriff's Department denied wrongdoing. The settlement was reached days before the case was scheduled for jury trial.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/oneida-county-sheriffs-office-settles-civil-rights-lawsuit-with-ojibwe-man-for-1-25m/article_b89cb547-e286-4e81-83df-706d88c1d679.html

Family of rideshare driver killed in Milwaukee police chase crash sues city and MPD

The family of El Moctar Sidiya, 28, filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the City of Milwaukee and two named officers, alleging the officers negligently continued a high-speed pursuit through busy city streets, contributing to the crash that killed Sidiya at the intersection of Brady and Humboldt. Suspect Cera Wilkerson, 22, faces six felony charges including fleeing an officer causing death and second-degree reckless homicide; she was found competent to proceed and is due back in court Oct. 6. Milwaukee police declined to comment on the lawsuit.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/milwaukee-county/family-of-rideshare-driver-killed-in-milwaukee-police-chase-crash-sues-city-and-mpd

FBI leads probe into fires at Enbridge office and drill site

The FBI is leading a multi-agency investigation into two fires tied to Enbridge's Line 5 reroute project: a Sept. 14 fire and graffiti at the company's Superior office, and a Sept. 17 fire destroying an equipment trailer and two boring machines at a drilling site in Ashland County's town of Gingles. The ATF, Wisconsin Division of Criminal Investigations, and State Fire Marshal's Office are supporting agencies. Separately, the DNR is overseeing remediation of an Aug. 25 Line 5 gas leak in Iron County, with soil excavation and split-sample testing with Enbridge set to begin imminently.

Source: Superior Telegram (Central/Northern) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/fbi-leads-probe-into-fires-at-enbridge-office-and-drill-site

Many rural Wisconsin courthouses lack weapon screening. A hidden gun highlights the issue.

A gun was discovered on July 16 in a third-floor bathroom of the Langlade County Courthouse in Antigo, accompanied by a note bearing the name of a trial witness. Langlade County Sheriff Mark Westen told the county's Public Safety Committee on Sept. 10 that he had proposed security upgrades about eight years ago but the county board rejected them over cost. A screening checkpoint would require a $80,000 to $100,000 scanning machine and roughly $130,000 annually for two full-time operators. Neighboring Lincoln and Shawano counties also lack courthouse screening; Marathon County's system, installed in 2017, cost more than $300,000.

The safety committee asked Westen for a written proposal; the committee's next meeting is Oct. 1, with the county board holding final budget authority.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Central/Northern) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/09/many-rural-wisconsin-courthouses-lack-weapon-screening-a-hidden-gun-highlights-the-issue/

Another Inmate Charged With Witness Intimidation Using Jail Tablet

The Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office charged Damian Cosme-Torres with felony intimidation of a victim, alleging he made more than 2,400 phone calls and sent tablet messages to a domestic violence victim while in custody at the Milwaukee County Jail since April. The case is the second high-profile instance of jail communication devices being used for witness intimidation and became an issue in the governor's race, with U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany attacking County Executive David Crowley. On Thursday, Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office Deputy Director David Rugaber told the County Board's Committee on Finance that tablets operate on a closed network maintained by contractor ICSolutions, cannot access the general internet, and have been in use at the jail since 2021.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/09/25/mke-county-another-inmate-charged-with-witness-intimidation-using-jail-tablet/

Milwaukee Police Department considers use of generative AI

The Milwaukee Police Department released a generative AI policy in January but has not yet adopted any AI products. An MPD spokesperson said its Generative Artificial Intelligence Committee has evaluated products including Axon's Draft One, which generates draft police reports from body-camera audio, but remains in a consideration phase only. The policy requires AI-generated material to be treated as a draft, reviewed for accuracy, and labeled as AI-assisted. The ACLU of Wisconsin and Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office each identified risks including transcription errors, model bias, and potential Brady list implications if AI-drafted reports conflict with officer testimony.

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

Madison police body cams fast-tracked by new funding source

The Madison Community Foundation awarded a one-time $350,000 grant to fund one full year of operational costs for body-worn cameras for the entire Madison Police Department, accelerating deployment from a three-year phased rollout to full implementation in 2027. All neighborhood, patrol, mental health, and community policing officers and sergeants will be equipped. The city plans to purchase approximately 220 cameras at an assessed cost of $1,800 per unit including accessories and training, with Panasonic as the likely vendor. Mayor Rhodes-Conway had proposed $414,000 in the 2027 capital budget; the grant covers software, licensing, and initial staffing costs that cannot be financed through municipal borrowing. The department is also seeking federal grant funding for remaining capital costs.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-police-body-cams-fast-tracked-by-new-funding-source/article_7330b6fd-5cfd-469b-8933-f135798bd39c.html

Safe haven baby box opens in Wisconsin Rapids

A Safe Haven Baby Box was installed at Wisconsin Rapids Fire Station 2 on West Grand Ave., giving parents a legal and anonymous option to surrender newborns up to 30 days old under Wisconsin's safe haven law. The box cost $16,000 to install and approximately $600 annually to maintain, funded by community fundraising. The city of Antigo is separately fundraising a target of $20,000 for its own box, with the nearest existing box currently more than 90 minutes away.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/22/safe-haven-baby-box-opens-wisconsin-rapids/

Siting and Moratoria

The Data Center Challenge underscores community apprehension, policy opportunities

The UW-Madison La Follette School and Wisconsin Policy Forum co-hosted a Sept. 16 forum on data center expansion and regulation in Wisconsin. Wisconsin Policy Forum's Tyler Byrnes presented research covering rising utility rates, energy consumption changes from hyperscale facilities, infrastructure cost allocation, and existing tax exemptions. Sen. Jodi Habush Sinykin (D-Whitefish Bay) noted Wisconsin has "an absolute regulatory void on data centers" and said her Senate Bill 729, which addressed building requirements and utility rates, died without a floor vote last session. She is now developing a "Data Center Accountability Bill, Act 2." Rep. Shae Sortwell (R-Two Rivers) expressed hope for bipartisan consensus next session. The $15 billion Vantage Data Centers hyperscale facility broke ground in Port Washington in December 2025.

Source: UW-Madison La Follette School (Statewide) | https://lafollette.wisc.edu/news/the-data-center-challenge-underscores-community-apprehension-policy-opportunities/

Vilas County eyes 12-month moratorium on data centers

The Vilas County Planning and Zoning Committee voted after a public hearing to advance a proposed 12-month moratorium ordinance on new data centers, solar farms, and battery energy storage systems to the full county board. Zoning Administrator David Sadenwasser said the pause would allow the county to research impacts and develop regulations protecting public health and safety. The ordinance will be considered by the Vilas County Board on November 10. The neighboring Oneida County Board passed a similar one-year moratorium the previous month.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/vilas-county-eyes-12-month-moratorium-on-data-centers/article_907e7736-1434-4b55-bb8e-f5a178ba9ad0.html

Rock County Board tackles issues stemming from data center controversies

The Rock County Board approved three resolutions Thursday addressing data center development concerns. The first directs county officials to develop a formal NDA policy without prohibiting NDAs outright. The second creates a 13-member Rock County Advisory Committee for Data Centers, to include county and municipal representatives and subject-matter experts. The third resolution establishes a specific NDA policy targeting hyperscale data centers, defined as facilities averaging at least 50 megawatts of annual electricity demand and at least 100,000 square feet. An amendment to allocate up to $50,000 for outside expertise for the committee failed, with only three supervisors voting in favor. An amendment to table the committee until the state acts on data center guardrails also failed.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/rock-county-board-tackles-issues-stemming-from-data-center-controversies/article_f54dc5c0-2372-468d-a152-0836d7ce2670.html

County revises data center moratorium

The Monroe County Board approved a revised moratorium on data centers after a permit application for a proposed facility in the Town of Adrian exposed a gap in the county's earlier restrictions.

Source: Monroe County Herald (Sparta) (Western) | https://monroecountyherald.com/stories/county-revises-data-center-moratorium,182595

Data center size 'is insane'

Port Washington Mayor Ted Neitzke led a tour of one of four data center buildings under construction at the Vantage Data Centers Lighthouse Campus, a $15 billion project on the city's north side. The first building toured is 550,000 square feet; the largest of the four will be 759,000 square feet, with the four structures totaling approximately 2.5 million square feet. Vantage vice president Spencer Myers said the buildings will be turned over to tenants Oracle and OpenAI beginning at the end of 2027, with between 2,800 and 3,000 workers on site daily. The project is 20% to 25% complete. General contractor Weitz Co. began pouring the concrete foundation on Jan. 19 and placed the last piece of steel on May 12. The tour was the 13th Neitzke has organized since construction began in January.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/data-center-size-%E2%80%98-insane%E2%80%99

Data center TIF lawsuit dismissed by judge

Ozaukee County Circuit Court Judge Adam Gerol dismissed a lawsuit filed by Great Lakes Neighbors Inc. challenging the tax incremental financing district created by the City of Port Washington for the Vantage Data Centers Lighthouse Campus. Gerol ruled the group "did not prove the facts legally necessary for the case to go forward," finding the suit offered theories rather than facts, including on allegations of open meetings law violations and failure of the but-for test. Great Lakes Neighbors stated it intends to pursue other avenues. Separately, Gerol heard arguments the same day in a case brought by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of

Commerce seeking to overturn a voter-approved referendum requirement for TIF districts exceeding $10 million; Gerol said he will issue a decision on that case Oct. 19.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/data-center-tif-lawsuit-dismissed-judge

Janesville City Council to host hearing on proposed data center moratorium

The Janesville City Council will hold a public hearing on a proposed 12-month moratorium on data center development, scheduled for 6 p.m. Monday at Janesville City Hall. City staff recommends approval. If enacted, the moratorium would immediately halt acceptance, processing, and approval of applications for rezoning, permits, annexation, and other data center development approvals. The moratorium would remain in effect for 12 months unless amended, rescinded, or extended. Staff cited the absence of specific zoning classifications, siting criteria, or infrastructure requirements for data centers in the current code.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-city-council-to-host-hearing-on-proposed-data-center-moratorium/article_4c7086df-8c66-4bff-adb4-0a7a090bd19b.html

Village of Kekoskee Board Discusses Data Center Moratorium and Discuss Contract with Dodge County Humane Society

At its Sept. 15 meeting, the Kekoskee Village Board declined to sign the 2027 Dodge County Humane Society stray animal contract, which carries a $2,000 base fee covering up to five animals and $450 per additional animal, determining the cost was not justified given the village's historically low intake of one or two animals per year. The board also voted to join the Marsh Area Chamber of Commerce at a $75 annual fee. Separately, the board scheduled an Oct. 20 public hearing at 5 p.m. on whether to adopt an AI data center moratorium ordinance, noting that Dodge County's existing moratorium does not automatically apply to municipalities with independent zoning.

Source: Mayville Dodge County Pioneer (South Central) | https://www.dodgecountypionier.com/stories/village-of-kekoskee-board-discusses-data-center-moretoreum-and-discuss-contract-with-dodge-county,355560

Bipartisan opposition mounts against Wisconsin's proposed 765,000-volt power lines

Democratic and Republican state legislators representing Sauk and Columbia counties, the two major-party gubernatorial candidates, area municipalities, and school districts have publicly opposed the Bell Center-Columbia-Sugar Creek-Illinois/Wisconsin (BECI) transmission line, a proposed 190-mile, 765,000-volt line crossing nine counties estimated to cost approximately $1.2 billion as part of the roughly $21.8 billion Tranche 2.1 multistate project. A September 18 forum hosted in Sauk County drew Reps. Karen DeSanto, Tony Kurtz, and Sen. Sarah Keyeski. The project proponent, Midcontinent Grid Solutions, a joint venture of TransSource Energy and BHE Transmission, requires Wisconsin Public Service Commission approval; state utility regulators have not yet become involved. A public comment deadline to the PSC was set for Monday.

Source: WiscNews (South Central) | https://wiscnews.com/news/local/article_cded019b-862a-4388-9529-e6e25712ab2c.html

Van Orden votes to protect Wisconsin families from data center-driven rate increases

Congressman Derrick Van Orden voted yes on H.R. 9340, the bipartisan Ratepayer Protection Act, which would require state utility regulators to consider standards ensuring large-load customers, including data centers, cover the full incremental costs of generation, transmission, and distribution upgrades needed to serve their energy demands. Van Orden stated Wisconsin families should not pay higher utility bills to subsidize data center energy needs.

Source: Stanley Republican (Statewide) | https://stanleyrepublican.com/stories/van-orden-votes-to-protect-wisconsin-families-from-data-center-driven-rate-increases,207187

PSC case opened on Dallas solar project; first step towards possible construction approval

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission opened formal Docket 9848-CE-100 on September 18 after MN8 Energy, operating as Sandhill Solar LLC, submitted a pre-application engineering plan on September 9 for a proposed 100-megawatt solar array paired with a 50 MW battery storage system on roughly 1,039 acres in the Town of Dallas, Barron County. The project includes a new 69-kilovolt generation tie line connecting to Xcel Energy's Ridgeland Substation. Sandhill Solar plans to file a formal Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity application in the fourth quarter of 2026. If approved, regulatory decisions are anticipated by late 2027, construction would begin in the second quarter of 2028, and completion is targeted for late 2029.

Source: Barron News-Shield (Western) | https://news-shield.com/news/top_stories/article_a7efd310-a368-4427-813f-b3064f2230d1.html

Town of Beloit to discuss opposing high voltage transmission line project

The Town of Beloit Board of Supervisors is scheduled to discuss and potentially act on a resolution opposing the routing and construction of a proposed 765-kilovolt high-voltage transmission line. The Bell Center-Columbia-Sugar Creek project, approved by MISO in 2024, would run 190 miles through up to nine southwest Wisconsin counties at an estimated cost of $1.2 billion, requiring towers as tall as 175 feet. Town Administrator John Malizio noted proposed routes cross two new subdivisions near Garden Prairie School and pass near a recently approved $512 million liquified natural gas plant. Midcontinent Grid Solutions is expected to submit route alternatives to the Public Service Commission in early 2027.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/town-of-beloit-to-discuss-opposing-high-voltage-transmission-line-project/article_ade357c8-04cd-5f25-a8d6-db035084bb66.html

Public Hearing Held For Potential Non-Metallic Mining Operation in Town of Byron

The Town of Byron held a public hearing Sept. 9 on a permit application by Fond du Lac Stone Development and Michels Corporation to conduct non-metallic mining on a 27.6-acre parcel. The proposed work schedule is 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, with blasting limited to 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Residents raised concerns about road safety, property values, groundwater contamination, and consistency with the Town's Comprehensive

Plan 2040, which does not designate the parcel for mining. The public comment record closed Sept. 16, and the board's deliberation-only meeting is scheduled for Oct. 14 at 6:30 p.m.

Source: Mayville Dodge County Pioneer (Northeastern) | https://www.dodgecountypionier.com/stories/public-hearing-held-for-potential-non-metallic-mining-operation-in-town-of-byron,355558

Glenmore board opts to maintain current manure pit process

The Town of Glenmore Board of Supervisors voted 2-1 to uphold the existing requirement for Conditional Use Permits for animal waste storage facilities, following a contentious discussion at the board's monthly meeting.

Source: Denmark News (Northeastern) | https://thedenmarknews.com/glenmore-board-opts-maintain-current-manure-pit-process

Housing and Development

Condo production continues to lag in Wisconsin

A Wisconsin Policy Forum report finds condo production in Milwaukee and Madison remains far below pre-recession levels. Milwaukee averaged about 8 new condo units annually from 2021 to 2025, down from roughly 309 annually during 2004 to 2008. Madison averaged about 16 annually in the recent period versus about 547 during the pre-recession peak. More than 52,000 Wisconsinites live in owner-occupied units in structures of five or more units, representing 0.9% of state population compared to a 1.6% national share. The report identifies construction defect liability law and condo financing rules as policy levers available to legislators seeking to stimulate production.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Statewide) | https://dailyreporter.com/2026/09/25/condo-production-lag-wisconsin-milwaukee-madison/

Monona targets growth along Broadway corridors with new project

Galway Companies is constructing "The Greenline" in Monona, a development described as the largest in the city's history, comprising 357 apartment units and approximately 16,000 square feet of commercial space off West Broadway. A 1.44-acre public park within the development will be funded through park dedication fees. Mayor Nancy Moore said the project aligns with the city's 10-year comprehensive plan, which focuses on Monona Drive and both East and West Broadway corridors. A separate East Broadway project will add workforce and affordable housing for seniors 55 and older. The state-required comprehensive plan update will also address the future of South Town Mall.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/09/24/monona-targets-growth-along-broadway-corridors-with-new-project/

City of Ladysmith giving away residential riverfront lots

The City of Ladysmith is offering three riverfront lots along the Flambeau River at no cost to home builders willing to construct a residence within 12 to 18 months. Applications are handled first-come, first-served; once approved, a developer agreement is executed and title transfers. If construction is not completed within the required timeframe, title reverts to the city.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/09/25/city-ladysmith-giving-away-residential-riverfront-lots/

City of La Crosse looking for partners to administer Housing Rehabilitation Program

The City of La Crosse issued a Request for Proposals on Thursday seeking a qualified partner to administer its HUD Community Development Block Grant-funded Housing Rehabilitation Program, which has served more than 1,300 homeowners since its creation. The selected partner will handle homeowner outreach, eligibility verification, contractor management, and federal compliance. Proposals are due by 4 p.m. on October 21 to the Department of Planning and Development.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/09/24/city-la-crosse-looking-partners-administer-housing-rehabilitation-program/

Manitou Manor Explains Proposed Rent Increase

The Manitowoc Housing Authority is raising the flat rent at Manitou Manor Apartments from $593 to $620 per month for a one-bedroom unit, a rate that includes utilities, pest inspections, and on-site maintenance. Executive Director Serena Lewis attributed the increase to property insurance costs that nearly doubled to approximately $55,000 this year, along with a Payment In Lieu of Taxes obligation that rose more than $2,000 over two years. Tenants who qualify may alternatively choose income-based rent. The authority meets publicly on the third Wednesday of each month.

Source: Seehafer News (Northeastern) | https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/09/26/manitou-manor-explains-proposed-rent-increase/

Madison church plans rebuild, over 100 rent-restricted apartments

Dale Heights Presbyterian Church on Madison's west side is proposing to demolish its sanctuary on University Avenue and construct approximately 110 rent-restricted apartments across three buildings, developed by Threshold Sacred Development. Rents would be set at around 70% of area median income, approximately $64,000 annually. The project would proceed in two stages, with a four-story mixed-use building of about 45 units constructed first, followed by two residential buildings of 30 to 40 units each after demolition of the existing church. City Council member John Guequierre noted that reconstructing nearby portions of Norman Way is in the city's long-term transportation plan, and city planner Chris Wells said he would consult the Traffic Engineering department on access concerns raised by neighbors.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/development/madison-church-plans-rebuild-over-100-rent-restricted-apartments/article_c2c46e85-d4a3-4f7f-8c2b-6b9e7e89c104.html

Milton continues to see rapid growth in its housing market

Milton recorded a 390% increase in housing unit construction between 2023 and 2024. Developer Next Generation LLC is breaking ground on Sunset Point, a north-side subdivision with a 78-unit apartment complex and eight single-family homes. JS Chisum Land LLC is proposing a fifth addition to Red Hawk Farms with nine lots, with a possible amendment later to allow duplexes on five lots requiring rezoning. City Administrator Paul Hensch noted that levy limits make growth essential to avoiding service cuts, and said no additional projects are expected to break ground before year-end.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/milton-continues-to-see-rapid-growth-in-its-housing-market/article_487ad43a-ac0b-42ad-9c4a-e650879d4a77.html

City to host public meeting on project turning McKinley School site into 28-home development

The City of Kenosha will hold a public meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Oct. 6 at Room 202 of the City Municipal Building, 625 52nd St., to update residents on plans to redevelop the former McKinley Elementary School site at 5520 32nd Ave. into 28 single-family homes and a new park on the 5.6-acre lot. Milwaukee-based MSA is conducting initial land division and design engineering. Bidding is expected to begin in early 2027, with construction projected to start in early 2027 and conclude by December 2027, weather permitting.

Source: Journal Times (Southeastern) | https://journaltimes.com/news/local/business/development/article_49a6f3f8-b2d6-51d7-b056-02eeb3b7b2e9.html

Habitat For Humanity to redevelop DeForest's Holum Education Center

The DeForest Village Board approved a grant agreement with Habitat for Humanity of Dane County on Sept. 15, awarding a $225,000 grant from the village's HomeReach Affordable Housing Development Fund, established in March using tax increment from TID No. 3, for redevelopment of the Holum Education Center at 520 E. Holum Street into a 27-unit affordable housing development. Habitat purchased the property from the DeForest Area School District for $649,900, with closing also occurring Sept. 15. The agreement waives the PILOT requirement unless a unit maintains tax-exempt status more than 180 days after occupancy, requires final site plan approval by Aug. 31, 2027, and sets 10% occupancy by Aug. 31, 2028, 75% occupancy by March 1, 2033, with full buildout projected by 2035.

Source: Sun Prairie Star (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/the_star/local_news/habitat-for-humanity-to-redevelop-deforests-holum-education-center/article_9ffbc54f-810b-48a8-be40-4cdea38b02e4.html

Housing planned for site of closed UW-Milwaukee campus in Waukesha

The Waukesha County Board of Supervisors authorized the sale of the former 76-acre UW-Milwaukee Waukesha campus to Milwaukee-based developer F Street, which plans approximately 70 single-family homes and 580 market-rate multifamily units. Mayor Alicia Halvensleben said the development is projected to generate about $1.56 million in annual tax

revenue. The Waukesha Plan Commission and Common Council must still approve rezoning; demolition is targeted for later this year and construction for 2027.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Southeastern) | https://www.wpr.org/news/housing-site-of-closed-uw-milwaukee-campus-waukesha

Jefferson County: Board approves economic development reorganization

The Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium/ThriveED board voted to approve an administration agreement placing ThriveED under the administrative support of the Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation, a nonprofit, and to formally create a regional prosperity hub extending ThriveED's services into neighboring Dodge County. ThriveED President Deb Reinbold reported that Horicon and Beaver Dam have expressed interest in receiving services under the new model. Formal agreements between the parties are in various stages of drafting.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/jefferson-county-board-approves-economic-development-reorganization/article_7b68c813-6176-49ff-8613-ca8b0ff7ebad.html

Amery extends closing deadline on Soldiers Field sale

Amery's Common Council approved a First Amendment to the Soldiers Field purchase agreement, signed September 16, extending the due diligence period to November 1, 2026, and the closing date to December 1, 2026. The city is selling the property to Partner Properties LLC (Scott Lee) for $40,000 for a seasonal RV campground. The city retains the shoreline parcel and road rights of way. Before closing, the parties must execute a development agreement covering an approved site plan, construction schedule, and utility responsibilities, and Lee must obtain a conditional use permit. The city holds a two-year clawback option if the approved project is not built. Mayor Rick Van Blaricom and Clerk-Treasurer Taylor Larson signed for the city; Lee signed September 10.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/amery-extends-closing-deadline-on-soldiers-field-sale/article_d1826bf1-53dd-4e6b-b534-87dcacc8c6d1.html

Ho-Chunk to open Beloit casino Oct. 23

The Ho-Chunk Nation announced its Beloit casino will open Oct. 23 at 2 p.m., the first phase of a 1.2-million-square-foot, $705 million casino, hotel, and convention center project. The casino will feature 1,300 slot machines and four restaurants. A liquor license application was filed this week and is scheduled for a city vote Oct. 5; an occupancy permit has not yet been issued. Under a federal gaming compact, Ho-Chunk will pay the state 5% of gross gaming revenue (5.5% above $350 million annually), with the City of Beloit receiving 1.4% and Rock County 0.6%. The 312-room hotel and convention center are expected to open in 2027, at which point the Nation projects employing up to 1,500 workers, making it Beloit's largest employer.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/business-news/ho-chunk-to-open-beloit-casino-oct-23/article_20e0ab9e-3fca-4d6f-a7b7-a7639cb9045c.html

St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center receives $2.2M grant for expansion

The City of River Falls and the River Falls Economic Development Corporation will receive a $2.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration to expand the St. Croix Valley Business Innovation Center. The funded addition will comprise approximately 18,000 square feet, including three industrial bays, office space, and bathrooms. The center serves entrepreneurs in Pierce, St. Croix, and Polk counties.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/09/23/st-croix-valley-business-innovation-center-receives-22m-grant-expansion/

Stevens Point could get indoor sports and event complex

Stevens Point Mayor Mike Wiza said the city is advancing a proposal for a 110,000-square-foot indoor sports and event complex featuring eight full-size basketball courts and 690 parking stalls on city-owned land off McDill Avenue. The project is estimated to cost between $38 million and $50 million, with the city contributing land at a free or reduced price and the remainder expected from private donors and users. A feasibility study has been completed, and letters of support have been submitted by the Stevens Point Area Public School District, local hotels and businesses, and the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association. Wiza said formal city approval of the land contribution and stakeholder consensus are the next required steps, and the project will not proceed until substantially funded. A projected 10-year regional economic impact exceeds $130 million.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/25/stevens-point-could-get-indoor-sports-event-complex/

Foxconn Claims It Will Add 700 Jobs in Wisconsin

The Mount Pleasant Plan Commission unanimously recommended Wednesday that the Village Board approve Foxconn's proposal to renovate its Braun Road facility, adding 26 loading docks to support approximately 700 new production jobs by mid-2027. The Village Board has not yet voted. Foxconn currently employs more than 1,000 workers in Racine County. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation reworked its contract with Foxconn last year, offering $16 million in additional tax credits for expansion toward a target of 2,600 employees by end of 2029, bringing total state subsidies to $96 million. Village Community Development Director Samuel Schultz said no new tax increment financing is expected for the renovation.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/09/23/foxconn-claims-it-will-add-700-jobs-in-wisconsin/

Medical Charity Sues City of Madison

The Wisconsin Medical Project has sued the City of Madison, alleging the city failed to provide adequate advance notice, relocation assistance, or financial aid after purchasing the West Badger Road property where the charity had operated for roughly a decade. The city acquired the former Centro Hispano building for a redevelopment project and ended the nonprofit's sub-tenancy.

Source: Seehafer News (South Central) | https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/09/25/medical-charity-sues-city-of-madison/

Years of complaints uncovered after tenants forced from Milwaukee apartments

Milwaukee's Department of Neighborhood Services declared two apartment buildings at 2319 and 2327 W. Michigan St. unsafe on Wednesday, displacing more than 40 residents after inspectors found electrical tampering, defective fire alarm systems, and non-functioning fire doors. City records show repeated complaints and code enforcement activity at the properties over several years. The buildings are owned by S2 Real Estate 2319-2327 Michigan LLC, an entity tied to Sam Stair, who is separately accused by federal prosecutors of drug trafficking and money laundering. Managing company Smart Asset Realty said contractors are on site and expects residents could return within approximately two weeks.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/milwaukee-county/years-of-complaints-uncovered-after-tenants-forced-from-milwaukee-apartments

Land Use and Zoning

5-year update on Eau Claire County comprehensive plan held Wednesday

Eau Claire County held a public meeting Wednesday on the five-year update to its comprehensive plan, with Planning and Development Director Rod Eslinger reporting that residents expressed greatest concern about land use, specifically the impacts of data centers, energy storage, and groundwater protection. Additional steps remain before the update is finalized.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/09/23/5-year-update-eau-claire-county-comprehensive-plan-held-wednesday/

What will Whitewater look like in 20 years? Residents share their ideas with city planners

Whitewater held its final public open house for the Whitewater Forward comprehensive plan update, the city's first such update in nearly a decade. Concepts include converting First Street between Main and Center streets into a year-round pedestrian event space. Economic development manager Mason Becker said the plan could be approved by Whitewater Common Council as soon as November.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/walworth-county/what-will-whitewater-look-like-in-20-years-residents-share-their-ideas-with-city-planners

Ecological restoration planning begins on Hillmoor property

Lake Geneva's City Council unanimously approved a $29,430 contract with Native Range Ecological in November 2025 to develop a 10-year ecological restoration plan for the approximately 230-acre Hillmoor property at 333 E. Main St., purchased by the city for about $6

million from White River Holdings LLC in late 2022. Principal ecologist Clay Frazer presented a September 9 progress update to the City Council Committee of the Whole, outlining plans to remove invasive species including black locust, restore native plants and trees, improve wildlife habitats, and address soil health degraded by decades of golf course chemical use. The first three years of restoration work are expected to cost approximately $300,000, with the completed plan due to the City Council in December.

Source: Lake Geneva Regional News (Southeastern) | https://lakegenevanews.net/news/local/article_b3f38696-a184-4317-9216-e7632d30c42b.html

Board of Adjustment rejects county's bid to reopen Bohn variance case

The Burnett County Board of Adjustment voted unanimously Sept. 14 to deny the Burnett County Board of Supervisors' motion to reconsider a use variance granted July 6 to Northwinds Resort and Bar at 2069 County Road G in the Town of Rusk, which allows two non-compliant campers to remain on the property. Corporation Counsel Stephanie Thomas Schmidt argued the board committed a "manifest error" under the Koepsell standard by approving the variance despite acknowledging financial hardship alone cannot justify one and that the property already has other reasonable uses. Attorney Adam Jarchow countered that the board's rules permit reopening only at the same meeting or to correct a genuine manifest error, and that the correct remedy was a certiorari appeal to circuit court, a 30-day window that may have already lapsed. Board member Brad Peterson moved to deny reconsideration, Cathy Schmidt seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. The county had approximately 15 days from Sept. 14 to decide whether to file a certiorari appeal and had not indicated its intention as of the meeting date.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/board-of-adjustment-rejects-county-s-bid-to-reopen-bohn-variance-case/article_4cc8eb27-1b2e-47fc-a061-98a04563243b.html

On Janesville's November ballot: an 'anti-development' question

Janesville voters will decide Nov. 3 whether developments exceeding $450 million on the 250-acre former GM/JATCO site must receive majority voter approval, after a direct legislation petition gathered 3,927 signatures. The City Council placed the question on the ballot 7-0 rather than enacting it as an ordinance. City Finance Director Dave Godek estimates the site cost taxpayers $3.5 million to purchase, has been off the tax rolls for nine years, and will require at least $35 million to remediate. On Sept. 13 the council approved on first reading a 12-month moratorium on data centers. City Manager Kevin Lahner and other officials warned in a January memo that requiring referendums could delay investment and limit the council's ability to manage redevelopment. SHINE CEO Greg Piefer said his company's total Janesville investment has exceeded the $450 million threshold and that the restriction, had it existed earlier, would have challenged the company's site selection.

Source: Badger Institute (South Central) | https://www.badgerinstitute.org/on-janesvilles-november-ballot-an-anti-development-question/

New Grafton Woodman's proposal, commission moves plan forward

The Village of Grafton Planning Commission voted to advance plans for a proposed 245,000-square-foot Woodman's grocery store at the corner of Port Washington Road and Arrowhead Road, with a 24-hour operating schedule, a convenience store, gas station, car wash, 597 parking stalls, and 5.86 acres of stormwater retention ponds. The proposal also calls for expanding Port Washington Road to four lanes and reducing the speed limit from 45 mph to 35 mph on the affected stretch. The full village board is expected to vote on the commission's recommendations in October.

Source: WITI FOX6 Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.fox6now.com/news/grafton-woodmans-proposal-moves-forward

Shorewood considers next move after beach walker wins in circuit court

A Milwaukee County circuit court judge ruled that the Village of Shorewood could not ticket resident Paul Florsheim for walking north of Atwater Beach on Lake Michigan beyond a "no trespassing" sign, a case originating from a 2025 citation. The Shorewood village board met in closed session September 21 to discuss next steps, including whether to appeal. The village has until December to decide on an appeal. Because a circuit court ruling does not set precedent, Wisconsin still lacks a definitive policy on public shoreline access.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Southeastern) | https://www.wuwm.com/environment/2026-09-21/shorewood-considers-next-move-after-beach-walker-wins-in-circuit-court

Governance and Ethics

Rock County to hold restitution hearing in housing fraud case

Rock County Circuit Court Judge Ashley Morse scheduled a restitution hearing for November 30 in the case of Rachel Jacquest, a 44-year-old Beloit woman charged with two felony counts of misconduct in office and fraudulent records, plus one misdemeanor count of receiving stolen property. Jacquest, employed as a Janesville housing specialist since July 2023, is accused of pressuring staff to approve housing for family members whose residences did not meet program requirements and providing false employment verification to qualify a family friend for Section 8 benefits. Jacquest has pleaded not guilty and is free on a $1,000 signature bond.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/rock-county-to-hold-restitution-hearing-in-housing-fraud-case/article_4e255107-fd3f-5541-a0aa-496b3d20d9d8.html

Monroe County Ethics Board Declines to Investigate and Dismisses Eight of Nine Complaints Filed on Sheriff's Office Personnel

At its September 3, 2026, meeting, the Monroe County Ethics Board formally declined to investigate and dismissed eight of nine complaints filed against Sheriff's Office personnel, including Sheriff Revels and a chief deputy. One complaint was not dismissed and its disposition was not described in the available text.

Source: Monroe County Herald (Sparta) (Western) | https://monroecountyherald.com/stories/monroe-county-ethics-board-declines-to-investigate-and-dismisses-eight-of-nine-complaints-filed-on,182607

Democratic candidate Jung faces probe into campaigning on city time

Racine County District Attorney Tricia Hanson confirmed her office is investigating an allegation that Trevor Jung, City of Racine transit and mobility director and Democratic state Senate District 21 candidate, campaigned on city time. The allegation came from a resident on Sept. 23; Hanson forwarded it to a law enforcement agency for investigation and said no investigators have yet been assigned. The Racine County Sheriff's Office is determining which agency will handle the case. Jung previously denied the allegation and said he will take unpaid leave from his city job Oct. 1 through Election Day.

Source: Journal Times (Southeastern) | https://journaltimes.com/news/local/government-politics/elections/article_239ed437-be86-52da-a8af-b492986e9b28.html

New look Amery Tourism Commission faces year-end deadline on room tax funds

Amery's Common Council voted unanimously on September 16 to adopt Ordinance No. 11-2026, expanding the Tourism Commission from four to five voting members and eliminating two seats that created conflicts of interest identified by the city attorney. The new composition is one alderperson, one hotel and motel industry representative, and three at-large residents; quorum drops from four to three. Immediately after adoption the council appointed Mayor Rick Van Blaricom and former AEDC director Paul Shafer to two resident seats; a third remains open. State law requires the commission to allocate room tax revenue before year-end or the city faces daily penalties on its annual Department of Revenue report. The reorganized commission will be revisited at the April 2027 reorganization meeting.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/new-look-amery-tourism-commission-faces-year-end-deadline-on-room-tax-funds/article_cbab4534-53fa-4227-b3b5-12ec818786be.html

La Crosse council weighs path forward on city administrator

La Crosse's city council held an informal discussion with local government experts on Tuesday to assess options for establishing a professional manager, following a prior failed ordinance vote. Most council members appeared to favor a city administrator model, found in 62% of Wisconsin cities, which would assume mayoral responsibilities for supervising staff and the budget. Mayor Shaunel Washington-Spivey remained skeptical, proposing instead a lower-tier management position in the mayor's office. No formal action resulted; the council agreed to reconvene after the finance department determines costs, with a city administrator salary potentially exceeding $240,000. The city faces an $8 million budget gap heading into budget season.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Western) | https://chippewa.com/news/local/government-politics/article_620b30b9-63c1-58c0-940c-4b72c3d9381e.html

Janesville School District holds off on explaining how it reached superintendent decision

The School District of Janesville declined to publicly describe the process or timeline used to select a new superintendent until a board meeting Tuesday at 5 p.m., with Public Information Officer Patti Lux Mlsna citing the importance of staff and community hearing the details at an open meeting. The selection process became public four days before the board announced its intention to name a replacement for retiring Superintendent Mark Holzman, representing an apparent departure from the public search processes used for Holzman and his predecessor Steve Pophal.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-school-district-holds-off-on-explaining-how-it-reached-superintendent-decision/article_b3c89233-7b3d-42b9-8a5b-1c133a404fb4.html

Elections and Election Administration

Absentee voting opens in Wisconsin 2026

The Wisconsin Elections Commission reported 299,849 absentee ballots requested and 4,309 returned as of late September, with local clerks required to mail ballots to voters with valid requests by Sept. 17. WEC Administrator Meagan Wolfe moved the recommended mail-return deadline from 10 days to 14 days before Election Day, setting Oct. 20 as the new target. Ballots must reach municipal clerks by poll close on Nov. 3. Early in-person absentee voting opens Oct. 20.

Source: WRJN 1400 AM Racine/Kenosha (Statewide) | https://wrjn.com/news/2026/09/23/absentee-voting-opens-in-wisconsin-2026

Elections officials warn of unofficial third-party mailers ahead of midterms

Wisconsin elections officials are warning voters that unofficial third-party mailers falsely indicating recipients are not registered to vote are circulating statewide, with some listing clerks' offices as return addresses. Wisconsin Elections Commission Communications Director Emilee Miklas confirmed the mailers are not official state resources and that one group is distributing pre-filled absentee ballot applications that in some cases contain errors. Dane County Clerk Scott McDonell said the mailers rely on outdated lists unconnected to the official state voter database. Clerks are legally required to process any submitted absentee forms, including erroneous ones. Voters can verify registration at myvote.wi.gov.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/elections-officials-warn-of-unofficial-third-party-mailers-ahead-of-midterms/article_51fc6bf2-f88e-4276-9289-90af675238b8.html

Kronenwetter absentee ballots valid despite clerk vacancy, county says

The Marathon County Clerk's Office is partnering with the Village of Kronenwetter to issue absentee ballots ahead of the November 3 election while the village clerk position remains vacant. County Clerk Kim Trueblood confirmed that absentee ballots for Kronenwetter residents

with requests on file were mailed September 17 in compliance with the statutory deadline and are fully valid. Village Administrator James Davel said clerk recruitment is ongoing and that the village is coordinating with the county to complete all necessary training and preparations for November 3.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/23/kronenwetter-absentee-ballots-valid-despite-clerk-vacancy-county-say/

Dane Co. clerk criticizes 'silence' in face of threats to have federal agents at polls

Dane County Clerk Scott McDonell said local law enforcement agencies have been seeking guidance on how to respond if federal agents appear at polling places but have received no direction from the Wisconsin Elections Commission or Attorney General Josh Kaul. WEC communications director Emilee Miklas said the commission hopes to provide guidance before Election Day. U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin introduced legislation Wednesday intended to bar ICE and the National Guard from polling locations. Lawsuits have been filed against the FBI, Homeland Security, and the Department of Justice citing a federal law that restricts armed federal agents at polls.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/dane-co-clerk-criticizes-silence-in-face-of-threats-to-have-federal-agents-at-polls/article_5034631d-7f4d-49a8-bc51-15ebd356d426.html

Sen. Baldwin tours new election center

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin toured Dane County's new election center, which is designed to centralize election operations including secure storage for ballot scanners and ballots and training space for election workers. Officials said Dane County's current system is among the most decentralized in the nation, with equipment stored in churches, schools, and other spaces. Local election clerks are updating emergency plans in the event federal agents appear at voting sites.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/sen-baldwin-tours-new-election-center/article_5c9ca54b-d088-490b-96fd-17951df69e65.html

City clerk sounds off over idea of federal agents assigned to Nov. 3 election

Janesville City Clerk Lori Stottler issued a statement affirming her office would conduct the November 3 election under constitutional and state statutory authority, characterizing reported plans for federal law enforcement deployment as a "distraction." Stottler noted state statutes place election law enforcement on the County Sheriff's Office, with Janesville Police also conducting patrols, and said she defers to the state Department of Justice for further legal guidance on federal involvement. The statement followed reports that gubernatorial candidate Tom Tiffany welcomed potential DOJ deployment of 1,000 federal monitors and FBI Director Kash Patel's suggestion of "election crime coordinators" at field offices.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/city-clerk-sounds-off-over-idea-of-federal-agents-assigned-to-nov-3-election/article_bef5a6a8-6070-42b7-a612-bfeaa52d1896.html

Sen. Romaine Quinn: Understanding Wisconsin's Three November Referendum Questions

Three constitutional amendment questions will appear on Wisconsin's November ballot. Question 1 would prohibit the governor from creating or increasing any tax or fee through the partial veto power, amending Article V, Section 10(1)(c). Question 2 would amend Article I, Section 18 to bar the state or any political subdivision from ordering closure of or forbidding gatherings in places of worship during a state of emergency. Question 3 would create Article I, Section 27, prohibiting governmental entities from discriminating against or granting preferential treatment to any individual based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, education, contracting, or administration. Sen. Quinn states he supported placing all three questions on the ballot.

Source: DrydenWire (Statewide) | https://drydenwire.com/news/sen-romaine-quinn-constitutional-questions-coming-to-november-ballot/

Fond du Lac County man sentenced to 30 days in jail for illegal voting

Fond du Lac County Circuit Court Judge Laura Lavey sentenced Anthony J. Van Egtern to 30 days in jail after he entered a no contest plea to election fraud for casting a ballot in the November 3, 2020, general election while serving a felony sentence. The Wisconsin Elections Commission referred the case for prosecution on September 21, 2021. Van Egtern had previously failed to appear for a scheduled hearing, resulting in a bench warrant. District Attorney Eric Toney said he hopes the sentence deters future violations of election law.

Source: WBEV 1430 AM Beaver Dam (Northeastern) | https://dailydodge.com/fond-du-lac-county-man-sentenced-to-30-days-in-jail-for-illegal-voting/

Recall election scheduled for Wisconsin Rapids District 7 alderperson Michael Timm

The Wisconsin Rapids City Council ordered a recall election on Sept. 23 for District 7 Alderperson Michael Timm after the city clerk issued a Certificate of Sufficiency for a recall petition on Sept. 18. The recall election is scheduled for Oct. 27 at City Hall Council Chambers, 444 W. Grand Avenue. Candidates must file a Campaign Registration Statement, Declaration of Candidacy, and nomination papers with the city clerk by 5 p.m. Sept. 29. The winner will serve the remainder of the term, which expires April 19, 2027.

Source: WAOW ABC9 Wausau (Central/Northern) | https://www.waow.com/news/recall-election-scheduled-for-wisconsin-rapids-district-7-alderperson-michael-timm/article_59fbd728-b84e-406e-a19b-4584869c48f7.html

Human Services

VA Awards $17 Million in Grants to Fight Veteran Homelessness in Wisconsin

The Department of Veterans Affairs awarded $17 million in grants to community organizations in Wisconsin to assist veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in fiscal year 2027.

Source: Monroe County Herald (Sparta) (Statewide) | https://monroecountyherald.com/stories/va-awards-17-million-in-grants-to-fight-veteran-homelessness-in-wisconsin,182605

Green Bay's hidden homeless maintain lives and hopes while living in their vehicles

A Wisconsin Watch investigation documents vehicle-dwelling homelessness in Green Bay, where annual point-in-time counts systematically undercount people living in cars and vans, indirectly limiting federal funding allocations. Wisconsin HUD data show more than 5,200 people experienced homelessness statewide in 2025, up 16% over five years, including 561 families. The Coordinated Entry system, previously administered by Newcap for 10 northeast Wisconsin counties, collapsed after Newcap filed for bankruptcy in spring 2026, cutting off housing referrals for families on waitlists without notification. The Trump administration also announced changes to federal homelessness grants and an overhaul of the Head Start program, adding to resource uncertainty for low-income families relying on both services.

Source: PBS Wisconsin WHA21 (Northeastern) | https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/green-bays-hidden-homeless-maintain-lives-and-hopes-while-living-in-their-vehicles/

Manitowoc warming shelter moves to new location this winter

The Manitowoc Common Council approved relocating the city's warming shelter to St. Paul Lutheran Church on South 10th Street for its fifth season, after the prior location at Lakeshore CAP failed to meet city life safety code requirements. The shelter operates November 11 through April 9 on a first-come, first-served basis.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/manitowoc/manitowoc-warming-shelter-moves-to-new-location-this-winter

Federal immigration policy may be worsening Wisconsin's caregiver shortage, leaders say

Wisconsin home health agencies and nursing homes have abandoned plans to hire overseas workers after the Trump administration suspended nearly all refugee programs and terminated Temporary Protected Status for people from 13 countries. Immigrants constitute 30% of direct care workers nationwide, according to KFF. A bipartisan group of state lawmakers, including Sen. Jesse James (R-Thorp), Rep. Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay), and Rep. Sylvia Ortiz-Velez (D-Milwaukee), passed legislation in April allowing DACA recipients to obtain professional licenses in nursing and other fields. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects home health aide jobs will grow by 847,000 over the next decade, though the 2025 median salary was $35,800. Industry leaders say staffing shortfalls are forcing assisted living facilities to limit admissions and turn away prospective residents.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/09/wisconsin-caregiver-shortage-federal-immigration-policy-home-health-nursing-workers/

Trump admin cancels funding for refugees, immigrants and others in move Democrats argue is illegal

The Trump administration submitted a pocket rescission to Congress totaling $810 million in proposed spending cancellations, including $567 million from the HHS Refugee and Entrant Assistance account, $15 million from a DHS detention alternative program, $10 million from MBDA grant programs, and $10 million from USCIS citizenship integration grants. Congress has 45 days to act; with the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, the funds are positioned to lapse. Republican Sen. Susan Collins and Democratic Sen. Jeff Merkley both called the action an illegal line-item veto. Wisconsin local governments administering refugee resettlement or related grant programs could be affected by the rescissions.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/trump-admin-cancels-funding-for-refugees-immigrants-and-others-in-move-democrats-argue-is-illegal/article_ea0de8bf-01a4-519b-8a47-bb0cf6cb0117.html

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

Federal funding cuts forced Literacy Green Bay to reduce its ESL class offerings from 15 to 8, eliminate child care services, and build a 300-person waitlist. The nonprofit, founded in 1981 and serving adults from nearly 100 countries, charges students a $65 enrollment fee and $35 for books, with waivers available. Trump administration cuts to refugee resettlement programs and broader federal funding were the primary driver of the reductions. Staff have turned to community fundraising and informal community events to supplement services while managing growing demand amid increased immigration enforcement.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Northeastern) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/09/wisconsin-literacy-green-bay-immigrants-refugees-english-education-federal-cuts/

State seeks public input on next round of opioid settlement spending; Polk County won't see any of it

Wisconsin DHS opened a public survey through September 30 seeking input on allocating $11.6 million in opioid settlement funds anticipated for state fiscal year 2028, part of more than $874 million Wisconsin expects to collect between 2022 and 2038. Polk County will receive none of the funds because it was the only Wisconsin county to opt out of the class-action lawsuit that produced the settlement, leaving it outside the allocation process while neighboring counties receive local prevention and recovery funding.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/state-seeks-public-input-on-next-round-of-opioid-settlement-spending-polk-county-wont-see/article_38927ad1-9ae0-4a1f-b2b1-f62f06c57c73.html

County health dept. scales back, ends some programs as mandated costs surge

Sheboygan County Health and Human Services will implement service delivery changes in its 2027 budget proposal due to rising mandated costs and stagnant state and federal funding.

Specific program eliminations and reductions are listed in the proposal but are behind a paywall in this excerpt.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/county-health-dept-scales-back-ends-some-programs-as-mandated-costs-surge/

DHS: Another 20 measles cases reported in Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services reported 20 additional measles cases, bringing the 2026 statewide total to 191, with 184 concentrated in Grant, Iowa, and Lafayette counties. All but one case involved unvaccinated individuals. Cases have been confirmed in Chippewa, Grant, Iowa, Lafayette, Marathon, and Vernon counties. Children ages 5 to 17 account for 43.2% of cases. DHS is urging Wisconsinites to verify their vaccination status and obtain MMR doses if needed.

Source: WIZM 1410 AM La Crosse (Statewide) | https://www.wizmnews.com/2026/09/26/dhs-another-20-measles-cases-reported-in-wisconsin/

Town of Stella selected for multi-year PFAS study

The Town of Stella in Oneida County, where private wells have among the highest PFAS concentrations in the country, has been selected for a multi-year health study led by UW-Madison senior scientist Dr. Amy Schultz. The study received more than $3 million from the National Institutes of Health and will recruit 450 to 500 residents to examine PFAS exposure pathways and effects on cholesterol and blood lipids. Participants must be primary residents within four to five miles of the Stella Town Hall and have lived there at least one year, with eligibility beginning at age six. Recruitment is expected to begin in December or January.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wxpr.org/health/2026-09-24/town-of-stella-selected-for-mulit-year-pfas-study

Wisconsin names Foundation for Rural Housing interim provider in former NEWCAP counties

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families has named Foundation for Rural Housing, Inc. as the interim provider of low-income services in the 10 northeast Wisconsin counties previously served by NEWCAP following that organization's early 2026 closure. The designation is effective immediately. Foundation for Rural Housing, a statewide nonprofit operating for 55 years, will open a public office at 3500 Packerland Drive, Suite 285, De Pere, beginning October 1, open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Counties covered include Brown, Shawano, Oconto, Menominee, Langlade, Marinette, Oneida, Forest, Florence, and Vilas.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://fox11online.com/news/local/wisconsin-names-foundation-for-rural-housing-interim-provider-in-former-newcap-counties

988 service faces a funding shortage in Wisconsin despite bipartisan support

Wisconsin has not enacted permanent funding for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, leaving Family Services of Northeast Wisconsin, the statewide operator, unable to keep pace with demand that has exceeded all projection models. The service received more than 345,000 contacts since its July 2022 launch and handled over 11,200 calls in July 2026 alone, answering 9,000 in-state for an 81% response rate, compared to 90% in Illinois and Minnesota, which fund the service through dedicated telecommunications fees. In the 2025 budget cycle, Gov. Evers recommended $12.2 million for the lifeline, but the legislature did not provide permanent appropriation. Twelve states have enacted a dedicated 988 fee; Wisconsin advocates continue to push for a sustainable funding mechanism independent of the biennial budget cycle.

Source: PBS Wisconsin WHA21 (Statewide) | https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/988-service-faces-a-funding-shortage-in-wisconsin-despite-bipartisan-support/

Hunger relief leaders push for state funding as demand spikes

Feeding Wisconsin's statewide Policymaker Tour convened Thursday at Feed My People Food Bank in Eau Claire, where regional data showed first-time unduplicated visits to supported food programs rose from under 70,000 in 2022 to more than 100,000 in 2025 across a 14-county area, with food distribution up 24% over the past three months compared to the same period last year. A survey of 771 food pantry participants found 48% reported children in their households sometimes or often ate less than they should due to lack of funds, and 54% visited a pantry 11 or more times in the past year. Feeding Wisconsin used a $10 million state grant earlier this year to purchase produce and protein from local farms. Leaders said they will seek additional state funding in the upcoming budget cycle, particularly given anticipated changes to Medicaid programs.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/09/24/hunger-relief-leaders-push-state-funding-demand-spikes/

Senior summit addresses financial struggles in north central Wisconsin

The Healthy Aging Coalition of Marathon County and the Senior Empowerment Project are hosting the first-ever North Central Wisconsin Senior Summit on September 25 at the Lakeview Conference Center in Wausau, prompted by a United Way of Marathon County report finding nearly half of residents 65 and older in the region are living below a basic household survival budget. The free public event will gather data on challenges including housing, healthcare, isolation, and transportation, with United Way CEO Ben Lee presenting on the region's greatest needs. Organizers plan to compile findings into a summary report for community leaders and elected officials to inform future policy and funding decisions.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | https://www.wsaw.com/2026/09/24/senior-summit-addresses-financial-struggles-north-central-wisconsin/

Middleton referendum discussion highlights tension between property taxes and school funding

The Middleton-Cross Plains School District is seeking voter approval of a $118.5 million referendum on the Nov. 3 ballot, the second-largest ask in that election behind Green Bay's $158 million request. The district, which draws roughly 80% of its budget from property taxes, structured the request to provide $24.9 million in year one, rising by approximately 3% annually to $34.6 million in year four. For a median-priced $500,000 Middleton home, the annual added tax burden would be approximately $105 in year two. A community information session Sept. 17 drew about 20 attendees. The district conducted a survey of approximately 1,800 residents in which 66% said they would probably or definitely vote yes. A Wisconsin Policy Forum analysis found the spring 2026 approval rate of 61.3% was on track to be the lowest for an even-numbered year since 2010.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (South Central) | https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/09/21/middleton-referendum-discussion-highlights-tension-between-property-taxes-and-school-funding

Mayville Board Highlights Student Success, Referendum Outreach

The Mayville School District Board of Education met Sept. 7 and heard Superintendent Scott Sabol focus on outreach for an upcoming seven-year operational referendum. The district's current fund balance is approximately $1.5 million against an estimated need of $4 million to avoid short-term borrowing. The referendum, distinct from a prior capital referendum, would fund facility maintenance, transportation, and safety. The board approved routine personnel items including a part-time teacher contract for Yoli Sanchez, co-curricular advisor contracts, transportation contracts including a shuttle for St. John's Daycare, and a food service purchasing cooperative agreement. The next board meeting was scheduled for Sept. 21.

Source: Mayville Dodge County Pioneer (South Central) | https://www.dodgecountypionier.com/stories/mayville-board-highlights-student-success-referendum-outreach,354331

CF school board approves survey ahead of referendum

The Chippewa Falls School Board voted unanimously to approve a School Perception survey to be mailed to all addresses in the district as it plans for an April operational levy referendum, having unanimously deferred from a November vote in July. The survey presents three funding levels: $3.5 million (estimated $15 per $100,000 assessed value), $4 million ($25 per $100,000), or $4.5 million ($35 per $100,000). Enrollment has dropped nearly 450 students over five years, and the district's per-pupil spending of $16,452 is below the state average of $18,746. An existing $7.5 million, three-year referendum providing $2.5 million annually expires at the end of this school year. The board set a January date for a formal referendum motion, with informational meetings planned for February and March ahead of the April 6 vote. The survey deadline is Nov. 2.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/daily-updates/cf-school-board-approves-survey-ahead-of-referendum/article_01172c2c-2392-4139-b222-4ca81d5ba41a.html

$49 million shortfall: WUSD to consider capital referendum

The Watertown Unified School District School Board Fiscal Management Committee discussed a $49,293,647 deferred maintenance shortfall at its Sept. 23 meeting, with $7,914,000 budgeted from the general fund and $2,910,000 from the capital improvement plan fund already allocated for facilities over 10 years. Committee member Julaine Appling said a capital referendum should not be taken off the table, noting a prior district-wide survey had included capital referendum questions. Superintendent James Feil agreed. Voters approved a separate operational referendum in April allowing the district to exceed revenue limits by $4.5 million per year for five years through 2030-31. Lincoln and LEAP elementary schools, closing after 2026-27, carry a combined 20-year maintenance projection of just over $8.3 million. The committee asked administrators to assess every building's costs, condition, and needs.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/49-million-shortfall-wusd-to-consider-capital-referendum/article_9bb5da83-01bb-474f-a9ca-649744e1edab.html

Westby Area School District voters to decide on 3-year operational referendum

The Westby Area School District school board voted to place a three-year operational referendum on the November ballot after its current referendum expires. If approved, the measure would allow the district to exceed state revenue limits by $1.6 million beginning in 2027, rising to $1.8 million in year three. District officials project that on a $200,000 home, school tax bills would decrease by $74 in year one, $42 in year two, and $52 in year three due to existing debt being retired in 2027. Superintendent Steve Michaels warned that failure would require reductions affecting all staff categories and result in larger class sizes.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/09/23/westby-area-school-district-voters-decide-3-year-operational-referendum/

Community survey sent back to committee

The Antigo School Board voted 6-2 on Monday to return a draft community survey on the Clara R. McKenna Aquatic Center to the Buildings and Grounds Committee for revision, with approval targeted for October's meeting. The district currently levies approximately $300,000 annually through Fund 80 for the aquatic center and pays $60,000 per year to rent the pool. The survey draft presented options ranging from eliminating Fund 80 levy funding to increasing it to cover the facility's projected operating deficit. Board President Danny Pyeatt was excused.

Source: Antigo Daily Journal (Central/Northern) | https://www.antigojournal.com/news/community-survey-sent-back-to-committee/article_f7d195d4-1ad9-4b35-988a-cd052c06d078.html

Portage student arrested after bringing gun to football game: Police

A 17-year-old Portage High School student was arrested Wednesday after witnesses reported seeing him with a firearm at a Warriors football game against Evansville on Sept. 11. Portage

Police charged the student with felony possession of a firearm on school grounds and misdemeanor obstruction. Superintendent Josh Sween confirmed the student is no longer enrolled in the district and said a School Board expulsion hearing was held Wednesday evening, declining to provide details. Sween said the student did not make threats and no evidence indicated he was targeting anyone.

Source: WiscNews (South Central) | https://wiscnews.com/news/community/baraboonewsrepublic/article_20c99260-24fd-4b3e-96ef-13e0a4522584.html

MPS Walks A Tightrope On School Discipline and Civil Rights

The Milwaukee Board of School Directors accepted a school climate and culture report Thursday amid a U.S. Department of Education Title VI investigation announced Aug. 18 into whether MPS improperly considered race in administering discipline. The report, first presented to a board committee Sept. 8, outlines prevention-focused alternatives to suspension including restorative circles, peer mediation, and counseling. Board members Kate Vannoy and Erika Siemsen sponsored the resolution creating the Department of Equity, Belonging, and Community, which produced the report. Suspension and expulsion rates for Black males remain disproportionately high. Superintendent Brenda Cassellius cited licensed teacher placement and improved instruction as primary prevention tools.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/09/25/k-12-education-mps-walks-a-tightrope-on-school-discipline-and-civil-rights/

Superintendent halts 'Flashdance' musical; WHS seeking new production, director

WUSD Superintendent James Feil halted Watertown High School's planned 2027 spring production of "Flashdance," citing District Policies 5722 and 5880 governing school-sponsored productions and public performances. Feil said the decision followed concerns from two parents, a student school board representative, and a board member, and was not a finding of procedural failure by Principal Jason Widiker or Choir Director Ryan Moldenhauer, who had received proper principal approval. Moldenhauer subsequently elected not to direct any replacement production. Feil stated that reasonable additional resources may be considered to support a replacement production given the shortened timeline, and that he is seeking directors from outside the district.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/superintendent-halts-flashdance-musical-whs-seeking-new-production-director/article_c8a6cd64-9fb7-4e42-b432-78add8d1cfa4.html

Kenosha Unified leaders move forward with strategic planning

The Kenosha Unified School District board approved a partnership with CESA 6 on Sept. 22 to develop a three-to-five-year strategic plan at a cost of $35,000. CESA 6 CEO Ted Neitzke, also mayor of Port Washington and a former West Bend superintendent, attended virtually to present the methodology. The final plan is expected to be brought to the community in March. Board Treasurer Bob Tierney cast the only dissenting vote, arguing the district should have engaged the

community before contracting. The district faces a roughly $19 million deficit for the 2026-27 school year and is planning a possible operational referendum in April.

Source: Kenosha News (Southeastern) | https://www.kenoshanews.com/news/local/education/article_688eb013-bab2-49af-9675-aab4f6e9e608.html

Beaver Dam school officials discuss impact of declining enrollment

Beaver Dam Unified School District officials said declining enrollment is affecting staffing, budgeting, and long-term planning. State aid is calculated on a three-year enrollment average, which softens immediate impact but Director of Business Services Ryan Cashman warned effects will become more pronounced two to three years out. The district is managing the trend by leaving positions unfilled when vacancies arise rather than through immediate reductions, while weighing effects on class sizes, transportation, and academic programs. Officials did not announce specific position eliminations or a levy figure.

Source: WBEV 1430 AM Beaver Dam (South Central) | https://dailydodge.com/beaver-dam-school-officials-discuss-impact-of-declining-enrollment/

ECASD looks to community input for facilities planning

The Eau Claire Area School District is conducting community surveys and facility cost analyses to inform a recommendation to the school board in early 2027 on facilities and enrollment needs. A public open house is scheduled for Sept. 29 at North High School from 6 to 8 p.m. Superintendent Michael Johnson cited a projected 6% decline in Wisconsin's public school population over the next five years alongside a 6% increase in the special education population. The district carries deficits tied to special education costs, capital projects, and inflation, and the 2022 capital referendum left some buildings with unaddressed deferred maintenance. No dollar figures or board vote were reported.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/townnews/school/ecasd-looks-to-community-input-for-facilities-planning/article_e7c81fa6-cd39-44a1-a643-ac9a0491cc6b.html

MPS Hosts Second Great Schools Committee Meeting Monday

Milwaukee Public Schools will hold the second meeting of the Great Schools Committee at Starms Discovery Learning Center (2035 N. 25th Street) on Monday from 6 to 8 p.m. Members are scheduled to discuss and approve criteria for closing or merging schools and identify candidates for closure or merger. The committee, one of two announced earlier this month, is asked to present closure and merger recommendations to the board in November, with Long Range Facility Master Plan updates due in December. The committee is advisory; final decisions rest with the Superintendent and the Milwaukee Board of School Directors.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/pressrelease/mps-hosts-second-great-schools-committee-meeting-monday/

New Antigo sports complex approved

The Antigo School Board voted 6-1 on Monday to approve use of $5 million from the long-term capital improvement trust Fund 46 to construct a sports complex on district property, with groundbreaking expected this fall. The motion, as amended by board member Melissa Cornelius, requires the complex entrance to encompass Listle Field. The facility will support football, soccer, softball, band, and physical education. Jean Adams voted no; Randy Myers abstained; Board President Danny Pyeatt was excused.

Source: Antigo Daily Journal (Central/Northern) | https://www.antigojournal.com/news/new-antigo-sports-complex-approved/article_6d694d49-6da5-417b-8498-2f8320b52725.html

Rising diesel prices strain school district budgets

Wisconsin diesel prices exceeding $6.50 per gallon are forcing Lakeshore-area school districts to absorb unbudgeted fuel costs. The Mishicot School District reports weekly fuel spending rising from $1,500 to $2,500, a $1,000 increase, across a 12-bus fleet. The Two Rivers Public School District reports fuel costs up 137% compared to September of the prior year. The Manitowoc Public School District cites higher transportation costs and fuel surcharges as budget pressures. The Brillion School District has not taken formal budget action but is monitoring prices.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/lakeshore/rising-diesel-prices-strain-school-district-budgets

Your car may not take diesel, but your child's bus does. The cost of fuel price hikes

Milwaukee Public Schools faces an unanticipated fuel cost increase of $3.4 to $4 million this school year as diesel prices have risen from approximately $260 to over $450 per bus fill-up due to Iran war-related price spikes. MPS holds three-year contracts with private bus companies that include a CPI-based fuel benchmark; when costs exceed that benchmark, the district pays a surcharge. To offset costs, MPS eliminated 150 bus routes this year, saving roughly $25,000 per route, and consolidated bus stops. The district currently operates 50 electric buses and will add 100 more over the next two years.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Southeastern) | https://www.wuwm.com/diesel-school-bus-price-hikes

$23 Million Federal Grant Brings New College Support To 20 MPS Schools

Milwaukee Public Schools was awarded a $23 million matching federal GEAR UP grant in October 2025, supporting nearly 30,000 students in grades four through seven at 20 schools over seven years. MPS must match the $3.2 million annual federal share; Superintendent Brenda Cassellius said the district's contribution is approximately $900,000 in in-kind salaries and $1 million in building space, with no new money required. The first-year grant of $3.2 million funded eight student advisors and one coordinator. A kickoff event held Sept. 23 at American Family Field cost approximately $149,000, including facility rental of $12,000. The Trump administration proposed eliminating GEAR UP in its FY 2026 budget, but Congress funded it at FY 2025 levels.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/09/24/23-million-federal-grant-brings-new-college-support-to-20-mps-schools/

Supplying skilled workers to meet industry demand

The Cedar Grove-Belgium School District's Rocket Academy charter school, which provides skilled-trades training for juniors and seniors through pathways in machining, welding, HVAC, and industrial maintenance, faces a financial sustainability challenge as its $800,000 startup grant sunsets in approximately 18 months and a supplemental U.S. Department of Education funding request was recently denied. Enrollment peaked at 40 students with 24 graduates last year and is currently in the high 20s. The academy's Board of Governance is planning a capital campaign, with fundraising goals to be adjusted following the federal denial. State Education Committee Chairman Joel Kitchens and other legislators toured the facility. The academy operates in partnership with Lakeshore College in Sheboygan and area manufacturers.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/supplying-skilled-workers-meet-industry-demand

State-Local Interface

Wisconsin immigrants can keep using clinics, Head Start and adult education, judge rules

U.S. District Judge Mary McElroy ruled Sept. 21 that the Trump administration violated notice-and-comment requirements when it issued a rule barring undocumented immigrants and several categories of legal immigrants from federally funded adult education, Head Start, community health centers, and similar programs. Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul joined 20 other state attorneys general in suing to block the rule in July 2025. The ruling blocks federal implementation and enforcement but does not prohibit the administration from issuing a new rule through proper rulemaking procedures. The U.S. Department of Education called the decision "an unfortunate betrayal of hardworking, American taxpayers." Dr. Ken Loving, CEO of Access Community Health Centers, which operates five southwest Wisconsin clinics, said uncertainty has already undermined patient trust.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/09/wisconsin-immigrants-judge-ruling-health-clinics-head-start-adult-education-federal-funds/

Supreme Court says states can use controversial citizenship data tool for voter audits in win for Trump

The U.S. Supreme Court issued an unsigned opinion allowing states to use the DHS Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program for individualized voter citizenship checks, reversing a lower court block imposed by U.S. District Judge Sparkle Sooknanan. The majority held that federal law obligates the government to respond to state and local election officials' citizenship verification requests. The opinion noted that the National Voter Registration Act's 90-

day ban on systematic removals limits immediate mass purges, but the administration's separate argument that the ban does not apply to non-citizen purges remains unresolved and will be reviewed in a future case. The three liberal justices dissented, with Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson writing that burdening even a few lawful voters outweighs the government's interest. DHS has acknowledged SAVE can produce inaccurate results. Challengers warned the ruling endangers millions of eligible voters weeks before the November midterms.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Statewide) | https://www.news8000.com/news/politics/national-politics/supreme-court-says-states-can-use-controversial-citizenship-data-tool-for-voter-audits-in-win/article_483e8011-cc52-5345-90be-1473b5798098.html

Attorney for Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty defends Wisconsin congressional map

The Wisconsin Supreme Court, which holds a 5-2 liberal majority, is considering two challenges to the state's current congressional map, under which Republicans hold six of Wisconsin's eight U.S. House seats. Both lawsuits allege the map is gerrymandered and seek a redraw by 2028. Two three-judge panels appointed by the Supreme Court last year dismissed the challenges. The court will decide whether to return the cases to lower courts for trial; it heard nearly eight hours of arguments this week.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/attorney-for-wisconsin-institute-for-law-liberty-defends-wisconsin-congressional-map/article_b8266ae5-bb7e-4a73-8837-c58147736f48.html

Underly Calls For School Funding Overhaul, Conservatives Say Money Not The Issue

In her sixth State of Education Address Thursday, State Superintendent Jill Underly called on the Legislature to overhaul Wisconsin's school funding formula, citing 17 years without cost-of-living adjustments and special education reimbursement that fell from a promised 42% to 35% this year, costing MPS alone an estimated $36 million. Underly criticized the continued use of enrollment, district spending, and property value rather than student need as funding metrics. The Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty countered that statewide average per-pupil revenue is $19,000 and that Wisconsin ranks second nationally in overall math scores on NAEP despite lagging post-2022 recovery rates.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Statewide) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/09/25/underly-calls-for-school-funding-overhaul-conservatives-say-money-not-the-issue/

Court of Appeals District III Seat Opens Following Judge's Retirement

Gov. Tony Evers announced he is seeking applicants to fill a Court of Appeals District III vacancy created by Presiding Judge Lisa K. Stark's retirement, effective Dec. 28, 2026. The appointed judge will serve a term ending July 31, 2029. Applications must be submitted to GOVJudicialAppointments@wisconsin.gov by 5 p.m. on Oct. 7, 2026. District III covers 36 northern and western Wisconsin counties.

Source: DrydenWire (Statewide) | https://drydenwire.com/news/court-of-appeals-district-iii-seat-opens-following-judges-retirement/

Wisconsin DPI has 'backlog' of educator misconduct cases, seeks aid

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is requesting two additional full-time paralegal positions in the 2027 to 2029 state budget to address a backlog of 150 open license misconduct investigations, some dating back two to three years. The two positions would cost $350,000 over the biennium. The agency currently has one full-time and one part-time investigator handling an average of 113 investigations annually. DPI also asked lawmakers to reverse a 10% diversion of license application fees to the state general fund, which could provide hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional annual funding. The request follows a 2025 Cap Times investigation and subsequent legislative hearings. Separately, the article documents two cases of educators who surrendered licenses amid misconduct investigations and later obtained positions in school districts.

Source: Capital Times (Statewide) | https://captimes.com/news/education/wisconsin-dpi-has-backlog-of-educator-misconduct-cases-seeks-aid/article_27bcc50c-61a5-4d12-94be-e2643e7ccd73.html

Rep. Callahan demands ban on Flock cameras, vows to hold hearing

State Rep. Calvin Callahan, chairman of the Assembly Committee on Consumer Protection, called Sept. 14 for Wisconsin to ban unchecked government use of Flock Safety automated license plate reader cameras, citing privacy and surveillance concerns. Callahan announced he will use his committee authority to hold a hearing on the technology when the Legislature returns in January 2027.

Source: Merrill Foto News (Statewide) | https://merrillfotonews.com/stories/rep-callahan-demands-ban-on-flock-cameras-vows-to-hold-hearing,355946

How Wisconsin Land Trusts Are Adapting After Knowles-Nelson's Demise

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant Program, which provided $1.3 billion over nearly 40 years and covered roughly 50% of land acquisition costs for Wisconsin land trusts, lost its funding in June when the Legislature failed to extend it. Door County Land Trust Executive Director Emily Wood said 80 to 90% of her organization's project funding previously came from state and federal grants. The DCLT is proceeding with acquisition of a 338-acre preserve along Little Sturgeon Bay using other federal grants and private donations. Gathering Waters, an alliance of 40 Wisconsin land trusts, says the program's absence makes securing community support harder, as DNR approval of Knowles-Nelson grants previously served as a credibility signal for local fundraising.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Statewide) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/09/24/how-wisconsin-land-trusts-are-adapting-after-knowles-nelsons-demise/

Tammy Baldwin bill bans ICE agents, National Guard from polling places

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) introduced the "Safe Access to the Polls Act," which would prohibit federal agencies including ICE, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the National Guard from operating within a quarter mile of any election location or setting up checkpoints on routes to polling places. The bill was introduced ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections.

Republican congressional majorities make passage before year-end unlikely, and Baldwin said she is exploring attaching it to must-pass legislation.

Source: La Crosse Tribune (Statewide) | https://lacrossetribune.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_d20b3f22-3196-5613-b45b-ecb3e63395ee.html

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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.
