

Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing

August 1 to August 8, 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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TRAINING ANNOUNCEMENT: Generative AI Training Workshop



GENERATIVE AI AS AN INTERNAL CONSULTANT — IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT —



Not just another AI workshop.
*Learn how to think about your problems
so AI helps you get better results.*



CLARIFY THE PROBLEM
Frame issues the right way
so your prompts produce
useful, defensible results.



GET DRAFTS THAT WORK
Produce decision memos, job
documents, analyses, and
reports with confidence.



YOU STAY IN CONTROL
AI creates the draft.
Experienced judgment,
supervision, and accountability
make the decisions.



**WEDNESDAY
SEPTEMBER 16, 2026**



8:30 A.M.–4:00 P.M.
(FULL-DAY WORKSHOP)



**TIMBER RIDGE LODGE
GRAND GENEVA
LAKE GENEVA, WISCONSIN**



**\$250
PER PARTICIPANT**



FOR EXPERIENCED PUBLIC-SECTOR PROFESSIONALS
HR Directors • Administrators • Department Heads • Finance Leaders

REGISTER TODAY



<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/generative-ai-workshop-lake-geneva-wi>



A structured, supervisory approach to
using generative AI across HR, finance,
and administration—governed by
judgment, oversight, and public trust.

On a conference brochure, this reads like another AI training session. It is closer to a working session on a problem you already know. Imagine a department head asking for more levy support in a year when there is not enough to go around. The request is reasonable. It is also not well supported. Someone has to work out whether the need is real or just well argued, what the alternatives are, what it commits the county to over three years, whether it creates equity problems you will answer for next year, and how to explain the decision to a board that has heard this pitch before. Most people reading this know how to do that work. What they do not have is time, or anyone to think it through with. So it waits, or it goes to a consultant, or it gets answered thinner than it deserves.

The day is about closing that gap. The morning covers setup, which almost no AI training addresses and which is usually why people find these tools disappointing: standing instructions so you stop re-explaining yourself, a workspace built around a body of work, which of your own documents are worth loading in and what format they need to be in to get read. The afternoon takes a problem like the one above, inside a fictional county, and works it from the first question to the finished memo. The session is instructor-led, and participants follow along on their own machines. The point is not to finish something that day. It is to go back to work able to do this at your own desk.

Three things get said plainly. Generative AI does not hand you the answer. It produces work that reads well and is sometimes wrong in ways only someone who knows the organization would catch, so a good share of the day is what you check and what you send back. Second, a sequence

of work reaches a depth that single requests never did, and the same analysis can be rendered for a board, a department head, and the people who carry it out. Third, this leaves a different kind of record. A records request for a search history shows what somebody read. One that reaches into generative AI shows how the thinking developed: what was asked, what was discarded, how the document came to say what it says. Whether that is a public record is unsettled. The safe assumption is that it is reachable, which makes working in these tools defensibly a skill worth practicing.

Register at: <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/generative-ai-workshop-lake-geneva-wi>

Budgets and Finance

DeForest's unique TIF situation calls for creative financial planning

The Village of DeForest's seven active tax incremental financing districts represent just under 25 percent of the village's total equalized value, nearly double the 12 percent statutory cap that bars creation of new districts above that threshold. Finance Director Brandon Hennes presented the annual TIF report to the village board on July 7, noting the districts complied at creation but passed the limit because of rapid commercial and residential growth. TID #2, established in 2009 with a base value of \$27,900, had grown to just under \$130.5 million by the end of 2025 and must close by 2035, though staff are targeting closure in 2027 or 2028. TIDs #4, #5, and #7 are also candidates for early closure. Village Administrator Bill Chang described staggering closures across multiple years to avoid a revenue cliff, preserve the mill rate required for state shared revenue eligibility, and protect the school district, the county, and Madison College. Staff will continue evaluating closure sequencing.

Source: Sun Prairie Star (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/the_star/local_news/deforests-unique-tif-situation-calls-for-creative-financial-planning/article_819513d3-d780-4415-ab4b-5a32a2529981.html

West Bend must repay nearly \$30,000 to We Energies after EV chargers fall short of usage goal

The City of West Bend owes a one-time repayment of nearly \$30,000 to We Energies after two city-owned electric vehicle charging stations on Main Street and Vine Street failed to meet the usage condition attached to a 2023 incentive grant. We Energies awarded the city \$55,000 in 2023 to build the two stations on the condition that they reach 60 percent of their kilowatt usage threshold; the stations reached 32 percent. City Administrator Jesse Thyges said the repayment obligation went untracked during a staff transition. We Energies spokesperson Brendan Conway confirmed the utility notified the city of the repayment terms and extended its deadline before demanding payment. Thyges will bring the repayment request to the Common Council, and if approved the expense will be drawn from budgeted contingency funds for unforeseen expenses, requiring no tax increase. The city has updated its procedures for tracking long-term payment obligations.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/washington-county/west-bend-must-repay-nearly-30-000-to-we-energies-after-ev-chargers-fall-short-of-usage-goal>

Investor turns to state after Milwaukee deal falls through

The Wisconsin Health and Educational Facilities Authority approved an \$88 million tax-exempt bond issue for two affiliates of Bedford Affordable Housing Foundation after the Milwaukee Common Council voted 14-1 on May 12 to deny a parallel bond sale through the state-created Public Finance Authority. The bonds finance Bedford's purchase and renovation of the 236-unit St. James Place at 10300 W. Fountain Ave. and the 138-unit Arbor Ridge Apartments at 7960-7972 N. 107th St., converting both from market rate to affordable rents, with planned improvements totaling \$2.25 million. Both limited liability companies registered with the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions on July 30. WHEFA held a public hearing on June 25, and Executive Director Larry Wiemer confirmed the authority was unaware of the Common Council's prior rejection. Neither the bonds nor the approval involves city or state funds. An Arbor Ridge resident said the transaction is expected to close in mid-August.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Southeastern) | <https://dailyreporter.com/2026/08/07/bedford-affordable-housing-foundation-milwaukee-apartment-takeover/>

RF doing 'due diligence' on purchase of St. Croix Gas

The River Falls City Council authorized staff at its July 28 meeting to conduct legal and financial due diligence on a potential municipal acquisition of St. Croix Gas, an investor-owned utility serving roughly 10,000 gas meters in River Falls, Prescott, and the Hammond area. An independent appraisal valued the company at \$9.5 million. Finance Director Josh Solinger identified a comfort range of \$5 million to \$7 million, producing a negotiated offer of \$6.4 million, with due diligence estimated to cost approximately \$150,000. St. Croix Gas recorded \$10,377,007 in 2025 operating revenues and \$464,880 in net operating income. Utility Director Kevin Westhuis projected roughly \$400,000 in annual payment in lieu of taxes to the city's general fund under municipal ownership, compared with the electric utility's current \$450,000 and the water department's \$375,000. The company has 12 employees and two properties in the transaction. Final approval would require separate City Council and Public Service Commission votes plus a public referendum.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/rf-doing-due-diligence-on-purchase-of-st-croix-gas,200993>

La Crosse may spend another \$90,000 on French Island appeal

La Crosse's finance committee approved a \$90,000 appropriation near-unanimously to continue the city's legal appeal against the village of French Island's incorporation, with the resolution scheduled for final approval at the August 13 city council meeting. The city has already spent at least \$186,000 on the dispute, including more than \$170,000 contesting the then-town of Campbell's incorporation bid and an additional \$16,000 appealing that decision, according to invoices obtained by the La Crosse Tribune. The new appropriation would fund future legal fees for contracted attorneys at Boardman Clark. Officials said total expenditures could reach \$300,000 or more depending on the appeal's duration. Mayor Shauntel Washington-Spivey declined to specify how much the city has spent since April, citing closed session confidentiality, and the Tribune has submitted an open records request for all legal invoices from April forward. French Island village president Dan Kapanke criticized the challenge as contrary to residents' wishes.

Source: La Crosse Tribune (Western) | https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/government-politics/article_1d2f46c9-f97e-43af-9f70-2d75531401d9.html

Barron County seeks bids on 15 parcels

Barron County Treasurer Samantha Sommerfeld informed the Barron County Executive Committee at its August 5 meeting that 15 tax-delinquent parcels are listed for online auction at Wisconsin Surplus Auction, with bidding open August 10 through August 31. The county foreclosed the parcels through the in rem tax foreclosure process for delinquency on 2023 taxes, and they are scattered across towns, villages, and cities including Almena, Cedar Lake, Cumberland, Barron, and Rice Lake. The parcels range from a \$100 minimum-bid lot of 0.01 acres of landlocked land near Third Street in Turtle Lake to an \$80,000 dilapidated one-room home on Twin Lake near Birchwood. Two are waterfront properties with buildings and seven are landlocked. Minimum bids are set at fair market value, the amount owed to the county, or \$100, whichever is greater. Adjacent landowners of landlocked parcels receive mailed notices granting bidding precedence. A second auction round is planned for September or October if any parcels draw no bids.

Source: Rice Lake Chronotype (Western) | https://apg-wi.com/rice_lake_chronotype/news/barron-county-seeks-bids-on-15-parcels/article_e18cbb25-1c0a-4fbe-8b0c-6f4c68e2e5cf.html

Finance Committee approves funding for city garage improvements

The Tomahawk Finance Committee approved three municipal garage improvement projects totaling \$20,575 at its July 28 meeting at City Hall, drawing the funding entirely from the city's Garage Reserve Fund. City Street Department Leadperson Nick Rosenmeier presented all three proposals. The largest expenditure, approximately \$17,200 including installation, replaces the hydraulic vehicle lift with an electronic two-post lift; Rosenmeier reported the existing hydraulic unit is unsafe because a fluid leak causes lifted vehicles to lower and cannot be repaired because of its age and concrete-embedded design. A second project replaces eight-foot fluorescent light fixtures in the tin shed building with LED fixtures at an estimated \$1,700. The third replaces the upper door tracks on Door 3 at roughly \$1,675 after the tracks proved incompatible with a previously installed opener; Ziebell Door Company corrected the original installation at no charge but conditioned future warranty coverage on the track replacement. Rosenmeier noted the approved spending leaves just under \$31,000 in the Garage Reserve Fund.

Source: Tomahawk Leader (Central/Northern) | <https://www.tomahawkleader.com/stories/finance-committee-approves-funding-for-city-garage-improvements,348002>

Councilors shares ideas for Superior's 2027 budget

The Superior City Council met in committee on August 4 to gather councilor proposals for the city's 2027 general fund and capital improvements budgets, following a July 28 session with department heads. Proposals include artificial intelligence integration in the MyCitySuperior app and city website, small stipends for Superior Police Auxiliary members, parks and trail improvements including a water feature at Hammond Park, repurposing ball fields on North 58th Street for soccer and rugby, a legacy fund for long-term financial stability, expanded bus service on the Itasca route to Lake Superior Apartments, and a collaboration with the University of Wisconsin-Superior on an indoor fieldhouse and expanded parking at Loon's Foot Landing. Councilor Lindsey Graskey also proposed measures to assist small businesses and improve pedestrian safety during the anticipated closure of the Blatnik Bridge. Mayor Jim Paine said the goal is to build council consensus on priorities. Councilors will rank the submitted ideas over the next two weeks before Paine drafts the 2027 budget.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/councilors-shares-ideas-for-superiors-2027-budget>

Superior commission awards final public arts grants

Superior's Public Arts Commission voted Thursday, July 30, to award its final round of grants totaling \$19,860, drawn from a \$22,670 budget against \$32,000 in requests, before the program ends. The commission funded four projects across four organizations. Time Arc Theatre received \$7,960, reduced from a \$9,660 request, for a musical to be performed in June 2027. The Douglas County Historical Society received the full \$3,500 requested for a Nordic arts workshop series. The St. Louis River Rendezvous received \$5,900 of a \$6,000 request for a September 24 through 26 living history event at Billings Park serving up to 500 students. Superior Historic Properties received \$2,500 for an October 24 educational performance at Fairlawn Mansion. Commissioner Lindsey Graskey proposed trimming Time Arc Theatre's grant by reducing the rent line. The commission denied funding entirely for one application, a \$10,000 photography book project.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/superior-commission-awards-final-public-arts-grants>

City of Madison police overtime driving \$1M in protest response costs

The City of Madison has accumulated an estimated \$1 million in costs responding to protests and increased police presence following the July 22 officer-involved shooting of Corey Ruiz, according to Finance Director David Schmiedicke. Madison Police Department overtime accounts for the majority of the figure. Public works expenses, including salt trucks, road clearing, and signage related to the Williamson Street encampment, total under \$50,000, and Community Development Division hotel vouchers also total under \$50,000. The city's annual contingent reserve is \$2 million, and prior 2026 draws include approximately \$70,000 for the MADCAP water bill assistance program and approximately \$500,000 approved this week for election and facilities costs, leaving Schmiedicke estimating capacity for up to \$4 million in additional emergency spending. The city does not currently anticipate mutual aid billing from State Patrol or the Sun Prairie Police Department. Schmiedicke characterized the \$1 million as a one-time cost he does not expect to affect the 2027 budget. Confirmed figures will not be available for at least one month while payroll is processed.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/08/07/city-madison-police-overtime-driving-1m-protest-response-costs/>

Workforce and Labor

'It feels like coming home,' Caitlin Stene returns to Waunakee as Utility GM

Waunakee Utilities appointed Caitlin Stene as its new General Manager, her third period of employment with the Village of Waunakee. Stene most recently served as Assistant City Administrator for the City of Sun Prairie, where she oversaw eight departments and managed long-term financial planning including debt, capital improvement, and five-year management plans. She worked for Waunakee from 2013 to 2016 as the village's first assistant administrator and human resources manager, and again from 2019 to 2021 as village clerk, deputy administrator, and human resources manager. She succeeds Tim Herlitzka, who held the General Manager position for 21 years and received a proclamation from the Waunakee Village Board on

July 20. Stene begins alongside three concurrent capital projects: construction of a new well at Kilkenny Farms West, construction of a new water tower, and upgrades to electric substations. The utility also anticipates multiple retirements among long-tenured employees, with workforce succession planning to be developed in coordination with the Waunakee Utilities Commission.

Source: Lodi Enterprise (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/tribune_enterprise/news/local/it-feels-like-coming-home-caitlin-stene-returns-to-waunakee-as-utility-gm/article_0f2ed641-52e7-4fb3-b4a7-507a35549b79.html

Voters are hearing a lot about Cary Madrigal. Here's what the records show.

Racine County Sheriff Christopher Schmalzing filed disciplinary charges in February 2025, recommending a 10-day suspension without pay for Capt. Cary A. Madrigal, finding she took no appropriate action after a deputy reported in November 2023 that colleague Preston Kite had sent him an unsolicited explicit photograph. Madrigal signed a document the following morning accepting the suspension and waiving her right to contest it, so no independent body reviewed the discipline. Kite was arrested in February 2024 and convicted on 21 felonies, 20 of them child sex crimes; a July 14, 2025 resentencing hearing corrected four counts sentenced above the statutory maximum, reducing his operative total to 90 years with 55 years of initial confinement. Racine County District Attorney Patricia Hanson declined to file criminal charges against Madrigal. The sheriff's complaint states that multiple supervisory staff knew of the allegations, but no discipline of any other supervisor has been made public. The sheriff has not responded to three written requests for comment.

Source: Racine County Eye (Southeastern) | <https://racinecountyeve.com/2026/08/08/cary-madrigal-discipline-records/>

Brain drain erodes Wisconsin's talent potential

The Wisconsin Policy Forum released an analysis drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2024 American Community Survey five-year estimates finding that 59.8 percent of Wisconsin-born adults aged 31 to 40 living in another state hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 45.2 percent of same-age adults born elsewhere who now live in Wisconsin. The 14.6 percentage point gap ranks Wisconsin second nationally for net brain drain, behind only North Dakota. The report used methods consistent with a 2019 Joint Economic Committee study and examined U.S.-born adults ages 31 to 40 across all 50 states. Wisconsin gained only 0.56 highly educated adults from Minnesota for each college-educated Wisconsin native who moved there, while Illinois was the origin of 24.4 percent of highly educated entrants to Wisconsin. The Policy Forum identified policy responses used by other states, including Ohio's discounted mortgage programs for graduates, Texas's business-relocation incentives, and Minnesota's rural recruitment networks, as options Wisconsin policymakers could consider.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Statewide) | <https://dailyreporter.com/2026/08/07/wisconsin-high-net-brain-drain-college-educated-adults/>

Wisconsin Employers Continue to Express Overwhelming Confidence in Graduates of Wisconsin Technical College System

The Wisconsin Technical College System released its 2026 WTCS Employer Satisfaction Report documenting employer perceptions of graduates across the state's 16 technical colleges. The report found that 97 percent of employers were satisfied with graduates' education, 96 percent would hire a WTCS graduate again, 92 percent would recommend a graduate to other employers, and 97 percent said their local technical college is important to their business's overall success.

The companion 2025 WTCS Graduate Outcomes Report showed 92 percent of graduates in the labor force were employed within six months of graduation, 81 percent were working in fields directly related to their training, and associate degree graduates reported a median annual salary of just over \$60,000 within six months. Ninety-three percent of graduates remain in Wisconsin after completing their education. WTCS President Layla Merrifield and Mid-State Technical College President Shelly Mondeik were cited in the release. The employer satisfaction survey is conducted every four years.

Source: WDLB 1450 AM Marshfield (Statewide) | <https://wdlbam.com/2026/08/07/wisconsin-employers-continue-to-express-overwhelming-confidence-in-graduates-of-wisconsin-technical-college-system/>

The Apprenticeship Revival

The Chippewa Valley Youth Apprenticeship program, facilitated by Cooperative Educational Service Agency 10 through a 24-school consortium spanning Altoona, Augusta, Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Fall Creek, Menomonie, and other communities, recorded more than 270 participating students and over 200 local employer partners in the 2025-26 school year, up from approximately 240 students and 190 employers the prior year. The program is part of a statewide initiative that surpassed 12,000 youth apprenticeship participants in 2025-26, a 7 percent increase over the previous single-year record and the fourth consecutive record-breaking year for Wisconsin's combined apprenticeship programs, which totaled more than 18,500 participants. Over the past decade the Chippewa Valley program alone has engaged more than 2,450 students and 1,180 employers. Fall Creek High School reports an annual program certification rate of 80 to 90 percent. Students who complete the program earn a state workforce certification alongside paid work experience.

Source: Volume One (Western) | <https://volumeone.org/articles/2026/08/06/398633-the-apprenticeship-revival>

UW Health Launches WorkForward to Export Health Apprenticeship Model Nationally

UW Health in Madison announced in May 2026 the creation of WorkForward, a separate company designed to help health systems and state agencies in other states establish registered apprenticeship programs modeled on UW Health's own initiative. UW Health launched its apprenticeship program in 2018 and now offers pathways into 17 professions, including registered nursing, surgical technology, pharmacy technicians, and respiratory therapists, with more than 1,000 apprentices graduated to date. Apprentices pay no tuition and receive wages during classroom hours. Before the program launched, up to three in 10 medical assistant, nursing assistant, and pharmacy technician positions at UW Health were unfilled; that figure has dropped to approximately one in 10. Bridgett Willey, who oversaw the original apprenticeship launch, now directs WorkForward. Program lengths range from 10 months for medical assistants to four years for registered nurses. WorkForward's stated goal is to help external organizations navigate financial and bureaucratic barriers to replicating the model.

Source: PBS Wisconsin WHA21 (Statewide) | <https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/uw-health-moves-to-expand-its-health-apprenticeships-model-around-the-nation/>

Dodge County Intern Program celebrates successful 2nd year

Dodge County completed the second year of its internship program on August 3, when three high school interns presented their work to the Executive Committee. The seven-week program placed Braxton Soldner from Dodgeland High School, Carter Wild from Horicon High School, and Paige

Murphy from Lakeside Lutheran High School across 11 county departments. County Administrator Cameron Clapper and Board Chair Dave Frohling attended the August 3 presentation. Community Development Marketing and Communications Manager Morgan Muche coordinated the program. During their rotation with the Land Resources and Parks Department, Wild and Soldner built a boardwalk-to-trail ramp at Nitschke Mounds Park, and all three interns removed invasive wild parsnip at the same site. The interns documented their experiences in a slideshow delivered to the Executive Committee. The county announced no future program dates or structural changes in connection with the completion of this year's cohort.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/dodge-county-intern-program-celebrates-successful-2nd-year/article_bac06851-2f5a-4c2a-9af9-bb137ca230bb.html

Racine County teens celebrate completion of 2026 Summer Youth Employment Program

Racine County held a completion ceremony on August 8 for its 2026 Summer Youth Employment Program at the Wieczorek Pavilion at Pritchard Park, 2800 Ohio St., Racine. The program, now in its sixth year, enrolled 117 youth ages 15 to 18 across an eight-week period. More than 50 businesses participated as host employers, paying participants \$14 per hour. Twelve participants received star youth awards for exceptional performance. Named participants included Theodric Corley, placed at RPI Inc., and Amariah Hatley, who worked at Ambitious Vibes Candle Co. in downtown Racine. Ameri Miller, a star youth award recipient, was placed at Mileager's. Alfonso Gardner presented certificates, and Racine County Youth Justice Coordinator Karen Goodwin also participated in the ceremony. The county reported no subsequent procedural step in connection with the program's completion.

Source: Lake Geneva Regional News (Southeastern) | https://lakegenevanews.net/news/local/article_e4740d6e-a8ce-50e3-b724-6063e65ba216.html

Youth learn life skills in Kenosha County summer employment program

Kenosha County's Summer Youth Employment Program completed its 17th season, enrolling 133 at-risk youth ages 14 to 21 who were referred by social workers, counselors, or other professionals. Participants worked 20 hours per week for eight weeks at 20 public and private sector worksites, including two county parks, earning \$9 per hour. Kenosha Unified School District students who completed the program and a related work-skills curriculum also earned a half credit toward high school graduation. The county administers the program through a partnership with partner agencies, overseen by county Gang Intervention and Youth Justice Supervisor Glenn Larson. County Executive Samantha Kerkman joined program leaders on Thursday for the unveiling of two murals created by participants in the program's Youth Employment in the Arts component, one to be displayed in the county's new Human Services Building at 3500 52nd Street and the other at Hillcrest School. The county reported no next scheduled action.

Source: Lake Geneva Regional News (Southeastern) | https://lakegenevanews.net/news/local/government-politics/article_79f783c4-007b-5194-9104-e0a62ceaa6a1.html

Infrastructure and Utilities

Notification of cyber incident

Washburn County disclosed on August 8 that it is actively responding to a cyber incident first detected on the morning of August 6. Upon detection the county initiated its incident response procedures and shut down county technology systems on August 6 to allow cybersecurity professionals and incident response specialists to assess affected systems while limiting disruption to county operations. The county is working with cybersecurity professionals and other partners to investigate the scope of the activity and restore affected services. Court operations and county offices remain open to the public during the response. Calls are being directed to 911 and routed to appropriate departments until county phone service is restored, and the county has implemented additional security measures. The investigation remains ongoing, and the county states it will communicate directly with affected individuals if it determines personal information was compromised. The county is posting updates to its website.

Source: Spooner Advocate (Western) | https://apg-wi.com/spooner_advocate/news/local/notification-of-cyber-incident/article_6e0359b6-23d8-495d-b728-2d9d276e1363.html

Vote to save Grafton dam cheered by crowd

The Grafton Village Board voted unanimously Monday to repair the Bridge Street Dam rather than remove it, directing staff to seek expedited bids for the work. The dam's hydraulic cylinder failed on May 2, opening a gate and substantially draining the community's millpond; consultant J.F. Brennan Co. of La Crosse estimated cylinder replacement at \$180,000. Public Works Director Julie Esch presented three cost benchmarks: \$180,000 for the cylinder replacement, \$500,000 to also install a backup gate-failure system, and \$2 million for full dam removal. The board had postponed a decision in June for 60 days pending further research. A citizen group separately filed a 1,672-signature petition Monday afternoon seeking a village ordinance requiring a public referendum before any funds are spent on dam removal, and the petition calls for a referendum to compel the legislation if the board declines to pass the ordinance. Village President Dan Delorit noted the village must also develop a long-term maintenance plan addressing existing cracks and structural issues.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | <https://ozaukeepress.com/content/vote-save-grafton-dam-cheered-crowd>

City leaders call for no cost street fix downtown

At its July 27 meeting the Ladysmith City Council received an update from Public Works Director Kurt Gorsegrner on a construction defect discovered on Miner Avenue, reconstructed in 2024 for \$3.49 million between E. Third and W. Sixth streets. During April 2026 excavation by Haas Construction to repair a sanitary sewer lateral serving Security Financial Bank in the 200 block of W. Miner Avenue, workers found an abandoned concrete storm sewer pipe that should have been removed during the original reconstruction but was left in place undocumented. The city is demanding full-width asphalt replacement between Second and Fourth streets at no cost to taxpayers, rejecting a partial half-width repaving proposal from MSA Professional Services, the engineering firm hired under a \$76,400 contract. Gorsegrner stated liability rests between MSA and the contractor to resolve between themselves. Engineers are excavating multiple locations and using cameras to assess the pipe's full extent, with temporary road closures expected later in summer 2026 before final repaving.

Source: Ladysmith News (Western) | https://ladysmithnews.com/news/article_0a11e539-8e42-4edf-b94c-317cd78d0f47.html

Lake Mills: Council approves design order for Sandy Beach Park improvements

The Lake Mills City Council voted at its August 4 meeting to approve a task order authorizing Strand Associates and Mead and Hunt to begin design work for Sandy Beach Park improvements. The full design scope is estimated at just over \$515,000, while a reduced scope excluding red line items the two firms flagged as potentially unnecessary would cost approximately \$426,000. Planned improvements include parking lots, a concession building, new restrooms, volleyball courts, a kayak launch, stormwater design, new shelters, and a maintenance garage. Red line items subject to possible elimination include restroom buildings, a second parking lot, new pavilions, and a maintenance garage. Council Member Greg Kutz noted the maintenance garage would account for \$33,800 in design fees. City Manager Drake Daily said funding for the design could be drawn from capital funds in 2026. Design is expected to be complete by late 2026 or early 2027, after which the city will solicit construction bids under the approved design package.

Source: Waterloo/Marshall Courier (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/leader_independent/news/local/lake-mills-council-approves-design-order-for-sandy-beach-park-improvements/article_6940155f-18c9-4689-9ae7-13e294b4618c.html

Options for future Baraboo Great Sauk trail spur on the table

Baraboo's Common Council approved a tripartite planning agreement among the city, Sauk County, and the Town of Baraboo on July 14 to plan and develop a spur connecting the Great Sauk State Trail extension to downtown Baraboo. The resolution passed 5-4, with District 3 Ald. Bryant Hazard, District 4 Ald. Jason Kent, District 5 Ald. Andrea Lombard, and District 8 Ald. Ken Schindler voting against it. The Sauk County Board unanimously approved the same agreement on July 21. A public hearing held July 29 at Carnegie-Schadde Memorial Public Library presented six conceptual route options, five of which involve new trail construction, and one of those five includes a \$1 million pedestrian bridge over the Baraboo River between the Broadway and Walnut Street bridges. Possible connections include Campbell Park, Al Behrman Elementary School, Weber Park, and the city's Riverwalk. Barry Hartup, chair of the Baraboo Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission, characterized all six options as preliminary. Public feedback from the July 29 hearing will inform further planning.

Source: WiscNews (South Central) | https://wiscnews.com/news/local/article_ac679c67-86d9-483d-b4a3-f83abfca19ca.html

Madison's new regional bus station near State Street opening this fall

The Madison Common Council-approved redevelopment of the former State Street Campus Garage at 415 N. Lake St. is on track to deliver a permanent regional bus terminal by mid-October, ending a 17-year reliance on temporary street-side stops following the 2009 closure of the Badger Bus Depot. The city's share of the project cost totals approximately \$50 million, financed through tax increment financing, developer payments from Minneapolis-based Mortenson Development for air rights above the garage, and parking utility revenue. The mixed-use development, Theory Madison, rises 15 stories and includes 717 beds across 213 units, with 100 beds income-qualified, and UW-Madison will help connect eligible students to those units. The public parking garage is scheduled to begin operations in mid-August. The bus terminal will feature 24-hour

staffing, indoor waiting, and restrooms. A public art installation budgeted at \$320,000 is tentatively scheduled for installation by May 2027.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-s-new-regional-bus-station-near-state-street-opening-this-fall/article_3488fad1-6528-4d3f-a736-225608e58045.html

Citizens continue to fight transmission line

The Richland County Board of Supervisors convened July 21 with a standing-room-only crowd and 24 citizens providing public input on the proposed 765 kV BECI transmission line, developed by Midcontinent Grid Solutions, a limited liability company incorporated approximately one year ago. Board Chair Kerry Severson confirmed the county received no official notification from the developer before company representatives contacted the county administrator and highway commissioner to arrange a July 9 meeting. Supervisor Steve Carrow reported that the board's information request resolution, passed at the March 2026 meeting and sent immediately to the developer, had not been seen by the two company representatives present. Developer representatives told county officials that landowner notifications are planned for July and August, a public open meeting is scheduled for August, a second forum is set for November, and a Public Service Commission application is targeted for February 2027. Carrow outlined a path toward an opposition resolution moving through the Natural Resources Committee, then the Executive and Finance Committee, with a potential board vote at the August meeting.

Source: SW News Group (South Central) | <https://www.swnews4u.com/local/environment/citizens-continue-to-fight-transmission-line/>

New internet proposed for Fairgrounds

Pierce County Fair Manager Liz Dietsche presented a proposal to the Pierce County board on July 28 for Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services and Swift Current Connect to install high-speed fiber internet and Wi-Fi at the Pierce County Fairgrounds under a 10-year sponsorship agreement running through the 2037 fair. The cooperative would fund an initial estimated investment of \$200,000 covering network design, materials, equipment, construction, and installation labor in exchange for naming rights at agreed locations including the grandstand and entry gates, valued at \$20,000 annually. The cooperative would also provide a \$5,000 annual operational allowance for maintenance, with costs beyond that allowance billed to Pierce County at \$135 per hour. The board heard a first reading of the resolution. Board Chair Jon Aubart questioned whether the arrangement constitutes a donation, and Supervisors Mel Pittman and Mike Kahlow raised concerns about upgrade costs and catastrophic equipment loss. The resolution returns to the board at the August meeting, and the infrastructure would be in place by July 2027 if approved.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/untitled,200980>

City hosts information session for Main Street businesses

The City of Watertown held a public information session on July 30 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Madison College's Watertown Campus to brief stakeholders on the planned complete roadway reconstruction of Main Street from Church Street to N. Ninth Street, scheduled for 2028. Approximately 40 stakeholders attended. Because Main Street is State Highway 19, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation will oversee the project. Presenters included Mayor Robert Stocks, Alder Tony Arnett, and WisDOT representative Steve Porter. Topics covered the project timeline, business access during construction, and parking arrangements. Attendees were permitted to

pre-submit questions or submit written questions on notecards during the presentation. The city reported no subsequent procedural step.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/city-hosts-information-session-for-main-street-businesses/article_9cead434-5fd3-49ca-9d0f-034391b1dd5d.html

Public Safety

Bayfield County Board dumps backstop ambulance plan for \$1 million payment

The Bayfield County Board voted 7-6 on July 28 to abandon a proposed county-funded backstop ambulance service and instead allocate \$1 million to bolster existing emergency medical services providers across the county's nine EMS districts. Board member Fred Strand moved the allocation after the agenda had called for consideration of backstop service proposals from the Ashland Fire Department and Essentia Health, each of which would have provided a dedicated ambulance and crew 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. An amendment from board member Dennis Pocernich directed the funds toward recruitment, retention, training, on-call pay increases, and reimbursement of training costs. County EMS Coordinator Bryan Ziemann reported 108 missed ambulance calls last year and projected the 2026 total would exceed that figure, with each missed call constituting a violation of state statute. Seven of the nine EMS districts rely mainly on volunteers, and together the districts answered more than 2,100 calls in 2023, a 60 percent increase from 2021. The board had designated no administrator for distributing the funds as of the vote.

Source: Phillips Price County Review (Western) | https://apg-wi.com/ashland_daily_press/paywall/bayfield-county-board-dumps-backstop-ambulance-plan-for-1-million-payment/article_617438a8-0a43-488a-8e34-ed44ac41edd2.html

Fox Crossing Fire Department digging out after station demolished by tornado

A July 27 tornado demolished Fox Crossing Fire Station 41 on Valley Road in Menasha, injuring three on-duty firefighters and rendering the station and all housed apparatus unable to return to service. The tornado tore away the station's roof and collapsed portions of the building while a driver, lieutenant, and firefighter were inside the apparatus bay, and all three sustained minor injuries requiring stitches at a local hospital. Concrete debris and twisted metal covered the fire trucks inside, causing severe damage. Through partnerships with the Grand Chute Fire Department, Red Power Diesel Services, and Reliant Fire Apparatus, the department secured two replacement apparatus to maintain emergency response capability. The Village Utility Department provided a building on Airport Road to serve as a temporary fire station covering the east side of the community. Fire Chief Todd Sweeney confirmed the station and original apparatus remain out of service, with no restoration timeline reported.

Source: Kaukauna Community News (Northeastern) | <https://kaukaunacommunitynews.com/2026/08/04/fox-crossing-fire-department-digging-out-after-station-demolished-by-tornado/>

Fox Valley leaders give answers on debris, uninhabitable homes, tornado recovery funding

Municipal leaders from Menasha, the City of Neenah, the Town of Neenah, Fox Crossing, and Winnebago County convened a public town hall Thursday, August 6, to address recovery questions from residents affected by a tornado that struck approximately 10 days earlier. Fox

Crossing Village Manager Jeff Sturgill reported more than 12 active cleanup crews operating in that municipality. Menasha Mayor Austin Hammond estimated at least 100 homes are currently uninhabitable, with that number potentially rising as additional structures are assessed, and projected that debris clearance from streets and curbs will require at least one to two additional weeks. On financing, leaders said state and federal aid applications are pending but approval could take up to three months, and interim measures under consideration include reallocation of existing municipal funds and short-term borrowing. The municipalities have directed residents to separate organic debris from inorganic building materials to facilitate contractor removal and chipping operations.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://fox11online.com/news/local/municipal-leaders-answer-questions-on-debris-cleanup-uninhabitable-homes-recovery-funds>

Gas line rupture leads to evacuation

Highway 35/70 road construction crews severed a three-inch natural gas line in downtown Siren at approximately 12:12 p.m. on Monday, August 3, triggering a multi-agency emergency evacuation of businesses within 100 yards of the intersection of Johnson Street and State Highway 35. Burnett County Emergency Management Director Aaron Bentley confirmed that the Siren Police Department coordinated with the Burnett County Sheriff's Office, the Burnett County Highway Shop, Village of Siren Public Works, the Siren Fire Department, and the Webster Fire Department to close traffic and execute evacuations under the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Emergency Response Guide. Because of gusty southerly winds, traffic was diverted for one-half mile to the north, with additional rerouting near Crooked Lake Park. WE Energies responded and shut off and repaired the line, which had been ruptured during excavation on the west side of Highway 35. The Siren Police Department and the Burnett County Sheriff's Office issued an all-clear at approximately 3:40 p.m.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/gas-line-rupture-leads-to-evacuation/article_61068f66-4766-448f-b8fc-6c7a734401b5.html

Madison police clear encampment at shooting site, arrest 22

Madison city workers and police cleared a protest encampment at the intersection of South Baldwin and Williamson streets on the morning of Tuesday, August 4, after the site had blocked traffic for approximately 13 days following the July 22 police shooting death of Corey Ruiz. The operation began around 5 a.m. when non-police staff, including Community Alternative Response Emergency Services personnel and Streets Division workers using a megaphone, entered the encampment. Police moved in after demonstrators allegedly threw rocks and lit fires, and the street reopened to traffic just after 9 a.m. Officers arrested 22 people in total. One protester was transported to a hospital with non-life-threatening injuries, and a city employee suffered a medical event and was also hospitalized. Crews boxed memorial objects and relocated them to Demetral Field park. Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway stated in a video message that city officials plan to work with the Ruiz family and community members to create an ongoing memorial space.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (South Central) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/08/madison-clears-encampment-police-shooting-site-arrests-wisconsin-corey-ruiz/>

Mayor, police chief stand by clearing of intersection, say trust in city 'very fragile'

Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway and Police Chief John Patterson defended the city's decision to clear the encampment at the intersection of Williamson and South Baldwin streets at

a press briefing Wednesday. City crews began removing tents, grills, and coolers at approximately 4:30 a.m. Tuesday, and police approached the memorial site about two hours later. Officers made 22 arrests and issued 10 citations during the clearance. Crews relocated items valued at more than \$50 to Demetral Park until noon Wednesday, and the city will retain them for 45 days for owner retrieval. One officer used pepper spray, and the department deployed no large-scale crowd-control measures such as tear gas. Nearby businesses, including restaurants and a hotel, reported a 65 to 90 percent drop in sales since protests began. The Madison Police Department is working to incorporate additional de-escalation techniques and plans to train a broader range of staff to address public safety situations.

Source: Chippewa Herald (South Central) | https://chippewa.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_712f8d1c-1a71-580c-ba7c-5a628f26b1d3.html

Madison police maintain increased presence at Williamson and Baldwin intersection

The Madison Police Department is maintaining an increased law enforcement presence at the intersection of Williamson and South Baldwin streets following city officials' closure of the memorial and protest zone honoring Corey Ruiz. On Tuesday, August 5, officers arrested one man at the intersection after he blocked traffic, yelled at and spat on officers, and was found in possession of a firearm without a concealed carry permit. Special Events Team officers are stationed at the intersection for crowd control, and a command post team is monitoring the situation from a broader vantage point. The department has received supplemental staffing assistance from the Wisconsin State Patrol and the Sun Prairie Police Department to sustain coverage without requiring officers to work continuously. Chief John Patterson is in daily contact with the Division of Criminal Investigation, which is independently investigating the original shooting, and the department states it is limiting public disclosures to avoid jeopardizing that investigation.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/08/06/madison-police-maintain-increased-presence-williamson-baldwin-intersection/>

Madison residents demand city spend more on police oversight

At a seven-hour Madison City Council meeting on Tuesday, August 5, council leaders tabled amendments that would have regulated the Office of the Independent Monitor and the Police Civilian Oversight Board, opting instead to hear public testimony following the July 22 fatal police shooting of Corey Ruiz. Interim Independent Monitor Aeramique Glass submitted a 2027 operating budget request of \$771,000, approximately \$360,000 more than the prior year's budget, proposing to hire a full-time data analyst, a case manager, and a committee support person, in direct defiance of Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway's directive for departments to cut spending by 2 percent. Glass also proposed redirecting \$1.63 million in unspent agency funds accumulated since 2020 to cover mutual aid response costs following Ruiz's death, and requested an annual funding floor of at least 1 percent of the Madison Police Department's budget. Glass separately accused Dane County District Attorney Ismael Ozanne, City Attorney Michael Hass, the Madison Police Department, and Chief John Patterson of obstructing her office's investigation into the shooting.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/madison-residents-demand-city-spend-more-on-police-oversight/article_48acc5e8-d7e6-49bb-938e-7c39c106d60a.html

Madison Police Civilian Oversight Board backs independent monitor after altercation with officers

The Executive Committee of Madison's Police Civilian Oversight Board issued a formal statement on August 7 backing interim Independent Police Monitor Meeka Glass following a physical altercation between Glass and Madison Police Department officers on Tuesday, August 5. The board stated it is deeply concerned by video of the interaction and asserted that Glass was acting within the scope of her authority when she attempted to obtain an officer's badge number. The board explicitly disagreed with characterizations, including remarks Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway made at a Wednesday news conference, that Glass's subsequent statement about burning the city down constituted incitement to violence, framing the language instead as a rhetorical expression of frustration. The board emphasized the need for a thorough, independent review of the altercation. The mayor noted that the City Council has repeatedly affirmed that the monitor's office operates independently of her office.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/08/06/madison-police-civilian-oversight-board-backs-independent-monitor-after-altercation-with-officers/>

Brookfield police chief defends officers in Flock-related I-94 stop of innocent people

Brookfield Police Chief Chris Garcia issued an emailed statement defending his officers following a Thursday, August 7 traffic stop on Interstate 94 in which officers detained two innocent people after a Flock Safety license plate alert connected their vehicle to a Milwaukee homicide suspect believed to be armed. Garcia stated his investigation found officers had sufficient information and objective facts to support the actions they took, and emphasized that officers did not stop the wrong vehicle. Milwaukee police subsequently acknowledged that department staff accidentally failed to remove the vehicle alert from the Flock system after the department was no longer seeking the vehicle, generating the chain of events. Officers released both detained individuals. Separately, some Wisconsin agencies, including UW-Madison police and Dane County, have ended their Flock contracts, and a former Milwaukee police officer pleaded guilty in June to misusing Flock technology to track a person he was dating.

Source: WiscNews (Southeastern) | https://wiscnews.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_4d914ca4-ce5e-53ae-a1ec-bcd4e351f8ec.html

Waukesha police seek suspect in Flock camera vandalism

Waukesha police are investigating the vandalism of a Flock Safety automated license plate reader camera at the intersection of East Sunset Drive and State Highway 164, with officers dispatched at 7:39 p.m. Wednesday following multiple calls reporting a man using a pipe to damage the mounted device. Waukesha Police Capt. Dan Baumann confirmed the damaged device was a Flock Safety camera used by law enforcement to capture vehicle license plate images and other identifying vehicle characteristics to assist in criminal investigations. Officers searched the area and requested assistance from the Waukesha County Sheriff's Department K-9 unit, but could not track the suspect. A separate incident the prior week in the Town of Mukwonago involved gunshot damage to a sensor and solar panel at Sugden Road and Beulah Road, with the Town of Mukwonago Police Department estimating repair costs at several thousand dollars. The department is asking anyone with information to contact Detective Bloom.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/news/waukesha-camera-vandalism-suspect/article_56a30f13-825d-4bc8-bce2-32ac99fea8e4.html

Cudahy gun range removes Flock cameras after viral video raises privacy concerns

Eagle Sports Range in Cudahy removed Flock license plate reading cameras from its parking lot on Tuesday, August 5, after a video posted on social media and viewed tens of thousands of times drew public attention to the surveillance equipment. General Manager Saad Jaber stated the range originally installed the cameras in 2023 following a series of break-ins at other Milwaukee-area gun ranges. In February 2026 the range asked Flock to remove the cameras over privacy concerns, but the company declined, citing an existing contract. Six months after that request, range staff physically removed the cameras themselves and stored them in a back room, with Jaber acknowledging the range would address the contract dispute separately. Closed-circuit cameras installed and operated solely by range staff remain active inside the building and in the parking lot. Flock had not responded to a request for comment as of publication.

Source: WISN 12 ABC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.wisn.com/article/cudahy-gun-range-removes-flock-cameras-after-viral-video-raises-privacy-concerns/73384028>

Your local law enforcement is using Flock cameras

A crowd-sourced analysis published August 6 by The Daily Yonder, drawing on the Atlas of Surveillance database updated through December 2025, documents that nearly 800 rural law enforcement agencies across the United States deploy automatic license plate readers. In nonmetropolitan jurisdictions, approximately 80 percent of those agencies, representing 627 communities, use cameras manufactured by Flock Safety. The dataset identifies Wisconsin Rapids-area and broader central and northern Wisconsin agencies among jurisdictions holding reader contracts, though the published text did not itemize specific agency names. An Electronic Frontier Foundation analysis of 2025 searches found at least 50 law enforcement agencies ran Flock network queries tied to protest activity, and a Milwaukee Police Department officer used that city's reader network to track individuals 180 times over two months. Because Flock cameras store data in a shared nationwide database, any contracting agency can query records held by other agencies, including federal entities. The Atlas of Surveillance dataset is publicly accessible.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (Statewide) | <https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/08/06/your-local-law-enforcement-is-using-flock-cameras>

Delafield in need of more hunters for deer management program

The City of Delafield's Deer Management Committee is recruiting hunters for its free urban archery deer hunting program, citing a growing deer population and associated public costs. Committee Chairman Joe Reynoso said the city supplies approved stand locations, tree stands, parking, GPS coordinates, and Department of Natural Resources tags at no cost to participants, who must meet state hunting requirements and apply through the city's website. Hunting is restricted to archery equipment from elevated stands. The city's Department of Public Works pays approximately \$200 per deer for carcass removal following vehicle collisions, with roughly 39 deer collected last year, compared with an estimated \$400 per deer for professional sharpshooter programs. The Department of Natural Resources places Waukesha County's deer population at approximately 16,500 animals, and the county ranked first in Wisconsin for deer-vehicle crashes for the third consecutive year, with preliminary 2025 statewide data recording 17,795 such crashes causing six fatalities and 720 injuries. The committee is also seeking private landowners with larger properties to host additional stands.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/news/delafield-seeks-urban-hunters/article_9a5386dc-c87d-5a48-aff4-c2792df060b3.html

Electric bikes have city leaders pushing safety

At Monroe's Common Council meeting, Mayor Tom Miller announced the city is pursuing formal electric bike and electric scooter regulations, citing a gap in state law and a rise in incidents on city streets. Miller stated he is receiving frequent calls about near-collisions, particularly around the downtown square, and will seek updated rules through the Public Safety Committee and the full council. Police Chief Nathan Foltz is coordinating officer enforcement efforts and using social media to communicate existing rules. Under current Monroe City Code 10-3-3, electric bikes are treated as bicycles, carry a 25 mile per hour in-town speed limit, and must display rear reflective tape and a front white lamp visible from 500 feet. The council separately voted to establish school zone and traffic controls around Northside Elementary and a new high school opening this year, and adopted a resolution creating a shared-maintenance arrangement with the Monroe Park District for local athletic fields following prior approval by the Public Works Committee. Miller acknowledged the rulemaking process will take time.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | <https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/electric-bikes-have-city-leaders-pushing-safety/>

Village of McFarland holds listening session on traffic safety

The Village of McFarland held a community listening session on August 7 to gather public input on traffic safety following the July 8 death of an 8-year-old resident who was struck while riding her bike at the intersection of Broadhead Street and North Peninsula Way. Village Administrator Matt Schuenke described the session's purpose as collecting community-identified concerns and prioritizing future safety measures. The village confirmed the crash remains under investigation and stated additional information will be released at a future time. The listening session is the first in a planned series of public meetings on road safety. The McFarland Village Board is scheduled to discuss the session's findings at its next regular meeting on August 14.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/08/07/village-mcfarland-holds-listening-session-traffic-safety/>

Shorewood Hills pool closes, plans to reopen Saturday

The Village of Shorewood Hills closed its municipal pool after a village-employed masters swim and dive coach for adult swimmers was arrested in Monona on child pornography charges. Village officials contacted the Monona Police Department to determine whether any village program falls within the scope of the investigation. The village directed the Shorewood Hills Police Department to conduct a full search of the pool facility as a precautionary public safety measure. According to the village's statement, the arrested employee did not coach any youth programs and was not affiliated with the Shorewood Hills swim and dive teams. The pool resumed normal operating hours on Saturday, August 8, opening at 10 a.m.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/08/08/shorewood-hills-pool-closes-plans-reopen-saturday/>

Police 'recognize the value' in what can be expensive K9 programs

Multiple River Valley Region law enforcement agencies fund K9 programs through a combination of budgeted appropriations and donations, with initial costs for a new dog plus training estimated at approximately \$20,000 and total startup costs including a purpose-equipped squad car reaching just over \$100,000, according to Chippewa Falls Sgt. Stephen McMahon. Arcadia Police

Chief Nic Scholl reported that squad car K9 inserts cost \$2,000 to \$6,000, and air conditioning and temperature monitoring upgrades add approximately \$1,200 per vehicle. Arcadia's K9 Oscar was recently donated by a Winona business that has also donated dogs to the Buffalo County Sheriff's Office and to Iowa departments in New Hampton and Pleasant Hill. La Crosse Sgt. Whitney Hughes reported that her department's K9 program is funded almost entirely by donations, with an annual golf fundraiser scheduled for September 14. Winona officer Tyler Sense noted that annual K9 maintenance and training, including recertifications, costs \$1,000 to \$2,000 per year.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Western) | https://chippewa.com/news/local/article_dfb59be0-e9c4-5cd9-93b2-7086d2d0f17f.html

Mid-State Technical College Hosts Tactical Strength & Readiness Symposium

Mid-State Technical College and Advanced Tactical Medicine co-hosted the inaugural Tactical Strength and Readiness Symposium on July 21 and 22, drawing professionals from 25 public safety agencies across law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, emergency management, and corrections disciplines. The two-day event featured keynote speakers including a survivor of the 2017 Route 91 Las Vegas mass shooting and Jb Moody, chief of the Stevens Point Fire Department. Attendees participated in six breakout sessions covering physical resilience, mental readiness, tactical performance, leadership, wellness, and high-stress decision-making. Rick Anderson, dean of Mid-State's Adams Campus and School of Public Safety, described the symposium as a platform for cross-disciplinary knowledge exchange and stated plans to make it an annual event. The 2027 symposium has already been scheduled for July 13 and 14, with planning underway to expand educational offerings and deepen partnerships across the regional public safety community.

Source: WDLB 1450 AM Marshfield (Central/Northern) | <https://wdlbam.com/2026/08/05/mid-state-technical-college-hosts-tactical-strength-readiness-symposium/>

Land Use and Development

County staff recommend negotiating with wind developer, a path most residents didn't ask for

Marathon County's Conservation, Planning and Zoning department and County Administration jointly issued memos dated August 6 recommending that the county negotiate a joint development agreement with Alliant Energy over its proposed 150-megawatt Hub City Wind Farm, a project of 28 to 38 turbines spanning six southwestern townships. The recommendation follows a spring survey that drew 1,395 responses, with most participants reporting no perceived project benefits. Staff concluded that Public Service Commission intervention carries no guarantee of producing concessions, noting commission staff told the county they were unaware of any intervention that resulted in denial of a certificate of public convenience and necessity. Columbia, Iowa, Kenosha, and St. Croix counties and the Town of Saratoga in Wood County each reported using negotiated agreements as their primary tool. Iowa County approved a joint development agreement with developer Invenergy on July 22 after three to four months of negotiation covering road maintenance, school funding, and communication expectations. The Executive Committee meets August 13 at 3 p.m. to discuss options, including a closed session on negotiation strategy.

Source: Wausau Pilot & Review (Central/Northern) | <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/08/08/county-staff-recommend-negotiating-with-wind-developer-a-path-most-residents-didnt-ask-for/>

A \$10 billion data center proposal vanished after a local official told the developer the process would have to unfold in public

Maryland-based Stonebridge ceased pursuing a proposed \$10 billion artificial intelligence data center in the Town of Pacific, Columbia County, after Town Chair Steven Pate informed Stonebridge executive Douglas Firstenberg that any proposal would require a public meeting with all five town board members present. Columbia County planning director Kurt Calkins had previously described the project as projecting 400 permanent jobs and a 2027 opening. Emails obtained by Wisconsin Watch under Wisconsin's public records law show Stonebridge attorney Kevin Ramakrishna first contacted the county in August, with county officials meeting Firstenberg in October and Pate in November. The Pacific town clerk reported no data center-related emails on file. In a separate governance response, Columbia County Board Supervisor Denise Brusveen introduced a policy change, adopted by the county board in July, prohibiting supervisors from signing nondisclosure agreements regarding data centers. Calkins confirmed the county has not heard from Stonebridge in months.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (South Central) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/08/wisconsin-10-billion-data-center-proposal-columbia-county-town-pacific-developer/>

La Crosse data center ban inches closer to reality

The La Crosse Judiciary and Administration Committee unanimously approved an 18-month data center moratorium on August 6, temporarily prohibiting the city from permitting data centers within city limits while city and county staff assess the facilities' impacts. The resolution advances to the full City Council for final approval on August 13. The proposed ordinance explicitly cites La Crosse County's previously established educational committee and its own temporary ban, approved in April, as parallel actions. The county's moratorium applies to all county-zoned land and unincorporated towns except Burns, and the village of French Island, which recently reincorporated, has also zoned itself independently. A five-member county educational committee, which includes one elected official from each town, village, and city in the county, has until May 2027 to submit a formal recommendation on data center policy. Mayor Shaundel Washington-Spivey confirmed the city's action is intended to signal partnership with the county study effort before any permanent zoning decisions are made.

Source: Chippewa Herald (Western) | https://chippewa.com/news/local/government-politics/article_b6376a49-ed00-56fe-a8d7-19c29cdfcd88.html

Wis. Rapids Mayor addresses criticisms, legal challenges surrounding potential data center project

Wisconsin Rapids Mayor Matt Zacher stated on August 6 that no formal development deal exists between the city and PNK Group, the developer seeking to build a data center on the former Wisconsin Rapids mill site along the Wisconsin River. PNK Group applied for a conditional use permit earlier in 2026, but both the city and the company agreed the process was moving too quickly. The city has routed all communications between PNK Group and city officials through outside legal counsel since May 2026. Zacher said an outright ban on data center development is not legally feasible under existing municipal authority, as the city can only regulate a transaction

between two private parties, current mill site owner Capital Recovery Group and PNK Group, to a limited extent. A Wisconsin Rapids Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Monday, August 11 at the WRAMS theater to discuss data center development and consider a potential moratorium or referendum, though neither action would affect PNK Group's existing application unless the company withdraws and reapplies.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/wis-rapids-mayor-addresses-criticisms-legal-challenges-surrounding-potential-data-center-project/article_bed1d6a9-6efb-49f0-81cc-aa5273d9318f.html

As data center debate roars in Wisconsin Rapids, mayor says lack of state rules harms cities

Wisconsin Rapids Mayor Matt Zacher stated publicly that the city's authority over a proposed data center by developer PNK Group at the former paper mill site is limited to a conditional use permit, which he identified as the only available regulatory tool before construction begins. The mill site anchored the city's economy for more than 100 years before COVID closed major operations. A Republican-backed state Assembly bill that would have required data centers to pay for power grid work passed the Assembly but died in the state Senate, leaving no statewide framework. A University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Research on the Wisconsin Economy report recommended a potential two-year statewide moratorium to allow time for state policy development addressing land use, cost allocations, and disclosures. State Rep. Scott Krug, R-Rome, publicly opposed granting the conditional use permit given unanswered questions from the developer. The city's next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for Monday at the local junior high auditorium to accommodate anticipated public attendance.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wpr.org/news/wisconsin-rapids-mayor-says-lack-of-state-rules-harms-cities>

Beaver Dam's Heritage Mall to be sold

The Beaver Dam Common Council voted Monday, August 4, to terminate development agreements and forgivable mortgages associated with Heritage Village Mall, clearing the legal path for the property's sale. City Attorney Larry Konopacki stated the city had previously approved two separate forgivable loans for the mall's owners, characterized as grants that required repayment if certain conditions, specifically attracting retail tenants, were not met, and those conditions have since been fulfilled. The mall's four current tenants, Marshalls, Five Below, Ross, and Harbor Freight, hold leases extending into the 2030s according to Konopacki. The owners are seeking a sale price slightly above \$8 million. The property, which opened July 30, 1980, was last sold in 2007 to four local investors for an undisclosed amount. The stated rationale for the sale is to transfer the property at lower leverage so the new ownership group has greater resources for capital improvements and ongoing maintenance.

Source: WiscNews (South Central) | https://wiscnews.com/news/community/bdc/article_154c528e-01bb-4e32-a897-f80051673679.html

City, county ready to celebrate beginning of new apartment complex at old YMCA

The City of Beloit and Rock County are jointly financing the Riverside Apartments, a 55-unit affordable housing development at 1865 Riverside Drive on the former Stateline Family YMCA site, with a groundbreaking ceremony held Wednesday, August 6. The City of Beloit is providing a \$4.16 million, 30-year interest-free incentive loan; the Rock County HOME Consortium is

contributing \$829,632; Rock County is contributing \$989,000; and the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority awarded \$1.2 million in low-income housing tax credits. Of the 55 units, 45 are designated for families earning at or below 80 percent of the county median income. The developers are Lutheran Social Services and the Alternative Continuum of Care, both based in Madison. McGann Construction of Madison, also the builder, began site preparation in mid-July. The project is the largest Beloit low-income housing tax credit project since McGann built the 41-unit Parker Bluff complex in 2012.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/business-news/city-county-ready-to-celebrate-beginning-of-new-apartment-complex-at-old-ymca/article_356e90a3-808f-42ca-83dc-e62cfdd5fab4.html

Economic development plan: City's new strategy focuses on agriculture, trades, recreation

The Watertown Common Council received a new comprehensive economic development plan on Tuesday, presented by District 7 Alder Tony Arnett, marking the city's first such plan according to Arnett. The plan organizes economic priorities into five hubs: agriculture, skilled trades, healthcare, commercial development, and recreation. Agricultural components include integrating advanced farming technologies, establishing an enterprise center for research and startups, and expanding agritourism through farmer's markets and farm-stand networks. The skilled trades section targets small and mid-size manufacturing workforce gaps through a proposed training facility developed in partnership with Madison Area Technical College and trade unions, with feeder programs from regional high schools. Commercial efforts focus on downtown and South Church Street, including filling vacant storefronts and developing empty parcels to add properties to the tax roll. Recreational development centers on Brandt-Quirk and Riverside Parks and the Rock River, with planned additions of piers and boat launches. Manager of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives Deb Sybell noted that grant and loan program identification is ongoing at local, state, and federal levels.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/economic-development-plan-citys-new-strategy-focuses-on-agriculture-trades-recreation/article_d788a34b-5eef-48a2-b2f2-2818036ee429.html

City of Eau Claire's New Comprehensive Plan Project, 'Legacy EC,' Underway

The City of Eau Claire has formally launched Legacy EC, its first comprehensive plan overhaul since 2015 and the seventh update since the original plan was adopted. The new plan will establish the city's policies, priorities, and development goals for the next 20 years, covering land use, housing, transportation, parks, infrastructure, and economic development. The Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee holds its inaugural meeting this month to establish the project timeline and community engagement strategy. The committee includes City Council members Aaron Brewster and Jessica Schoen, Plan Commission members Susan Wolfgram and Josh Zeug, 11 resident members with relevant expertise, and three alternate members. Planning Manager Ned Noel confirmed the first committee meeting is not open for public engagement. Community input opportunities are expected to begin in mid-September, with details not yet finalized, and in the interim residents may submit comments through an interactive map. The city amended the 2015 plan in both 2022 and 2025.

Source: Volume One (Western) | <https://volumeone.org/articles/2026/08/07/398638-city-of-eau-claires-new-comprehensive-plan-project-legacy-ec-underway>

Foxboro Golf Course plans face scrutiny at packed Oregon Plan Commission meeting

The Oregon Village Plan Commission held a standing-room-only conceptual review on August 7 of a proposal by developer Glenn Hofer of Ridgeview Development to convert portions of Foxboro Golf Course into housing phases of the Autumn Ridge neighborhood. Under Hofer's preferred concept, Phases 4A, 4B, and 5 would be developed while 10 holes remain operational, and a contingency Phase 6 would add housing on the eastern portion if the 10-hole course proves financially unsustainable. The commission took no vote, as the session was discussion only and formal applications have not been filed. Hofer stated he intends to begin Phase 4A in 2027 if the project advances and that he has a deal to sell the remaining course at below assessed land value. Plan Commissioner John Bieno stated the proposal needed to give greater weight to resident concerns beyond the green-space buffer already added. Village staff indicated a similar conceptual presentation is expected before the Oregon Village Board at a September meeting.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | <https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/08/07/foxboro-golf-course-plans-face-scrutiny-packed-oregon-plan-commission-meeting/>

Plan Commission OKs permit for renovation of Main Street building

On July 20 the Lake Geneva Plan Commission unanimously approved a conditional use permit and downtown design review for a renovation project at 736 through 738 W. Main St. Coulter Crossings LLC of Williams Bay, operating under the name Project Cursive, plans to convert the two-address building into two distinct first-floor retail spaces, a stationery and gift store and a gathering and event space. The second floor would be renovated into a commercial apartment featuring two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen, two dining rooms, office space, and a great room. The rear of the building would receive an outdoor staircase and a two-tiered deck, with a privacy fence planned around the lower staircase level and an elevator connecting the basement to a rooftop terrace area. Jeff Auberger of Stebnitz Builders Inc. of Elkhorn is the general contractor. The conditional use permit still requires approval by the Lake Geneva City Council before the project can proceed.

Source: Lake Geneva Regional News (Southeastern) | https://lakegenevanews.net/news/local/business/real-estate/article_e04a8919-d166-434a-abf8-0d6ee081fe07.html

Planning commission public hearing on solar and wind ordinance

The Village of North Bay Planning Commission will hold a public hearing at 6 p.m. on Monday, August 10, at Village Hall to consider a proposed ordinance amending Sections 8.14-5 and 8.14-6 of the Village of North Bay Village Code governing solar and wind energy systems. The hearing is open to the public, and the village posts agendas at Village Hall and on its agendas and minutes page in accordance with state statutes. Members of the public wishing to review a draft of the proposed ordinance before the hearing must contact the village clerk to schedule an appointment. A related notice indicates a second public hearing on the same ordinance sections is scheduled for August 24. The village has taken no vote or final action on the proposed amendments.

Source: Journal Times (Southeastern) | https://journaltimes.com/news/community/article_37b43a8c-b3d8-5f7b-b47e-868ec1ce5a22.html

Governance and Elections

Jeffreys steps down as Green Bay City Clerk

Green Bay City Clerk Celestine Jeffreys resigned effective Friday, August 7, following a period of administrative leave prompted by a Wisconsin Elections Commission investigation into duplicate absentee ballots sent to voters ahead of the spring election and the August primary. The city's most recent commission filing identified Jeffreys as the source of the second duplication incident, stating that on June 22 she reprinted a portion of absentee voter labels from a PDF document after incorrectly believing some labels were missing from one of four label boxes, and that staff affixed those reprinted labels to ballot envelopes where they were later identified as the source of the duplicates. The city and Jeffreys issued a joint two-sentence statement confirming the departure. Complaint filer Theresa Sipes characterized the city's response to the commission as insufficient. The commission has no further proceedings scheduled on the matter, and the city has announced no successor.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://fox11online.com/news/local/jeffreys-steps-down-as-green-bay-city-clerk-celestine-jeffreys-duplicate-ballots-wec>

Green Bay clerk resigns amid investigations into duplicate ballot incidents

Green Bay City Clerk Celestine Jeffreys resigned following a Wisconsin Elections Commission investigation into her office sending 152 duplicate ballots to voters during the spring election and an undisclosed number ahead of the August primary. Jeffreys had been on administrative leave since July 9, and the city announced her resignation on a Friday with a two-sentence statement declining further comment. Stacy Menke, previously the city's deputy clerk, is serving as interim clerk through the August primary. Mayor Eric Genrich holds authority to select a permanent replacement, but any nominee must be confirmed by the city council. Earlier compliance concerns predate the ballot errors: in late 2023 the commission found her policy of allowing third-party absentee ballot returns for sick but non-disabled voters likely violated state law, and she separately acknowledged failing to deactivate certain voter registrations as required by statute across multiple elections.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Northeastern) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/08/wisconsin-green-bay-clerk-resigns-duplicate-ballot-mistakes-election/>

Special prosecutor to take over Brown County case involving Elon Musk

Brown County District Attorney David Lasee announced Friday, August 7, that his office has a conflict of interest in reviewing an election bribery complaint against Elon Musk and that La Crosse County District Attorney Tim Gruenke will serve as special prosecutor. The Wisconsin Elections Commission voted 5-1 in closed session on July 9 to refer two confidential complaints to the Brown County district attorney's office, and voters in Milwaukee and Green Bay filed the complaints. The complaints concern \$1 million checks Musk distributed at a Green Bay rally during the 2025 Wisconsin Supreme Court race, in which Musk and allied groups spent at least \$20 million supporting Republican-backed candidate Brad Schimel, who lost by 10 percentage points to Democratic-backed Susan Crawford. A separate lawsuit filed by the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, alleging vote bribery, unauthorized lotteries, unlawful conspiracy, and public nuisance, remains pending in Brown County. Lasee did not specify the nature of his office's conflict of interest.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://fox11online.com/news/local/elon-musk-election-bribery-1-million-dollar-checks-voters-brown-county-district-attorney-david-lasee-conflict-interest-la-crosse-county-tim-gruenke-wisconsin-elections-commission-complaints>

OSC closes Hatch Act complaint against Chris Weaver

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel closed a Hatch Act complaint against Monroe County Chief Deputy Christopher Weaver on August 7, finding the federal law did not apply to him because his involvement with federally funded programs at the Monroe County Sheriff's Office was too limited. The complaint alleged Weaver violated the Hatch Act by having sheriff's office staff participate in a campaign parade and by using his position to influence his 2026 sheriff's race through social media comments referencing nonpublic information about his opponent. The office identified two federal funding streams connected to the sheriff's office: a bulletproof vest reimbursement program administered by a sergeant rather than Weaver, and the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program, which requires the sheriff's signature and approval by county committees and the Monroe County Board. Because Weaver neither prepares grant applications nor signs funding requests, the agency concluded his involvement was too minor for coverage. The agency made no determination on whether the alleged conduct would have violated the Hatch Act and closed the case without further action.

Source: Monroe County Herald (Sparta) (Western) | <https://monroecountyherald.com/stories/osc-closes-hatch-act-complaint-against-chris-weaver,177457>

Former Wilton clerk/treasurer sentenced in theft case

Former Village of Wilton Clerk and Treasurer Leigha Lynn Barton was sentenced Monday to a combined 10 years of probation and 30 days in jail following a theft case involving municipal funds. The court also ordered Barton to pay more than \$35,000 in restitution. Barton had held the position of clerk and treasurer for the Village of Wilton, a municipal office responsible for managing public funds and official records. The sentencing concludes the criminal proceeding against her. The available article text reports no additional procedural steps.

Source: Monroe County Herald (Sparta) (Western) | <https://monroecountyherald.com/stories/former-wilton-clerktreasurer-sentenced-in-theft-case,177037>

Sauk Co sheriff has spent at least \$4,500 to gas up in NW Wisconsin with county credit card

An investigation by The Badger Project found that Sauk County Sheriff Richard Meister used a county-issued fuel card approximately 80 times over the past two years to fill his department truck at locations in northwestern Wisconsin, totaling roughly \$4,500 in fuel purchased as far as 220 miles from Sauk County. From January through May 2026 alone, Meister made at least 16 such fill-ups in municipalities including Birchwood, Rice Lake, and Black River Falls, between 1.5 and 3.5 hours from the county, spending approximately \$1,000. Sauk County Sheriff's Office vehicle use policy prohibits deputies from using county vehicles for personal errands unless approved under special circumstances. The county confirmed the authenticity of fuel card records obtained by The Badger Project. Meister, a 43-year department veteran whose term ends this year, did not respond to multiple comment requests.

Source: The Badger Project (South Central) | <https://thebadgerproject.org/2026/08/03/sauk-co-sheriff-has-spent-at-least-4500-to-gas-up-in-nw-wisconsin-with-county-credit-card/>

Tougher path for La Crosse city administrator proposal this time around

La Crosse's Judiciary and Administration Committee voted on a draft charter ordinance that would establish a city administrator position, with three of six members present supporting it, two voting against, and one abstaining. The split outcome contrasts with the unanimous approval the same panel gave a prior version of the ordinance in February; that earlier draft failed to reach the supermajority required for full council passage and went dormant for five months. Council members Aron Newberry and Larry Sleznow advanced the current version to active legislation in July after sponsoring the ordinance. Council president Tamra Dickinson said after the Wednesday meeting that she has unresolved questions and may know more the following week. Council member Crystal Bedford said she would have voted against the resolution to prevent it from moving to the consent agenda, which she believed might have limited public debate. The ordinance must next secure a supermajority of the full La Crosse City Council to become effective.

Source: La Crosse Tribune (Western) | https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/government-politics/article_735f2e3b-31f8-4622-b2d6-92ed4b099a22.html

Marathon County holds poll worker training ahead of Tuesday's primary election

Marathon County Clerk Kim Trueblood and Wood County Clerk Trent Miner co-led a chief inspector poll worker training session on August 7 in Wausau ahead of Tuesday's primary election. Approximately 30 people completed the training, which focused on preparing poll workers to serve as chief inspectors at polling locations. The chief inspector training is distinct from the mandatory training required of all poll workers. The clerks designed the session to ensure that any polling location worker could step in as chief inspector and manage situations arising on election day. Trueblood and Miner stated their preference for having all poll workers trained uniformly rather than only those formally assigned to the chief inspector role. The clerks plan to conduct at least one additional training session before November's general election.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/08/08/marathon-county-holds-poll-worker-training-ahead-tuesdays-primary-election/>

What Wisconsin leaders in a blue city and red county say about election integrity

A Democracy Defense Project poll of Wisconsin voters released ahead of the August primary found that 91 percent of Wisconsin Democrats expressed confidence that votes would be accurately cast and counted in November, compared with 46 percent of Republicans. Washington County Clerk Ashley Reichert stated her office has conducted post-election audits since 2018, including random audits after every election and a full countywide audit after every general election, and that election inspectors in Washington County earn between \$9 and \$14 per hour depending on role. Milwaukee election workers earn \$220 for a full election day shift beginning at 6 a.m. The poll also found that nearly 80 percent of respondents support statewide regulations for drop boxes and nearly half support some form of early absentee ballot tabulation. Former Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, now on the Democracy Defense Project's leadership team, called for a state law change allowing communities to process, but not count, absentee ballots 24 to 48 hours before Election Day.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | <https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/what-wisconsin-leaders-in-a-blue-city-and-red-county-say-about-election-integrity>

Oshkosh Public Library explores partnership that could relocate Life TV studio

The Oshkosh Common Council voted 4-3 at its Tuesday meeting to keep the Life TV channel available on the Spectrum network while moving the channel's operations to the Oshkosh Public Library. Library officials describe discussions with Life TV as preliminary, with no decisions finalized on how the partnership would operate, what resources it would require, or how it would affect daily library operations. Unresolved questions include whether building modifications would be required to support content production and what staffing impacts might result. Under Wisconsin law the Oshkosh Public Library Board of Trustees holds authority over decisions regarding use of library facilities, and any formal Life TV proposal would proceed through the board's review and public decision-making process. The library has committed to providing timely updates to the public and media as additional information becomes available.

Source: WTAQ 1360 AM / 97.5 FM Green Bay (Northeastern) | <https://wtaq.com/2026/08/07/oshkosh-public-library-explores-partnership-that-could-relocate-life-tv-studio/>

Human Services

Programs to begin soon for La Crosse County opioid response plan

La Crosse County is preparing to deploy \$7.6 million in opioid litigation settlement funds through a program called RISE, for Recovery, Intervention, Support, and Empowerment, with funds expected to be distributed within the next few months. The La Crosse County Board approved the budget for the settlement funds in 2025. The \$7.6 million, derived from national lawsuits against opioid manufacturers and distributors, is divided across three core pillars: justice support, strengthening families, and expanding treatment access. Specific initiatives include jail-based medication-assisted treatment, expanded home visiting services, and housing assistance. Jenna Sickels, La Crosse County Human Services Outpatient Clinic Supervisor, identified reduced recidivism among individuals with substance use disorder and decreased child protective services involvement as target outcomes. Deployment of the funds is expected to begin within the next few months.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/08/04/programs-begin-soon-la-crosse-county-opioid-response-plan/>

New Medicaid work requirements are coming. Here's what you need to know.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services is preparing to implement federal Medicaid work requirements established under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, affecting approximately 200,000 BadgerCare Plus members ages 19 to 64 without a dependent child under 19 in the household. Department Secretary Kirsten Johnson and Medicaid Director Amanda Dreyer disclosed that roughly 63,000 current members are at immediate risk of losing coverage because the state lacks documentation showing they meet the requirements or qualify for an exemption. Affected members must demonstrate at least 80 hours monthly of qualifying activity, including employment, volunteering, school, or job training, during a 12-month lookback period. New applicants will face the requirements early in 2027, with current members subject to the rules at renewal beginning March 2027. First-year implementation costs are estimated at \$10 million for system upgrades, with staffing and training costs still being finalized. The department is coordinating with counties, health care providers, and community organizations on outreach, prioritizing people experiencing homelessness.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/08/new-medicaid-work-requirements-are-coming-heres-what-you-need-to-know/>

Wisconsin Critics Say Proposed Federal Changes Would Roll Back Head Start Standards

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families published a notice of proposed rulemaking Thursday, August 7, that would rewrite or eliminate numerous federal performance standards governing Head Start early education programs nationwide. Wisconsin's Head Start Association, which represents 39 Head Start programs statewide serving approximately 12,000 enrolled children, says the rule would eliminate requirements for classroom quality, teacher qualifications, health services, disability supports, and family engagement. Among the specific standards targeted is the current requirement of one adult caregiver per four infants and one teacher per four 2-year-old children; the proposed rule would defer those ratios to state regulations, which Wisconsin and 46 other states set at less stringent levels for 2-year-olds. Reach Dane, which operates Head Start programs at 13 locations in Dane and Green counties, is among the Wisconsin providers opposing the change. The proposed rule is subject to a public comment period before any final rule could take effect.

Source: Patch (Statewide) | <https://patch.com/wisconsin/across-wi/wisconsin-critics-say-proposed-federal-changes-would-roll-back-head-start>

Get your 4-year-old ready for elementary school for free through new state program

Gov. Tony Evers secured \$65 million for Get Kids Ready, a Wisconsin school readiness initiative administered by the Department of Children and Families that pays child care providers to deliver 437 required hours of instruction per year to 4-year-olds at no cost to families. The program covers academic, physical, social-emotional, and self-help skill development for children who are 4 years old or will be by September 1. More than 300 providers across Milwaukee are currently participating, and the Department of Children and Families maintains a statewide list of participating providers. Child care providers may charge families for care time beyond the 437 state-funded instruction hours. Parents apply by submitting a department application directly to a participating provider of their choice, and there is no application deadline. COA Youth and Family Centers announced it received a grant to implement the program at its Riverwest Campus at 909 E. Garfield Ave. in Milwaukee.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (Statewide) | <https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/08/05/get-your-4-year-old-ready-for-elementary-school-for-free-through-new-state-program>

Bad air days are here to stay. Here's what Madison is doing about it.

Public Health Madison and Dane County and the City of Madison have deployed multiple governance responses following a July 16 air quality index reading of 450 in Madison, the highest hazardous classification and the worst air quality day the city has recorded in a century, caused by wildfire smoke from Canada and Minnesota. The city has distributed N95 masks through public library branches and activated its emergency notification system during poor-air episodes. Madison is also operating dozens of air quality sensors under a multi-year U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-funded project managed by city sustainability and resilience manager Jessica Price. City policies including bus rapid transit expansion and fleet electrification are cited as contributing to particulate emission reductions. Price indicated the city is evaluating a residential air filter subsidy program modeled on existing energy efficiency initiatives and is studying clean air

center designations at libraries, schools, and community centers. No formal vote or appropriation has been reported, and the next step is further city review of both program concepts.

Source: Capital Times (South Central) | https://captimes.com/news/government/bad-air-days-are-here-to-stay-here-s-what-madison-is-doing-about-it/article_5b041f2f-3b80-48cb-a792-7bb49f54a4e1.html

Drug-resistant fungus spreads to 23 states including Wisconsin

Wisconsin Department of Health Services spokesperson Jennifer Miller confirmed that Wisconsin has recorded more than 100 cumulative cases of *Candida auris* since the state's first case in 2022, with 31 provisional cases reported in 2026. *Candida auris* is a drug-resistant fungus resistant to most antifungal medications that spreads primarily in health care settings among immunocompromised patients or those with medical devices. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates a mortality rate of 30 to 60 percent among infected individuals, though many patients had co-occurring serious conditions. Nationally, more than 6,000 cases were reported in 2024 according to a CDC report released in March 2026. Among neighboring states, Michigan has recorded 518 cases and Illinois 379 cases in 2026 as of July 25, compared with Wisconsin's 31. The state health department characterizes the provisional 2026 figure as subject to change and notes the fungus is becoming more common. No Wisconsin-specific public health emergency declaration or formal government action was reported.

Source: Wausau Pilot & Review (Statewide) | <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/08/08/drug-resistant-fungus-spreads-to-23-states-including-wisconsin/>

Northwest Journey wants to expand Prescott program

The Prescott School Board heard a presentation at its July meeting from Northwest Journey Program Director Brittany Paulson and Clinical Coordinator Skye Summers regarding a proposed expansion of the organization's Prescott mental health day treatment program to serve clients ages 14 to 17. Northwest Journey currently operates at 125 Elm St. N. inside the Malone Intermediate School building with five full-time employees, one part-time employee, and three interns, serving between 13 and 18 clients at a time across the Prescott, Ellsworth, River Falls, Hudson, and New Richmond school districts. The organization reported 12 law enforcement contacts in Prescott in 2025 and one in 2026. The expansion, contingent on the Intermediate School building not being sold, would begin after the 2026-27 school year. Proposed protocols include staff review of all client records prior to start dates and immediate transfer to virtual or alternative programming if physical aggression occurs. The item may return before the board at its August meeting.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | <https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/northwest-journey-wants-to-expand-prescott-program,201012>

New Tribal Resource Center honors legendary elder Archie Mosay

The St. Croix Tribe's Archie Mosay Resource Center, funded by a \$4.25 million Wisconsin Department of Administration grant through the Flexible Facilities Program, is scheduled to open with a public dedication ceremony on Thursday, August 13, at 1 p.m. at 24633 Angeline Ave., Webster. The grant supported the refurbishment and expansion of the former St. Croix Tribal Center in Hertel, a building more than 50 years old, into a multi-purpose facility. The center consolidates St. Croix Tribal Education, Elder and Aging Services, Historic Preservation, and community services for the Sand Lake Community under one roof. Features include six classrooms, four specialized online testing rooms, a refurbished gymnasium, a language

preservation studio, and a public library developed in partnership with the Northern Waters Library Network and UW-Madison's Tribal Libraries, Archives and Museums department. The elder center nutrition site provides free meals to community members aged 65 and older regardless of tribal affiliation, with tribal elders eligible beginning at age 55, and meals are available to the general public for \$5.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/new-tribal-resource-center-honors-legendary-elder-archie-mosay/article_c9cf8feb-085b-4e83-8b2b-f01d0f4c4f31.html

Foundation closes after 'deep reflection'

The School District of Monroe is set to assume ownership of the Got Your Back mental health app, pending Monroe school board approval at its August 10 meeting, following the closure of Jacob's SWAG Foundation after 13 years of operation. The foundation, established by the Ellefson family in memory of Jacob Ellefson, announced it closed at the end of July. The app, launched in 2020 and available on smartphones and tablets, supports mental health and crisis prevention primarily among teens. Over its 13-year history the foundation distributed \$302,170 into local communities through scholarships, mental health training, kindness initiatives, and app development. The district's acquisition will also incorporate the app into a student education component covering development, maintenance, and support of the platform. Board members Karen Mau-Boll, Joe Monroe, and Todd Schluesche served the foundation throughout its operation. The transfer is contingent on board approval at the August 10 meeting.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | <https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/foundation-closes-after-deep-reflection/>

Union Grove summer meal program continues after donors step up

Racine Unified School District announced Wednesday, August 4, that its summer meal program will extend two additional weeks at sites in Union Grove following donor commitments from Benner Beats Hunger and Aramark. The two active distribution locations, Gifford School and American Roller Company, will continue operating on their regular schedules through Wednesday, August 12, providing free grab-and-go breakfasts and lunches to children. The extension follows a supply shortfall reported July 23, when demand exceeded available food at the most recent distribution and volunteers were unable to serve all families in line. Benner Beats Hunger volunteer Sherrie Tussler stated that one week's supply of seven breakfasts and seven lunches costs \$49 per child, with individual meal contributions set at \$3 per breakfast and \$4 per lunch. Funding for the extended service follows the same cost structure used throughout the summer. August 12 is the final scheduled day of meal service under the extended program.

Source: Racine County Eye (Southeastern) | <https://racinecountyeeye.com/2026/08/04/union-grove-summer-meal-program/>

School Districts

Cuts to Marinette Middle School positions trigger discussion

The Marinette School Board on Monday approved an initial resolution authorizing up to \$68 million in general obligation bonds and a companion measure placing the question on the November ballot, with officials projecting a tax impact of 47 cents per \$1,000 of equalized property value. The funds would finance upgrades to the middle school and high school, including science labs,

auditorium seating, and technical education spaces. Separately, the board held a discussion-only agenda item on a revised middle school staffing plan under which the sixth-grade social studies teaching position would be effectively eliminated, with fifth, seventh, and eighth grade social studies teachers each absorbing one section of sixth-grade social studies during their former prep periods. Superintendent Matt Smith cited board-approved class size targets of 24 students as justification. Board Member Hank Matthews questioned the trade-off, noting the overall district budget increased while teaching positions were reduced. The board took no action on the staffing matter.

Source: EagleHerald (Northeastern) | https://www.ehextra.com/news/cuts-to-marinette-middle-school-positions-trigger-discussion/article_60fba5f5-5157-4c05-9f7e-912655af9fcc.html

Stevens Point schools explore grade reconfiguration amid declining enrollment

The Stevens Point Area School District is exploring consolidation of its 13 school buildings in response to declining enrollment, with the school board expected to receive a formal recommendation this winter. District enrollment stood at approximately 7,200 students five years ago when Assistant Superintendent Chris Nyman joined the district and has since fallen by roughly 200 students, with projections indicating a further loss of 400 students over the next 10 to 15 years. The district assembled a 47-person team to develop three consolidation options. Option A would place sixth and seventh grade in a dedicated building, Option B would move ninth grade to SPASH, and Option C would move sixth grade to the junior highs and ninth grade to SPASH. The district held a community meeting focused on Option C on August 5. The district is also considering closing or repurposing at least one school building. No formal decisions have been made.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | <https://www.wsaw.com/2026/08/05/stevens-point-schools-weigh-grade-reconfiguration-amid-declining-enrollment/>

Siren residents weigh in on district's future at community town hall

The Siren School Board held a community town hall on July 28 at Siren School's instructional media center, drawing approximately 30 residents, parents, staff, and alumni to discuss the district's future without producing formal decisions. Board President Katie Tewalt opened the session alongside board members Corey Bauer, Polly Imme, Kelly Wilttrout, Kim Thiex, and Mindy Zappa. The board organized five breakout discussion tables covering partnerships, academics, consolidation, referendum, and athletics and activities. The district noted only two returning classroom teachers in the elementary school for the coming fall. Attendees raised the possibility of a future referendum but settled on no specific dollar figures. Football participation was reported at roughly 10 students with two returning sophomores, though board members cautioned those figures were unconfirmed. The board also announced one open seat expiring April 2027, with letters of interest due to the district office by 4 p.m. August 11. Notes from the breakout groups will be compiled and released as official minutes, with a follow-up meeting anticipated in late August.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/siren-residents-weigh-in-on-district-s-future-at-community-town-hall/article_4f111589-2297-482f-93a3-b2cdf1500134.html

Superior School Board considers costly roof, field maintenance

The Superior School Board, at its August 3 committee of the whole meeting, heard a proposal from Garland Company for a full roof replacement at Superior Middle School, built in 2003, at an

estimated cost of \$7.7 million to \$8.2 million. The project would be funded entirely from the district's Fund 46 capital projects account, which Director of Business Services David See said the proposal would fully deplete. Garland representatives proposed a system using gravel surfacing, hot asphalt, a flood coat, and no exposed flashings, and would include maintenance work on roofs at Four Corners and Great Lakes schools. The board may vote on the roof proposal at its regular September meeting, with work targeted to begin in late May. Separately, the board unanimously approved a contract with Rettler Corporation of Stevens Point to manage replacement of field turf and track resurfacing at the NBC Spartan Sports Complex, estimated at \$900,000 to \$1 million, at a negotiated oversight fee of 6.5 percent of project costs plus a \$10,000 lump sum.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | <https://www.superiortelegam.com/news/local/superior-school-board-considers-costly-roof-field-maintenance>

Lien Elementary principal unveils staff survey results

Lien Elementary Principal Megan Challoner presented end-of-year staff survey results and a 90-day action plan to the Amery school board at its Monday meeting, marking the close of her first year leading the building. Challoner administered a non-anonymous feedback survey asking staff to rate building leadership performance and identify areas needing attention, and told staff in advance that she would see individual responses so she could follow up directly on concerns. Survey participation was described as strong despite the non-anonymous format. Every professional learning community team at Lien Elementary submitted growth proposals, which the leadership team consolidated into a single building-wide focus on restorative practices and student behavior management. The 90-day action plan includes measurable benchmarks, accountability check-ins, and an outside coach contracted to train and model practices for all staff throughout the full 90-day period. Challoner noted student behavior incidents were already down compared with prior-year building data. The plan will be implemented at the start of the fall school year.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/lien-elementary-principal-unveils-staff-survey-results/article_1a00cf18-9444-40f0-83ed-c3ce4eccdb9d.html

Uppena seems a strong asset to school district

The North Crawford School District hired Scott Uppena as its new superintendent in May, replacing Brandon Munson, who served in the role for 19 years. Munson's tenure included navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and securing passage of two district referendums. Uppena, who relocated to Soldiers Grove, had been on the job approximately one month at the time of the article. He previously served as a principal at New Lisbon before moving to the Royall School District, and holds an agriculture education degree from UW-Platteville, where he began teaching in 2004. Uppena cited the district's on-site daycare facility as a significant recruitment and retention tool, noting a statewide childcare shortage. He also highlighted the number of alumni staff members and recently refreshed facilities, including a greenhouse and improved athletic facilities, as indicators of district stability. No next formal governance action was reported.

Source: SW News Group (South Central) | <https://www.swnews4u.com/local/education/uppena-seems-a-strong-asset-to-school-district/>

Wisconsin exam scores, absenteeism rates have not returned to pre-pandemic levels

The Wisconsin Policy Forum's 2026 School DataTool, drawing on state data across all 421 Wisconsin public school districts, documents that Forward Exam proficiency in math and English language arts, ACT scores, and chronic absenteeism rates remain below pre-pandemic benchmarks statewide. The chronic absenteeism rate, defined as absence from 10 percent or more of school days or at least 18 days, remains more than four percentage points above pre-pandemic levels as of 2024-25, and the 2024-25 decline was the smallest year-over-year drop recorded since the post-pandemic peak. Public school enrollment fell by more than 14,000 students, or 1.7 percent, in 2025-26, the second-largest single-year decline since at least 2012. The statewide high school graduation rate reached 92 percent in 2024-25, its highest point since at least 2012. The share of students identified with disabilities increased for the fifth consecutive year, adding 455 students in 2025-26. The interactive DataTool is publicly available for district-level comparisons.

Source: Monroe Times (Statewide) | <https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/wisconsin-exam-scores-absenteeism-rates-have-not-returned-to-pre-pandemic-levels/>

State-Local Interface

Wisconsin regulators send ATC back to the drawing board on data center connection project

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission voted Thursday to reject American Transmission Company's pending application for a Port Washington data center grid connection project and require the utility to resubmit, marking what PSC Chair Summer Strand called a reasonable reset and what the company and its partners described as likely the first such action in the commission's century-long history. The original application, filed in September 2025, outlined a \$1.3 billion-plus infrastructure package comprising a high-voltage transmission line and five new substations across Fond du Lac, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, and Washington counties, intended to serve the data center by December 2027. Since the commission took up the proposal in December 2025, the company repeatedly revised routes and added temporary bypass lines, prompting PSC Environmental Affairs Coordinator Adam Ingwell to testify he had not seen comparable revision volume in his experience. Administrative Law Judge Michael Newmark found the company created an unreasonable burden on staff and the public. Wisconsin Citizens Utility Board Executive Director Tom Content flagged the project's cost as a moving target. No resubmission deadline was reported.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/08/wisconsin-psc-regulators-data-center-connection-project-atc-back-to-drawing-board-port-washington/>

Power line foes take aim at ATC application

The Responsible Energy Alliance, a coalition of residents from Saukville, Trenton, Fredonia, and Farmington, filed a petition with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin asking the commission to revoke its completeness finding for American Transmission Co.'s application to extend power lines to the Vantage Data Centers Lighthouse Campus in Port Washington, under Docket 137-CE-221. The alliance argues that since the application was declared complete, the company filed 564 additional application documents and 168 staff data request responses, with a commission staff member noting the alterations caused more significant challenges than normal

for review. More than 1,000 public comments were submitted by the August 5 deadline. The petition seeks either a full refiling of the application or withdrawal of two greenfield route segments traversing Ozaukee and Washington counties. The commission was scheduled to consider the petition August 6 in Madison. Public hearings are set for August 18 at Fredonia Village Hall, August 19 at Kiel Community Center, and August 25 in Madison, with written comments due August 28.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Statewide) | <https://ozaukeeexpress.com/content/power-line-foes-take-aim-at-application>

We Energies says Microsoft won't be held to contract terms that conflict with state regulators' order

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission voted in May to remove geographic constraints from the data center rate structure it approved for large customers, striking language that would have limited new power plants serving data centers to eastern Wisconsin or Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Despite that ruling, We Energies sent Microsoft a contract dated July 16 that retained the rejected location provision. Microsoft had asked the commission in June to reopen the case to address multiple errors or inconsistencies, including the geographic restriction, and the commission declined. We Energies spokesperson Brendan Conway stated the utility will follow the commission's order rather than the contract's language, meaning Microsoft may subscribe to power plants outside the restricted zone. The utility has not provided a timeline for updating the contract language. Separately, We Energies is seeking commission approval to purchase the planned Red Oak Ridge Energy Center natural gas plant in Kenosha County from Invenergy for \$1.8 billion, with Microsoft already signed up to purchase electricity from that facility.

Source: Racine County Eye (Statewide) | <https://racinecountyeve.com/2026/08/06/we-energies-microsoft-data-center/>

Wisconsin judge rules that paper absentee ballots violate rights of certain disabled people

Dane County Circuit Judge Everett Mitchell ruled Tuesday, August 4, that Wisconsin's absentee ballot program, which requires voters to complete and return a paper ballot, denies disabled people the equal opportunity to vote absentee privately and independently, violating protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Disability Rights Wisconsin, the League of Women Voters, and four disabled voters filed the lawsuit in 2024. Mitchell declined to order the Wisconsin Elections Commission to implement electronic absentee voting, finding the parties still dispute whether electronic ballots constitute a reasonable remedy, including concerns about implementation difficulty and associated risks. Mitchell had previously issued a temporary injunction in 2024 permitting electronic voting for voters who self-certify they cannot mark a paper ballot without assistance, but an appeals court reversed that ruling. Wisconsin currently emails absentee ballots only to military and overseas voters. A hearing is scheduled for August 12, at which a trial date may be set, and resolution before the November election is considered unlikely.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/wisconsin-judge-rules-that-paper-absentee-ballots-violate-rights-of-certain-disabled-people/article_8e54b594-a097-50ba-b226-87010d0d2bb9.html

Reminders ahead of August 11 Partisan Primary

The Wisconsin Elections Commission issued a pre-election checklist ahead of the August 11 partisan primary, reporting that 171,689 voters had already cast ballots through in-person

absentee voting as of August 7. The commission advises voters against mailing absentee ballots at this stage, directing them instead to contact municipal clerks about drop-off options, including drop boxes where available, and noting that all ballots must reach the polling place by 8 p.m. on election day. Polls statewide are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., and voters must be in line by 8 p.m. to be counted. Wisconsin law prohibits wagering on an election outcome and then voting in it under Wisconsin Statute Section 6.03(2). No statewide referenda appear on Tuesday's ballot, though local referenda may apply to some voters. Voters without acceptable photo identification may cast a provisional ballot and have three days to submit qualifying identification.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Statewide) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/reminders-ahead-of-august-11-partisan-primary/article_3478c5ca-0ce9-463d-901e-e17b0c4a98be.html

Can anyone buy Wisconsin voter roll data?

The Wisconsin Elections Commission makes the state's complete voter roll available for purchase at a flat fee of \$12,500, with no statutory restrictions on how purchasers may use the data once acquired, according to Wisconsin Legislative Council guidance. The voter list includes names, addresses, and individual voting history from recent elections, but excludes date of birth, driver's license number, and Social Security number. Buyers may use the data to contact individuals for any purpose, and foreign countries are not prohibited from purchasing it. The fact brief, published August 7, was prompted in part by President Donald Trump's July 16 primetime speech claiming voter data had been bought, stolen, or hacked by China in 18 states following the 2020 election. Commission officials state that election systems are secure and that the state's voter list is not known to have been hacked. No pending legislative action to restrict voter data sales is reported.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/08/wisconsin-voter-roll-list-data-buy-election-commission-trump-names-addresses-voting-history/>

Your Right to Know: Campaign finance site a big improvement

The Wisconsin Ethics Commission launched a redesigned public campaign finance dashboard in August 2025, replacing a PDF-based system that routinely froze and slowed searches. The new portal cost \$285,000 to build and carries a two-year maintenance cost of more than \$270,000, plus an additional \$20,000 to eliminate erroneous and duplicate records, according to Commission Administrator Daniel Carlton. The de-duplication tool has reduced duplicative entities by 78 percent, from 12 million down to approximately 2.6 million. The portal allows users to search state candidates, track individual donors and disbursements, and download original campaign finance reports for verification. Carlton acknowledged that data integrity issues persist because filers enter information without standardized training. An uncorrected error in the portal, first identified in April 2025, incorrectly showed a Supreme Court justice's campaign donating more than the \$6,000 allowable maximum in a circuit court race. The August 11 primary and November 3 general election will serve as operational tests for the site.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/08/wisconsin-ethics-commission-campaign-finance-site-big-improvement-your-right-to-know/>

Wisconsin DMV outlines how voters can get ID before Aug. 11 election

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation on August 4 outlined steps residents can take to obtain a state-issued photo identification card before the August 11 election. Wisconsin law requires an acceptable photo identification to vote, but the state does not issue a separate voter

identification card, and a federally compliant REAL ID is not required to cast a ballot. Applicants must bring a birth certificate, proof of identity, and proof of Wisconsin residency to a Division of Motor Vehicles customer service center, and appointments are available but not required. U.S. citizens unable to receive a physical identification card before election day may be eligible for a free receipt that is valid for voting at the polls. The division operates a toll-free hotline for identification questions. Voters with questions about eligibility or polling places should contact the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (Statewide) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/wisconsin-dmv-outlines-how-voters-can-get-id-before-aug-11-election/article_d742dd46-20b2-409f-b20f-d4975f10ce32.html

Gov. Evers declares economic disruption after Wisconsin storms

Gov. Tony Evers signed Executive Order #303 on August 7 declaring a period of abnormal economic disruption in Outagamie, Winnebago, Forest, and Vilas counties following storms that struck eastern Wisconsin the previous month. The order directs the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to enforce prohibitions against price gouging on everyday essentials and lodging in the four affected counties. The declaration follows Executive Order #300, which established a state of emergency after an EF3 tornado caused damage in the Menasha and Appleton area, accompanied by high winds, hail, power outages, and disruptions to public water systems. The storms displaced residents from their homes and caused widespread property damage requiring repairs to homes, vehicles, and businesses. Residents seeking assistance or wishing to file a price-gouging complaint may contact the department's Consumer Protection Hotline at (800) 422-7128. The department is also advising residents to exercise caution when hiring contractors for storm-related repairs.

Source: Journal Times (Statewide) | https://journaltimes.com/news/community/article_90876021-508e-5560-83d6-ff23f7c66778.html

Gov. Evers appeals Trump administration's denial of federal disaster relief

Gov. Tony Evers on August 8 submitted a formal appeal to the Trump administration contesting the Federal Emergency Management Agency's denial of federal Public Assistance for counties affected by severe spring storms and flooding, limiting the active appeal to Racine County after four of five initially denied counties, Bayfield, Manitowoc, Marathon, and Sauk, determined they did not need additional public assistance. The agency's denial letter, dated July 8, stated the infrastructure damage did not meet the severity and magnitude threshold for a Public Assistance designation. Racine County's remaining documented needs include damage across multiple public assets and two major roadway sections sinking or warping from failing culverts. The state's appeal also includes a statewide request for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding, which requires a presidentially declared disaster to activate. Separately, Evers signed an executive order declaring a period of abnormal economic disruption in Outagamie, Winnebago, Forest, and Vilas counties following July storms that produced an EF3 tornado.

Source: WISN 12 ABC Milwaukee (Statewide) | <https://www.wisn.com/article/gov-evers-appeals-trump-administrations-denial-of-federal-disaster-relief/73379180>

Gov. Evers appoints Jake Laehn as Buffalo County Sheriff

Governor Tony Evers appointed Jake Laehn as Buffalo County Sheriff on August 7, filling a vacancy created by Sheriff Michael Osmond's resignation. Laehn will serve the remainder of Osmond's unexpired term, which ends in January 2027. Laehn has been a deputy with the Buffalo County

Sheriff's Office since 2011 and currently holds the rank of chief deputy and undersheriff. His experience spans corrections, communications, patrol, investigations, and his current administrative role. The Office of Governor Evers announced the appointment by press release. Former Sheriff Osmond publicly endorsed Laehn, citing his leadership, integrity, and commitment to county residents. The release mentioned no additional confirmation vote by the Buffalo County Board. Laehn's term as appointed sheriff runs through January 2027, at which point the position would be subject to the next regularly scheduled election cycle.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Statewide) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/08/07/gov-evers-appoints-jake-laehn-buffalo-county-sheriff/>

Area bridge, culvert projects supported by Local Small Structures Improvement Program

Governor Tony Evers and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation announced that 101 communities statewide will receive nearly \$30 million through the newly created Local Small Structures Improvement Program, funded by a \$30 million set-aside from the \$150 million allocated to the Agricultural Roads Improvement Program in the 2025-27 biennial budget. The department selected projects from 430 applications totaling \$133.7 million in requests. In the central and northern Wisconsin region, the Town of Schley in Lincoln County will receive \$571,950, covering 90 percent of estimated construction costs for one structure. In Price County, the Town of Hill will receive \$450,000, the Town of Knox \$396,000, and the Town of Spirit \$90,000, each representing 90 percent of estimated construction costs. Combined with prior Agricultural Roads Improvement Program awards, the two programs have now funded 221 projects across 64 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. The department inventoried more than 16,500 small structures statewide, using an initial \$12.5 million appropriation, to identify structures in poor or severe condition eligible for awards.

Source: Tomahawk Leader (Statewide) | <https://www.tomahawkleader.com/stories/area-bridge-culvert-projects-supported-by-local-small-structures-improvement-program,348509>

La Crosse wins fight against WisDOT to protect northside vehicular access

The Office of the Commissioner of Railroads, led by Commissioner Don Vruwink, issued a final decision rejecting the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's February 2025 petition to close the Liberty and St. Cloud streets railroad intersection in La Crosse's Lower Northside neighborhood, and also protected the Avon and Hagar intersection against closure. The La Crosse Common Council had adopted Resolution 25-0478 on May 8, 2025, formally opposing both closures. Engineering and Public Works Director Matthew Gallagher and Planning Director Andrea Trane testified at a public hearing held July 29, 2025, joined by elected officials and community members. Assistant City Attorney Ellen Atterbury credited collaboration across city departments, including Planning and Development, Fire, and Police, for the outcome. As a condition of the final decision, the City of La Crosse must make satisfactory safety improvements at the Liberty and St. Cloud intersection, including erecting signage and implementing roadway markings, and will continue coordinating with the department on future railroad crossing projects.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Statewide) | <https://www.weau.com/2026/08/04/la-crosse-wins-fight-against-wisdot-protect-northside-vehicular-access/>

Tribal Sovereignty Is at Issue in Lac du Flambeau's Lawsuits

The Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians is a party in at least two active federal lawsuits bearing on tribal sovereignty and regulatory authority over reservation lands and waters. In the first, the State of Wisconsin sued the tribe after it moved to block non-members from fishing walleye and muskellunge on 19 lakes within the reservation, and a federal judge has issued a temporary order preventing the tribe from enforcing that ban. In the second, the White Sand Lake Association, a non-Native homeowners group, is asking a federal court to determine whether a tribal government may regulate non-member activities on fee-simple privately owned land and navigable waters within Wisconsin. A separate 2025 federal ruling sided with non-tribal homeowners in a road-access dispute involving four tribal roads on the reservation after Bureau of Indian Affairs easements expired. Tribal President John Johnson cited a declining fish population and the need to sustain approximately 4,000 tribal members as justification for the fishing restrictions. No trial dates are reported.

Source: PBS Wisconsin WHA21 (Statewide) | <https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/tribal-sovereignty-is-at-issue-in-lac-du-flambeaus-lawsuits/>

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.
