Wisconsin LocalGov Hub Briefing

October 10 to October 17, 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.

BUDGETS AND FINANCE 4

City of Janesville proposes $146.8 million budget 4
Janesville could consider public safety and operational referendum for 2028 budget 4
Oneida County cuts all funding for tourism in 2027 budget hearings 4
Landlord sues to overturn Delafield fire fee 5
Eau Claire settles with Marshfield Clinic over $690K property tax fight 5
Taxi fare rate increase public hearing tonight in City of Hartford, WI 5
10 bites from Madison budget briefings 5
Rice Lake mayor breaks tie to approve city's 2027 Budget 6
Glade Ave. bridge leads discussion again during budget conversation 6

WORKFORCE AND LABOR 6

Departures of key employees leaves Port shorthanded 6
Sheriff's office captain among finalists for Port chief job 7
Clark to become Chippewa County chief deputy 7
Kenosha Police Chief picked as next city administrator 7
Two more Madison alders will vote to fire interim police monitor 8
City Council approves applying savings to reduce insurance impact 8
Letter: City residents deserve more transparency over mayoral pay 8

INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES 8

Oconomowoc to spend additional $100,000 to replace lead service lines 8
Wausau City Council Approves Lead Service Line Replacement Ordinance 9
Wausau continues lead pipe replacements as funding shrinks 9
Marathon County Board to vote on nearly $55 million highway facility, Infrastructure chair appointment 10
Eau Claire Transit considering proposal to lower the cost of their monthly passes 10
City engineer: Voit Farm project isn't driving high assessments for Milwaukee Street rebuild 10
River Falls Town Hall closed for unsafe floor 10

PUBLIC SAFETY 11

ACLU asks Wisconsin Supreme Court to require warrants for license plate reader data 11
Appleton to decide on restricting license plate reader technology 11
Baraboo turning off Flock cameras in November 12

La Crosse residents urge city to cut Flock funds 12
Racine's proposed budget drops Flock plate-reader funding as police consider replacement 12
River Falls Police Department discontinuing use of Flock cameras 12
Sun Prairie Police propose ALPR switch, resident opposition remains 13
Bird rescinds electric scooter expansion proposal 13
Sun Prairie adopts ordinance regulating e-motos 13
Sussex adopts new rules for bikes, e-scooters 13
Richfield fire chief says new county EMS funding program will save smaller departments from going under 14
Oshkosh, town of Algoma to discuss combining fire, EMS 14
Ashland County, city seek $331,000 from Enbridge-funded safety account 15
Dane County Sheriff pushes back on budget amendments 15
County Sheriff Supports SRO For Reedsville School District 15
Racine police budget 2027: $1M more for overtime 15
City council approves emergency procedure updates 16

SITING AND MORATORIA 16

How could lawmakers regulate data centers? Wisconsin Policy Forum offers options 16
Data center zoning rules head to County Board 16
Wisconsin Rapids Data Center Faces Key Council Decision October 20 17
Microsoft planning to build fewer data centers at sprawling Mount Pleasant campus 17
Town of Beloit approves data center moratorium 17
Redner sworn in as Turtle board chair 18
Hundreds gather at state Capitol seeking action on transmission line 18
WASTE OR WETLANDS? What's Happening With The GFL Proposed Landfill Expansion 18

HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT 19

Why can't metro Madison build enough houses for its high demand? 19
Changes made to city's loan programs 19
Residents get first look at GM/JATCO site concepts that feature industrial use and housing 19
Menasha tornado recovery stalls as raze order delays hold up demolition work 20
Milwaukee Housing Authority fails to meet federal recovery requirements again, HUD letter states 20
Development narrowly approved despite concerns 20
Superior council to consider expanding tax increment districts 21
Webster Mobile Home Park residents have their say 21

LAND USE AND ZONING 21

Could some voters misunderstand GM/JATCO ballot referendum question? 21
Port Washington neighbors react to second rejection of housing development near Harbor Campus 22
City of Sheboygan Extends Comprehensive Plan Timeline 22

GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS 22

Dogs, drugs, and aloof supervisors discussed by Laf. Exec. Committee 22
Motion to remove Trempealeau County Board chair falls short 22
Third time's the charm? City administrator back on La Crosse docket 23
Women dragged out of meeting found guilty 23
Council sends code of conduct resolution to ethics board 23

ELECTIONS AND ELECTION ADMINISTRATION 24

Elections Commission Says Federal Agents Should Not Be at Polling Places 24
Wisconsin Elections Commission says it's ready for November 3rd election day turnout 24
"This incident will not shake us": Election officials undeterred after suspicious mail deemed 'non-hazardous' 24
Who runs Racine County's voting machines? What the records show 24

EC City Council resolution affirms confidence in local election process 25
Wisconsin Rapids Alderman Faces October 27 Recall Election 25
Village of Marshall installs absentee ballot drop box for voters 25

HUMAN SERVICES 26

How much will a new Lafayette Co. nursing home cost taxpayers? 26
First info meeting on Lafayette Manor held in Belmont 26
Dane County shelters strain as homelessness keeps climbing 26
Five potential measles cases reported in Rock County 27
Milwaukee anti-poverty agency has just $2,770 in cash left as financial crisis deepens 27
New Racine library social services program provides free help 27

SCHOOL DISTRICTS 27

Greenfield school referenda: What to know about the 2 questions ahead of Nov. 3 vote 27
Janesville School District lobbies on operational referendum in run up to Nov. 3 election 28
Washburn schools ask voters for $4.8M after three years of cuts 28
Whitefish Bay School District referendum: What to know ahead of Nov. 3 vote 28
Beloit reports another sharp drop in enrollment 29
Janesville School District sees another sharp decline in enrollment 29
Third Friday count: WUSD enrollment falls by 201 students 29
62% of Wisconsin schools to receive a drop in state aid 29
Southern Wisconsin school leaders and legislative candidates gather to discuss public education funding 30
Majority calls for re-election of Antigo School Board officers 30
Pewaukee school board member faces criticism over absences 30
Amery board OKs clubhouse tuition hikes, delays staffing vote 30
Haugen parents urge school board to consider what's best for kids 31
Superior School Board debates restrictions on school posters 31

STATE-LOCAL INTERFACE 32

Wisconsin PSC opens formal review of BECI transmission line developer's utility application 32
Billion-dollar natural gas plant projects passed by Wisconsin regulators 32
Gov. Evers announces end of fiscal year highlights 32
Gov. Evers, WisDOT announce over $152M in quarterly transportation aid payments to improve local roads statewide 33
Two-thirds of Wisconsin schools will see decline in state aid 33
Use of NDAs for Wisconsin data centers wider than previously known 33
What to know about Wisconsin's 3 statewide ballot questions 33
Wisconsin officials can count ballots that arrive late if officials make errors, judge rules 34
What's new in Wisconsin TIF: Key changes under Acts 173 and 235 34
DNR issues Enbridge notice of violation over Line 5 reroute 34
FEMA Disaster Recovery Center opens Monday in Menasha 35
Wisconsin Wins $218 Million Grant To Extend Hiawatha To Madison 35
New juvenile facility step toward end of juvenile prisons in Lincoln County 35
Wisconsin DOJ reaches $245K settlement with CAFO over manure pollution 35

City of Janesville proposes $146.8 million budget

Janesville's proposed 2027 budget totals $146.8 million, up $8.7 million from 2026, with an operating budget of $120.4 million. The general fund property tax levy would rise 3.3 percent, or $1.4 million, to $45.2 million, and the median homeowner would pay $47.08 more in municipal taxes and $88.24 more in utility costs, a combined $135.32. To close a $1.8 million shortfall, the city would draw $622,000 from general fund balance, end cash funding for police squad car replacement to save $398,000, and cut the animal control budget by $51,000. The proposal includes an 11.2 percent wastewater rate increase and a stormwater fee increase from $172 to $213 a year. Non-represented employees would receive a 2 percent cost-of-living adjustment, compared with 3 percent for unionized employees. A study session is set for Oct. 22, a public hearing for Nov. 9, and adoption for Nov. 23.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/city-of-janesville-proposes-146-8-million-budget/article_d103eeb8-b8b5-4af6-aa01-7ddf1347b683.html

Janesville could consider public safety and operational referendum for 2028 budget

Interim City Manager Jay Shambeau told the Janesville City Council that a referendum to fund public safety and city operations may be needed for the 2028 budget, which would require placement on the April 2027 nonpartisan ballot. Finance Director Dave Godek said the city can manage through 2027 with fund balance draws and cuts but considers 2028 unsustainable under current levy limits. The police department has not received approval for new officer hires in several years, and the fire department carries overtime costs because of limited staffing. The city's last referendum, for road improvements in 2012, resulted in a wheel tax. No referendum amount has been set, and the council must act soon to meet the April 2027 ballot deadline.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-could-consider-public-safety-and-operational-referendum-for-2028-budget/article_dcaa7ed4-3197-4387-9742-feadb5bff93b.html

Oneida County cuts all funding for tourism in 2027 budget hearings

The Oneida County Executive Committee voted unanimously to eliminate all county tourism funding from the 2027 budget against a projected $4 million county deficit. The Oneida County Tourism Council had requested about $92,000 and later reduced the request to roughly $70,000. Supervisor Michael Tautges cited the concentration of existing room-tax marketing in Three Lakes, Rhinelander, and Minocqua as justification for the cut. The Visit Oneida County website, social media channels, and e-newsletter will cease without funding. Visitor spending in the county totaled $314 million in 2025 and generated $1.5 million in sales tax. A county board member may still offer a budget amendment at the November board meeting to restore some funding.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Central/Northern) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/oneida-county-cuts-all-funding-for-tourism-in-2027-budget-hearings/article_d3550636-97db-4e5c-834b-ca758e6ffeed.html

Landlord sues to overturn Delafield fire fee

Fabick GB LLC filed suit in Waukesha County Circuit Court on Oct. 16 seeking to invalidate Delafield's fire fee, which the city adopted in 2023 after a voter referendum. The complaint asks the court to bar further imposition of the fee and to return $1,383 paid over three years: $450 in 2023, $463 in 2024, and $470 in 2025. The suit argues the fee violates the state uniformity clause and lacks statutory authority because it is not tied to fire services actually rendered to the property. Waukesha County Circuit Court Judge Zachary Wittchow struck down similar fees in Pewaukee and Dousman last month on comparable grounds.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/news/delafield-fire-fee-lawsuit/article_5bd09273-2040-5e66-b434-a6f5d5861232.html

Eau Claire settles with Marshfield Clinic over $690K property tax fight

The Eau Claire City Council voted to authorize a settlement with Marshfield Clinic that ends a dispute over a 2023 property tax bill of more than $690,000. The settlement grants a partial exemption for some clinic buildings and parking lots and a full exemption for the hospital and cancer center. Marshfield will make a direct payment to the city and will not receive a refund. The lawsuit will be dismissed once the settlement is finalized.

Source: WQOW ABC18 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.wqow.com/news/top-stories/eau-claire-settles-with-marshfield-clinic-over-690k-property-tax-fight/article_26784a46-876d-4c1c-80af-88eea7548a38.html

Taxi fare rate increase public hearing tonight in City of Hartford, WI

The Hartford Common Council held a public hearing Oct. 13 on two proposed Hartford Shared-Ride Taxi fare increases: raising the wait-time charge from 25 cents to 50 cents per minute and adding 25 cents to the $1.25-per-mile charge for trips outside city limits. Transportation Superintendent Deb Holton said neither charge had previously been increased. The service provides about 600 rides a month with three vans, and the actual cost per ride exceeds $16 against a $4.25 base fare. The council also considered a resolution establishing a $10.66 monthly household fee for residential garbage collection, to be added to utility bills with the corresponding cost removed from the tax levy.

Source: Washington County Insider (Southeastern) | https://www.washingtoncountyinsider.com/taxi-fare-inc-hearing-hartford/

10 bites from Madison budget briefings

Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway's proposed operating budget totals $477.5 million, and the full Common Council is scheduled to vote the second week of November. The city clerk's proposed budget is $3.63 million, with no signed agreement yet for permanent election-equipment storage at the county's new elections center. The assessor's $4.13 million budget covers defense of assessments that staff estimate kept $1.5 billion in value from shifting out of the commercial class, saving residential parcels roughly $500 each. The fire department's $83.4 million budget reflects a 31 percent increase in 911 EMS calls since 2021 and 1,047 instances last

year when one or zero ambulances were available. Information technology costs rose nearly $1 million, close to a 10 percent increase, as services move to cloud subscriptions.

Source: Isthmus (South Central) | https://isthmus.com/news/news/10-bites-from-madison-budget-briefings/

Rice Lake mayor breaks tie to approve city's 2027 Budget

The Rice Lake City Council deadlocked on the 2027 budget on Oct. 13, and the mayor broke the tie to approve it. Levy-funded accounts require $7,757,855 against a levy limit of $6,880,210, so the budget draws $877,645 from the Fund 10 general fund balance. That balance stands at $2,819,951 and is projected to fall to $1,942,306. Council members including Gina Sookiayak and Steve Bowman raised concerns about limited council input during the budget process and about the structural deficit. Bowman conditioned his support on the Finance Committee beginning revenue or deficit-reduction planning in January or February for the 2028 budget cycle.

Source: Rice Lake Chronotype (Western) | https://apg-wi.com/rice_lake_chronotype/news/rice-lake-mayor-breaks-tie-to-approve-city-s-2027-budget/article_842717af-8324-4845-a040-e908f035dae1.html

Glade Ave. bridge leads discussion again during budget conversation

At the Oct. 7 Spring Valley Village Board meeting, Finance Committee Chair Andrea Wallin reported that the committee began budget work with a $189,000 deficit and reached a balanced budget. A projected $93,696 in nursing home revenue is uncertain because the village has not received nursing home payments for two years and holds a $129,496 cash flow loan to the business. The committee recommended borrowing for the Glade Avenue bridge, which carries $288,000 in reimbursement grant funds good through 2029 and an estimated net cost of $178,000. Trustee Matt Huepfel submitted a $121,000 bid for a narrower one-lane option, which Public Works Director Steven Kirby said could not legally be accepted without competitive bidding. The board discussed approaching adjacent property owners about required easements before going to bid.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/glade-ave-bridge-leads-discussion-again-during-budget-conversation,209579

Workforce and Labor

Departures of key employees leaves Port shorthanded

Port Washington Public Works Director Rob Vanden Noven retired effective Oct. 9 after 25 years in the role, and Planning and Development Director Bob Harris resigned recently. City Administrator Melissa Gossett is covering Harris's duties. City Engineer Roger Strohm is handling Vanden Noven's duties and plans to apply for the director position. Alderman Mike Gasper estimated that neither post will be filled until early 2027, and the city is evaluating departmental staffing in the interim.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/departures-key-employees-leaves-port-shorthanded

Sheriff's office captain among finalists for Port chief job

The Port Washington Police and Fire Commission narrowed its police chief search to three finalists: Chad E. Eibs, operations captain with the Ozaukee County Sheriff's Office, with 20 years of experience; Joel Kuszynski, patrol captain with the Sheboygan Police Department, with 13 years; and Carl G. Waterstreet, professional standards captain with the Door County Sheriff's Office, with 26 years. A second round of interviews is planned, with no date set. The commission's goal is to have a new chief in place by Jan. 1. The new chief will replace Kevin Hingiss, who retired in June after 42 years with the department.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/sheriff%E2%80%99s-office-captain-among-finalists-port-chief-job

Clark to become Chippewa County chief deputy

Chippewa County Sheriff Travis Hakes has selected Andrew Clark, a 20-year veteran of the sheriff's office, to become chief deputy effective Jan. 4, 2027, when Chief Deputy Curt Dutton and Lt. Mark Bauman retire. The appointment follows 2025 Wisconsin Act 196, signed April 3, 2026, which requires the sheriff, rather than the county board, to appoint the chief deputy and permits removal at the sheriff's pleasure. County Administrator Andy Albarado is bringing ordinance amendments to conform to the new statute to the Executive Committee on Oct. 20. Full county board review is planned for November, with a vote in December.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/daily-updates/clark-to-become-chippewa-county-chief-deputy/article_87b1c764-d5d3-4a0e-a447-645f3614be8a.html

Kenosha Police Chief picked as next city administrator

Kenosha Mayor David Bogdala has selected Police Chief Patrick Patton to serve as the city's next administrator, and the appointment goes to the Common Council for confirmation on Oct. 19. Patton has served with the Kenosha Police Department since 2006 and was appointed chief in 2023. If confirmed, he would assume the administrator role on Jan. 1, 2027. The city did not announce a process for selecting a new police chief.

Source: WITI FOX6 Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.fox6now.com/news/kenosha-police-chief-picked-city-administrator

Two more Madison alders will vote to fire interim police monitor

District 14 Ald. Noah Lieberman and District 15 Ald. Dina Nina Martinez-Rutherford announced they will vote to fire Madison's interim Independent Police Monitor, Aeiramique "Meeka" Glass, bringing the public count of alders supporting removal to nine. Ten votes are needed to pass the resolution, introduced by District 2 Ald. Will Ochowicz. Lieberman cited Glass's failure to recruit a permanent monitor, her hiring of outside counsel and investigators without city-approved contracts, and a deteriorating relationship with Police Chief John Patterson. A review by City Attorney Michael Haas identified multiple policy violations. The Common Council was expected to vote on Tuesday.

Source: WISC CBS3 Madison (South Central) | https://www.channel3000.com/news/two-more-madison-alders-will-vote-to-fire-interim-police-monitor/article_22813728-313c-479c-a8d3-e33f2010c495.html

City Council approves applying savings to reduce insurance impact

The Medford City Council voted to apply accumulated savings from prior years to offset an increase in employee health insurance costs. The report did not state the size of the premium increase, the amount of savings applied, or the vote count.

Source: Medford Star News (Central/Northern) | https://www.centralwinews.com/news/2026/10/14/city-council-approves-applying-savings-to-reduce-insurance-impact/?destination=star-news

Letter: City residents deserve more transparency over mayoral pay

A letter to the editor in Stevens Point Metro Wire examines a proposed 17 percent raise for Mayor Mike Wiza, which would lift his annual pay from $77,057 to $90,023.06 in 2027, followed by 2 percent annual increases through 2030. The letter cites a gap of about $7,400 between the average of the mayor's selected municipal salary comparisons, $90,023.06, and the $82,641 average of comparisons in a Baker Tilly study used by Council President Marc Christianson. Personnel Committee Chair Mary Kneebone raised competing priorities, including hiring a police officer, and Council member Andrea Olson estimated total mayoral compensation at about $109,000 a year with benefits. The council is expected to deliberate in November. The article's language is partly advocacy-oriented.

Source: Stevens Point Metro Wire (Central/Northern) | https://spmetrowire.com/letter-city-residents-deserve-more-transparency-over-mayoral-pay/

Infrastructure and Utilities

Oconomowoc to spend additional $100,000 to replace lead service lines

The Oconomowoc Common Council approved an additional $100,000 for lead service line replacements after the 2026 capital budget allocation of $75,000 proved insufficient. Of 32 water samples collected between June and September, four exceeded acceptable lead levels, triggering required resident notification. Under city policy, when a homeowner replaces a private lead

lateral and the utility-owned public side is also lead, the city must replace its portion within 45 days at utility expense.

Source: Oconomowoc Enterprise (Southeastern) | https://oconomowocenterprise.com/oconomowoc_enterprise/news/oconomowoc-to-spend-additional-100-000-to-replace-lead-service-lines/article_c95014cb-36f9-56f5-a6f3-660e06612102.html

Wausau City Council Approves Lead Service Line Replacement Ordinance

The Wausau City Council approved an ordinance requiring all private-side connections to city water infrastructure to be copper or another non-lead material. The council also approved a gap financing plan so property owners at the tail end of the replacement program receive the same financial terms as earlier participants. Wausau has replaced more than 3,500 lead service lines over the past three years, leaving about 2,900. Project managers estimate the city saved roughly $7 million by starting replacements before the EPA's lead pipe removal mandate took effect.

Source: WDLB 1450 AM Marshfield (Central/Northern) | https://wdlbam.com/2026/10/17/wausau-city-council-approves-lead-service-line-replacement-ordinance/

Wausau continues lead pipe replacements as funding shrinks

Public Works Director Eric Lindman told the Wausau City Council's Finance Committee that residents may have to pay for lead service line replacements themselves unless new funding is found. The city has completed about $35 million in replacement work for roughly $15 million, using federal and state grants, principal forgiveness loans, and municipal utility financing, and that assistance is shrinking. Wausau must complete replacements by 2038 under an EPA mandate. Lindman planned to bring additional financing proposals to the Finance Committee the following week, with a full council decision to follow. At the time of the report, the city lacked ordinance authority to require participation.

Source: WSAW CBS7 Wausau (Central/Northern) | https://www.wsaw.com/2026/10/15/wausau-continues-lead-pipe-replacements-funding-shrinks/

Marathon County Board to vote on nearly $55 million highway facility, Infrastructure chair appointment

Marathon County supervisors were scheduled to vote on a resolution authorizing construction of a new highway facility in Kronenwetter at a guaranteed maximum price of $54.98 million, with completion projected for summer 2028. The county set aside $30 million in highway reserve funds in September 2025, and the remaining roughly $25 million would come from North Central Health Care facility-use payments, supplemented by an interfund loan from the general fund pending those payments. The board was also set to vote on Board Chair Kurt Gibbs' second attempt to appoint Supervisor Aaron Griner to chair the Infrastructure Committee, after the board rejected the same appointment in August. The consent agenda included wind and solar rules for the Town of Rietbrock, data center rules for the Town of Wausau, and a $388,750 reallocation of pandemic relief funds to the Regional Forensic Science Center.

Source: Wausau Pilot & Review (Central/Northern) | https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2026/10/17/marathon-county-board-to-vote-on-nearly-55-million-highway-facility-infrastructure-chair-appointment/

Eau Claire Transit considering proposal to lower the cost of their monthly passes

Eau Claire Transit is proposing to cut full-fare monthly passes from $50 to $40 and half-fare monthly passes from $25 to $20. Full-fare single rides would rise from $1.75 to $2.00, and half-fare single rides from $0.85 to $1.00. Paratransit co-pays would rise to $4 per ride. The Transit Commission will consider the proposal Oct. 21 at 4:30 p.m., followed by City Council meetings on Oct. 26 and Nov. 9.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/10/15/eau-claire-transit-considering-proposal-lower-cost-their-monthly-passes/

City engineer: Voit Farm project isn't driving high assessments for Milwaukee Street rebuild

Madison will reconstruct Milwaukee Street from Starkweather Creek to West Corporate Drive, with bidding this winter and completion targeted for fall 2027. The project is estimated at slightly under $5.6 million, and property owners will cover about $450,000, or 8 percent of the cost. Preliminary assessments averaged roughly $12,500, ranging from $1,245 for one residence to more than $53,000 for a commercial lot, according to Assistant City Engineer Chris Petykowski. City Engineer Jim Wolfe told a Sept. 22 council meeting that the reconstruction plans predated the adjacent Voit Farm redevelopment and are not cost-driven by it. Owners may pay in a lump sum or over 15 years at 4.5 percent interest.

Source: Isthmus (South Central) | https://isthmus.com/news/news/city-engineer-voit-farms-isnt-driving-high-assessments-for-Milwaukee-street-rebuild/

River Falls Town Hall closed for unsafe floor

The Town of River Falls Board voted at an emergency meeting Oct. 7 to close the 125-year-old town hall effective Oct. 8 after a structural engineer deemed the building unusable because of

rotted floor joists, support beams, and support posts. The Nov. 3 polling place was relocated to the Unitarian Universalist Society at N8101 State Road 65. Town Clerk Sarah Meyer said no repair estimate has been obtained and the board is focused on preparing the new location for Election Day. Town Chair Terry Kusilek said the cost of repair will be substantial.

Source: Pierce County Journal (Western) | https://www.piercecountyjournal.news/stories/river-falls-town-hall-closed-for-unsafe-floor,209577

Public Safety

ACLU asks Wisconsin Supreme Court to require warrants for license plate reader data

The ACLU of Wisconsin and the Electronic Frontier Foundation filed a petition asking the Wisconsin Supreme Court to require law enforcement to obtain a warrant before searching data collected by automatic license plate reader cameras. The petition names Green Bay, Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha as respondents. It was filed on behalf of the Wisconsin Council of Churches, which represents more than 2,000 congregations, and Green Bay pastor Melissa Pagel. The Supreme Court must first decide whether to accept the petition before the case can proceed.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Statewide) | https://fox11online.com/news/local/wi-aclu-lawsuit-asks-supreme-court-to-require-warrants-for-license-plate-reader-data

Appleton to decide on restricting license plate reader technology

Appleton's Common Council is set to consider a resolution on Wednesday, Oct. 21, that would prohibit the city's acquisition, installation, operation, use, or funding of automatic license plate reader systems. The resolution, submitted by Alderperson Adrian Stancil-Martin, carries limited exceptions for parking enforcement, access control at non-public areas, and weigh station use. Separately, the Oshkosh Common Council tabled its own license plate reader resolution after members discussed strengthening its language, with some pointing to Appleton's proposal as a model.

Source: WGBA NBC26 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://www.nbc26.com/appleton/appleton-to-decide-on-restricting-license-plate-reader-technology

Baraboo turning off Flock cameras in November

The Baraboo Common Council voted 5-3 to discontinue its Flock Safety automated license plate reader program when the one-year contract expires in November, ending a pilot funded by private donations and approved in August 2025. Ald. David Olson, Bryant Hazard, Andrea Lombard, Stephen Swallen, and Brett Topham voted to discontinue. Police Chief Justin Carloni said the six cameras provided leads on 121 cases and supported about 600 searches during the pilot. Council President Jason Kent said before the meeting that he would not support renewal, citing resident privacy concerns and uncertainty about future funding. Carloni said a move to another provider, such as Motorola, would require tax funding and interagency coordination.

Source: WiscNews (South Central) | https://wiscnews.com/news/local/article_2f81e7cd-df82-400a-96bb-e7ea03293983.html

La Crosse residents urge city to cut Flock funds

Thirteen La Crosse residents used public comment at a city council meeting to urge elimination of Flock Safety automated license plate reader spending from the next budget. Public records obtained by the La Crosse Tribune show the city entered a two-year, $42,000 contract with Flock Safety to operate eight readers through 2027, and that the La Crosse Police Department, not the council, entered the contract. The council voted to recommend a budget with no changes to license plate reader spending, though amendments remain possible before full council approval. Council member Mackenzie Mindel said she was concerned about recommending a budget that did not reflect the public input just received.

Source: La Crosse Tribune (Western) | https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/government-politics/article_fd2284bd-d396-42a7-b3f8-f89c1124114c.html

Racine's proposed budget drops Flock plate-reader funding as police consider replacement

Racine's proposed 2027 budget removes $75,000 previously allocated for Flock license plate reader cameras, following the Common Council's Sept. 15 vote to end the city's Flock Safety contract after a 30-day wind-down. Police Chief Alex Ramirez told the council Oct. 12 that the department is prepared to discuss a replacement automated license plate reader system, though no vendor or price was named. The proposed capital plan retains $80,000 in 2027 for Raven shot detection. A public hearing was scheduled for Oct. 14, with budget amendments Oct. 19 and final adoption Oct. 20.

Source: Racine County Eye (Southeastern) | https://racinecountyeye.com/2026/10/14/racine-flock-cameras-budget-replacement/

River Falls Police Department discontinuing use of Flock cameras

The River Falls Police Department will discontinue use of all nine of its Flock Safety cameras and the associated technology after an internal evaluation led to a loss of confidence in the system.

Data sharing was disabled on Oct. 9. The department will work with public works staff to physically cover all nine cameras.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/10/14/river-falls-police-department-discontinuing-use-flock-cameras/

Sun Prairie Police propose ALPR switch, resident opposition remains

Sun Prairie Police Chief Kevin Warych proposed switching the city's automated license plate reader contract from Flock Safety to Axon at the Oct. 7 Public Safety Committee meeting, after the city announced Sept. 16 that it would not renew its Flock contract. The department's nine Flock cameras expire between Dec. 31, 2026, and March 31, 2027. Warych proposed a 14-day data retention window and a commitment never to share data with federal authorities. Eight residents registered opposition in person and 20 submitted written opposition. The department has recorded 83 license plate reader-assisted investigative hits since May 2023. The committee had not voted on the Axon proposal as of publication.

Source: Sun Prairie Star (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/the_star/local_news/sun-prairie-police-propose-alpr-switch-resident-opposition-remains/article_589efa84-bb28-4406-b465-7eac7b4b6023.html

Bird rescinds electric scooter expansion proposal

Bird has withdrawn its proposal to expand electric scooter service areas in Eau Claire, citing concerns about improperly parked scooters, according to Deputy City Engineer Al Rinka. The proposal would have extended service beyond downtown, Banbury Place, and the UW-Eau Claire area while keeping the fleet at the city ordinance cap of 300 units. In September, the Waterways, Parks and Urban Forestry Commission unanimously rejected the proposal over obstruction concerns. Bird may revisit expansion after improving parking compliance. In 2026, 6,313 individuals used the service, covering more than 41,000 miles.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/local/bird-rescinds-electric-scooter-expansion-proposal/article_eac4a818-c32a-4bfc-aa6f-d1c734867fb4.html

Sun Prairie adopts ordinance regulating e-motos

The Sun Prairie Common Council adopted an updated ordinance defining and regulating e-motos as higher-powered devices distinct from e-bikes and e-scooters. Devices capable of exceeding 20 mph on motor power alone must be registered with a license and insurance to operate on roads. E-motos are banned from sidewalks, shared-use paths, and bike lanes. Helmets are required for all bicycle and e-device riders under age 18.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/10/16/sun-prairie-adopts-ordinance-regulating-e-motos/

Sussex adopts new rules for bikes, e-scooters

The Sussex Village Board approved an ordinance on Sept. 22 requiring registration and a visible license sticker for bicycles, e-bikes, electric scooters, and motor bicycles operated on village

streets, sidewalks, trails, and parks. Registration costs $10 through Dec. 31, 2026, and rises to $15 on Jan. 1, 2027, as a one-time fee. New owners must register a device within 10 days of a transfer. The ordinance also establishes operating zones and speed and safety rules that distinguish among traditional bicycles, three classes of e-bikes, electric scooters, and motor bicycles.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/news/sussex-approves-bicycle-registration/article_ed552007-e2d1-5735-b39a-cb8ebd465f3a.html

Richfield fire chief says new county EMS funding program will save smaller departments from going under

Washington County approved a $2.9 million Shared Services Grant Program that lets local fire and EMS departments access state funding through the county under a statutory levy exception while local chiefs keep operational control. Richfield Fire Chief Greg West said his department faced debt, rate increases, or a referendum without the program. Rising call volume and volunteer staffing shortages were cited as the main pressures pushing departments to seek county support.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/washington-county/richfield-fire-chief-says-new-county-ems-funding-program-will-save-smaller-departments-from-going-under

Oshkosh, town of Algoma to discuss combining fire, EMS

The City of Oshkosh and the Town of Algoma have commissioned a joint study of shared fire and EMS services and scheduled a public meeting for Thursday at 6 p.m. at the Oshkosh Seniors Center, 200 N. Campbell Rd. City Manager Rebecca Grill cited state levy limits and rising costs as drivers, noting that a joint district would provide additional levy flexibility and potential eligibility for the State Innovation Fund. No decisions on operational changes have been made. Oshkosh Fire responded to a record 10,405 calls in 2022.

Source: WLUK FOX11 Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://fox11online.com/news/local/oshkosh-town-algoma-winnebago-county-combine-fire-emergency-medical-service-meeting-discussion

Ashland County, city seek $331,000 from Enbridge-funded safety account

The Ashland County Sheriff's Office has submitted $234,726 in bills for law enforcement coverage related to the Enbridge Line 5 reroute and has received $168,418 so far from a Public Safety Escrow Account funded by Enbridge and administered by the Wisconsin Counties Association. The City of Ashland has submitted $96,344 in requests and received $40,430. The county's bills cover 535.5 deputy hours from January through August. Chief Deputy Dave Dawson reported 72 incident reports involving Line 5 calls from July 9 through Sept. 22, including two arrests referred to the district attorney for possible charges. Police Chief Brandon Marten said the city's requests covered protective equipment for large-crowd scenarios.

Source: Ashland Daily Press (Central/Northern) | https://apg-wi.com/ashland_daily_press/news/local/ashland-county-city-seek-331-000-from-enbridge-funded-safety-account/article_8559e0c1-fc80-4ade-8b83-19169a81186f.html

Dane County Sheriff pushes back on budget amendments

Dane County supervisors have proposed amendments to County Executive Melissa Agard's 2027 budget that would cut $3 million earmarked for 200 new sheriff's body cameras and eliminate three vacant deputy positions, redirecting roughly $500,000 to human services nonprofits including Urban Triage and the YWCA. Supervisor Heidi Wegleitner sponsors both amendments, and Supervisor Yogesh Chawla co-sponsored the body camera amendment, citing the need for a finalized storage and retention policy and one more public comment hearing before deployment. Sheriff Kalvin Barrett opposes both, noting the department spent more than $6.7 million on overtime in 2025, more than double its budgeted amount. The county board is expected to continue debating budget amendments in coming weeks.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/10/16/dane-county-sheriff-pushes-back-budget-amendments/

County Sheriff Supports SRO For Reedsville School District

Manitowoc County Sheriff Dan Hartwig announced that the county's 2026 budget includes funding for a school resource officer for the Reedsville School District, the first SRO placed there through the sheriff's office since 2004. The deputy will work four days a week at Reedsville and one day a week supporting county court services, then shift to patrol duties in summer. Currently only the Manitowoc and Two Rivers school districts have school resource officers placed by the county.

Source: Seehafer News (Northeastern) | https://www.seehafernews.com/2026/10/16/county-sheriff-supports-sro-for-reedsville-school-district/

Racine police budget 2027: $1M more for overtime

Racine's proposed 2027 police budget would increase the department's general fund allocation by $2.3 million, or 6.2 percent, to $39.2 million, with overtime set at $2.5 million, up $1 million from the adopted 2026 budget. The authorized sworn force stays at 196 positions; Chief Alex

Ramirez reported 183 sworn personnel on hand as of Oct. 12, with five recruits graduating in December and a new class of five starting in January. Calls for service rose 12 percent, from 45,738 to 51,228. The proposal also shifts two traffic investigator positions to police officer. Final adoption is scheduled for Oct. 20.

Source: WRJN 1400 AM Racine/Kenosha (Southeastern) | https://wrjn.com/news/2026/10/13/racine-police-budget-2027-1m-more-for-overtime

City council approves emergency procedure updates

The Tomahawk Common Council unanimously approved an ordinance Oct. 6 repealing the municipal code chapter titled "Civil Emergencies" and replacing it with a new "Emergency Management" chapter. The ordinance designates the mayor, currently Michael "Hob" E. Habeck, as local emergency management director, shifting that role from the police chief. Habeck is responsible for preparing a comprehensive emergency management plan for council approval and may appoint deputy and assistant directors subject to council confirmation. The ordinance formally adopts the Incident Command System and National Incident Management System for coordinated multi-agency response.

Source: Tomahawk Leader (Central/Northern) | https://www.tomahawkleader.com/stories/city-council-approves-emergency-procedure-updates,359278

Siting and Moratoria

How could lawmakers regulate data centers? Wisconsin Policy Forum offers options

A Wisconsin Policy Forum report examined data center development agreements in Janesville, Mount Pleasant, Port Washington, Beaver Dam, and DeForest, where three communities approved data centers and two rejected them. Forum President Jason Stein identified a conflict between tax increment financing law and levy limits that constrains how local officials can structure such deals. Options in the report include adding requirements or performance triggers to the existing state sales tax exemption on data center construction materials, a benefit Wisconsin shares with 37 other states. The report also notes a statewide shift from declining to growing electricity consumption that requires planning for new generation and transmission capacity.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Statewide) | https://www.wuwm.com/how-could-lawmakers-regulate-data-centers-wisconsin-policy-forum-offers-options

Data center zoning rules head to County Board

The Burnett County Land Use and Information Committee voted 5-0 on Oct. 6 to recommend a new I-2 Tech-Energy Industrial District ordinance to the full County Board for a vote on Oct. 15. The ordinance requires a County Board rezoning of at least 40 acres before any data center or battery energy storage facility can locate in the county. Facilities of 1 megawatt or less would be permitted by right in the district, and larger facilities would also need a conditional use permit.

Standards include 300-foot setbacks from property lines, noise limits of 55 decibels by day and 45 at night, twice-yearly groundwater and vibration testing, solar panels on 75 percent of data center roofs and parking areas, and required community benefit and decommissioning agreements. No data center application has been filed in the county.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/data-center-zoning-rules-head-to-county-board/article_d2067454-c833-4337-9e57-e8e51562dcb1.html

Wisconsin Rapids Data Center Faces Key Council Decision October 20

The Wisconsin Rapids Common Council is scheduled to vote Oct. 20 on PNK Group USA's permit application for an AI data center on about 209 acres at the Papermill Redevelopment site, 950 Fourth Avenue North, covering about 1.2 million square feet with an estimated 150 megawatts of electricity demand. The Planning Commission voted 7-0 on Sept. 16 to recommend denial, citing gaps in electrical utility approvals, staffing plans, construction traffic details, and building layouts. A 12-month data center moratorium took effect Oct. 9, but PNK Group's application predates it. PNK Group has proposed a $5.7 million Community Benefit Plan that has not been formalized as a legally binding agreement. The council meeting begins at 6 p.m. at Wisconsin Rapids Area Middle School.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (Central/Northern) | https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/10/15/wisconsin-rapids-data-center-faces-key-council-decision-october-20

Microsoft planning to build fewer data centers at sprawling Mount Pleasant campus

The Mount Pleasant Plan Commission unanimously approved an amended site plan on Oct. 14 reducing Microsoft's planned data center expansion from nine buildings to seven while increasing total building area from about 5.2 million to 5.8 million square feet. Estimated taxable value per acre fell from roughly $10 million to $7.7 million under the revised plan, which village officials attributed to more conservative projections. The village board is expected to vote on the amended plan later in October. Construction on Microsoft's second data center at the campus is expected to finish in 2028.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Southeastern) | https://www.wpr.org/news/microsoft-fewer-data-centers-sprawling-mount-pleasant-campus

Town of Beloit approves data center moratorium

The Town of Beloit Board of Supervisors voted 3-0 on Oct. 13 to approve a 12-month moratorium on data center development affecting any structure larger than 10,000 square feet. The moratorium targets the proposed "Project Cornmaze," a 2-million-square-foot hyperscale campus planned by Panattoni along Prairie Avenue in the towns of Beloit and Turtle. The moratorium can be extended by six months when it expires. The Town of Turtle scheduled a public hearing and possible vote on a similar moratorium for the following Wednesday at 6 p.m.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/local-news/town-of-beloit-approves-data-center-moratorium/article_2d54179c-5696-4c9b-9292-6c186c3d6008.html

Redner sworn in as Turtle board chair

Retired teacher Donna Redner was sworn in as Town of Turtle board chair after a recall election that removed longtime chairman Roger Anclam, who had run unopposed eight times since 2009. The recall followed disputes over the sale of the Lathers Road bridge and dealings with developers on a proposed Panattoni Development hyperscale data center of 2.1 million square feet valued at more than $1 billion. Immediately after taking office, Redner presided over a public hearing on a proposed 12-month moratorium barring developments larger than 10,000 square feet pending zoning review. No vote was taken at the hearing.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/redner-sworn-in-as-turtle-board-chair/article_cb165da6-e260-5bb3-ba7f-052353004e17.html

Hundreds gather at state Capitol seeking action on transmission line

More than 250 residents from 10 southern Wisconsin counties met with 52 lawmakers at the Capitol on Oct. 13, in an event organized by No 765 Line, to oppose the BECI 765-kilovolt transmission line proposed by Midcontinent Grid Solutions Wisconsin. The 190-mile line would cross Crawford, Columbia, Jefferson, Walworth, and Rock counties into Illinois. Organizers reported that 82 local governments have passed resolutions opposing the line or seeking review of it. Twenty-five lawmakers agreed to at least one of three requests: a bipartisan meeting by Dec. 15, an informational hearing on MISO's $21.8 billion plan, or a letter asking the PSC to hold a full public hearing on the developer's utility application. The PSC review is expected to take 12 to 18 months.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/hundreds-gather-at-state-capitol-seeking-action-on-transmission-line/article_87c89f4b-296e-5269-90ef-5ee53b60ce31.html

WASTE OR WETLANDS? What's Happening With The GFL Proposed Landfill Expansion

GFL Environmental, which bought the Seven Mile Creek Landfill in Eau Claire County in 2020, is informally pursuing a 120-acre expansion that would include withdrawing roughly 88 acres from the Eau Claire County Forest. GFL first approached County Administrator Jon Johnson in January 2026, and discussions resumed in late July. GFL says the expansion would extend the landfill's life by 12 to 15 years; the facility is in its last permitted cell. No formal offer has been made to the county or the DNR. Any land sale would require sequential approval by the County Parks and Forest Citizen Advisory Committee, county administrators, and the DNR. Johnson said his goal is to begin structured community discussions now.

Source: Volume One (Western) | https://volumeone.org/articles/2026/10/15/404875-waste-or-wetlands-whats-happening-with-the-gfl-proposed-landfill-expansion

Why can't metro Madison build enough houses for its high demand?

A Badger Institute analysis identifies land use, regulatory, and political barriers that it says prevent enough single-family home construction in the Madison metro area, where the median single-family home price reached $490,000 in the second quarter of 2026. Dane County's population of 600,000 is projected to grow by 150,000 to 275,000 by 2050. Obstacles cited include farmland preservation tax incentives and contractual penalties for early exit from state agricultural agreements, comprehensive plan boundaries that limit which parcels can be developed, and towns incorporating as villages specifically to restrict annexation. Developers and other sources cited bureaucratic processes as a primary cost driver, with some quarter-acre lots in the county priced at $250,000 to $300,000.

Source: Badger Institute (South Central) | https://www.badgerinstitute.org/why-cant-metro-madison-build-enough-houses-for-its-high-demand/

Changes made to city's loan programs

The Eau Claire City Council voted unanimously to consolidate five business loan funds into three: the Business Startup Loan Fund, the Business Expansion Loan Fund, and the EDA Revolving Loan Fund. The maximum startup loan rises from $25,000 to $35,000, and the startup interest rate rises from 4 percent to 6 percent. The council also set new underwriting fees and a $300-per-hour administrative fee for borrower-requested changes. The EDA Revolving Loan Fund remains unchanged pending possible defederalization discussions expected in late 2027. New applications are paused during the restructuring, and the city's website indicates they are expected to reopen in January.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/changes-made-to-citys-loan-programs/article_3ed6c1df-bbbc-4705-afe5-91d325cfd40f.html

Residents get first look at GM/JATCO site concepts that feature industrial use and housing

Consulting firm Stantec presented three preliminary redevelopment concepts for the roughly 250-acre former GM and JATCO sites in Janesville at a workshop of the GM/JATCO redevelopment advisory board. All three concepts place industrial use on the contaminated former GM site north of the Union Pacific tracks. Concept A features a 1.6-million-square-foot industrial building, Concept B emphasizes smaller-scale industrial and mixed-use development, and Concept C envisions a mixed-use employment district with rail-oriented industrial development on the JATCO parcel. Stantec will compile resident feedback before presenting findings to the advisory board, with a revised concept to follow.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/local/residents-get-first-look-at-gm-jatco-site-concepts-that-feature-industrial-use-and-housing/article_a745b6ca-8a46-4ab2-bbb8-41caef54de50.html

Menasha tornado recovery stalls as raze order delays hold up demolition work

Menasha's raze order process has delayed demolition of tornado-damaged homes for residents awaiting insurance payouts, because city policy gives homeowners 30 days after an order to demolish before the city acts and bills them. Community Development Director Andrew Dane said the city held off on issuing orders to avoid adding stress for residents still awaiting insurance decisions. The city issued its first raze order during the week and was processing about eight additional orders requested by residents, to be served over the following two weeks. Dane said the department has added staff and a new inspector to speed the process.

Source: WTAQ 1360 AM / 97.5 FM Green Bay (Northeastern) | https://wtaq.com/2026/10/16/menasha-tornado-recovery-stalls-as-raze-order-delays-hold-up-demolition-work/

Milwaukee Housing Authority fails to meet federal recovery requirements again, HUD letter states

HUD notified the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee, in a letter obtained by TMJ4, that the authority has failed to comply with its Recovery Agreement and Annual Contributions Contract, including missed deadlines for required unit inspections and a fiscal year 2025 financial audit. Some deadlines were missed by several months to a year. HUD designated HACM "troubled" in December 2024. HACM has until month's end to complete inspections of more than 100 units and submit its audit. If it fails to comply, HUD could assume control of HACM and take possession of all its properties. HACM's board was scheduled to meet the following week.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.tmj4.com/about-us/lighthouse/milwaukee-housing-authority-fails-to-meet-federal-recovery-requirements-again-hud-letter-states

Development narrowly approved despite concerns

The Plymouth City Council approved the final plat for the Scholar's Ridge subdivision, a 102-lot affordable home development on South Pleasant View Road, by a 5-3 vote. Concerns about the project, attributed in part to the Sheboygan County Economic Development Corp., were raised before the vote but did not prevent approval.

Source: Plymouth Review (Southeastern) | https://www.plymouth-review.com/articles/development-narrowly-approved-despite-concerns/

Superior council to consider expanding tax increment districts

The Superior Plan Commission on Oct. 13 recommended expanding two existing tax increment districts to fund downtown redevelopment and new housing. One expansion would let the city buy the former Kari Toyota site on Tower Avenue for its appraised value of about $730,000, with possible demolition, to control future land use. The second would support infrastructure for a 50-unit townhome project by Ronchi Brothers Construction, estimated as an $18 million investment. The downtown TID was created in 2019 as a 27-year district, and the housing TID was created in 2023 as a 20-year district. The City Council will consider both expansions at its Nov. 10 meeting.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/superior-council-to-consider-expanding-tax-increment-districts

Webster Mobile Home Park residents have their say

The Webster Village Board hosted an Oct. 12 meeting with about a dozen Webster Mobile Home Park residents to address continuing safety, maintenance, and code violations at the park, which is owned by Olena Investments of New Jersey. The board had withheld and then retroactively renewed Olena's operator license after a non-compliant vacant mobile home was removed. Multiple violations remain, including improperly grounded electrical meters, water leaks, and possible fire hazards. Residents pay $50 a month for yard maintenance and reported no responses from the out-of-state owner. The board said displacement of residents is not under discussion and committed to monthly reviews of the park's compliance.

Source: Burnett County Sentinel (Western) | https://burnettcountysentinel.com/news/webster-mobile-home-park-residents-have-their-say/article_5e38e73b-d4cf-4ea2-93d3-69fae6ac6098.html

Land Use and Zoning

Could some voters misunderstand GM/JATCO ballot referendum question?

Janesville's Nov. 3 ballot asks residents whether voters should have authority to approve any development project exceeding $450 million at the former GM/JATCO site. Supporters say opponents' claims that passage creates a permanent requirement are inaccurate, because under state law a direct legislation ordinance cannot be repealed or amended by the council for two years without voter approval, after which the council may act on its own. Opponents contend some voters may conflate the measure with blocking a specific data center. They also warn that the fixed $450 million threshold does not account for inflation and could subject future acceptable projects to mandatory referenda.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/could-some-voters-misunderstand-gm-jatco-ballot-referendum-question/article_d0c8990f-aaaf-48b0-a3d5-2980dff5edf8.html

Port Washington neighbors react to second rejection of housing development near Harbor Campus

Port Washington's Plan Commission voted down a revised concept plan on Oct. 15 for a 135-unit multifamily development on a vacant downtown parcel next to the Harbor Campus, the second rejection of proposals from developer Port Ventures LLC. Mayor Ted Neitzke voted no, and the motion failed for lack of a majority. Neighbors had raised concerns about traffic, flooding, groundwater, and privacy since the first proposal in February. The rejection is not binding because concept plans carry no legal finality.

Source: WTMJ 4 NBC Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/in-your-community/ozaukee-county/port-washington-neighbors-react-to-second-rejection-of-housing-development-near-harbor-campus

City of Sheboygan Extends Comprehensive Plan Timeline

The City of Sheboygan has moved Common Council consideration of its comprehensive plan from an earlier October date to the Nov. 2 council meeting. The delay follows committee approval of the plan amid objections and a request from community members for more time to provide input. Mayor Ryan Sorenson cited a need to create space for additional public dialogue. Residents are directed to contact their alders with feedback during the extension.

Source: WHBL 1330 AM Sheboygan (Southeastern) | https://whbl.com/2026/10/16/city-of-sheboygan-extends-comprehensive-plan-timeline/

Governance and Ethics

Dogs, drugs, and aloof supervisors discussed by Laf. Exec. Committee

Lafayette County's Executive Committee addressed EMS medication purchasing, the annual stray dog contract, and supervisor conduct at its most recent meeting. Interim EMS Director Jed Schultz and Lafayette Hospital CEO Marie Wamsley agreed to explore drug-purchasing options, including possible hospital discounts and renewed local pharmacy partnerships. The Green County Humane Society proposed raising its daily stray dog rate from $125 to $150 and adding stray cat services, and a newer local provider, Bones and Belly Rubs, expressed interest in supplementing capacity. The committee voted to research rules governing unannounced absences and supervisor conduct after members raised concerns about quorum risks and supervisors approaching departments outside their committee assignments.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/dogs-drugs-and-aloof-supervisors-discussed-by-laf-exec-committee/

Motion to remove Trempealeau County Board chair falls short

A special meeting of the Trempealeau County Board on Oct. 13 ended in an 8-8 tie on a motion to remove Board Chair Andy Todd, short of the majority required. Supervisors favoring removal cited transparency concerns and Todd withholding information from the full board. District 13

Supervisor Renee Lyon called the board divided and described it as not a healthy government. Todd acknowledged possible mistakes but said the concerns had not been communicated to him. Todd will continue as chair.

Source: WXOW ABC19 La Crosse (Western) | https://www.wxow.com/news/top-stories/motion-to-remove-trempealeau-county-board-chair-falls-short/article_0bc6b52e-fde4-4166-89e1-e6152028ac1b.html

Third time's the charm? City administrator back on La Crosse docket

Less than two months after the La Crosse Common Council narrowly defeated an ordinance to establish a city administrator, co-sponsors Larry Sleznikow and Aron Newberry are advancing the legislation again. Sleznikow announced the revival at a budget meeting attended by the full council and Mayor Shaundel Washington-Spivey, who maintains his opposition. The council is expected to deliberate on the ordinance in November, the third consideration of the charter change in nine months. The HR manager has estimated an administrator salary upward of $280,000 per year, though if the ordinance passes the position would not be fully paid until 2027. Funding mechanisms have not yet been presented to council members.

Source: La Crosse Tribune (Western) | https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/government-politics/article_93ae4897-3593-44a8-88ed-f92ef6632d2a.html

Women dragged out of meeting found guilty

Mid-Moraine Municipal Court Judge Christine Ohlis found Christine Le Jeune and Julianne Wanderer guilty of disorderly conduct and fined each $187 after their arrest and removal from the Dec. 3, 2025, Port Washington Common Council meeting during public comment on the Vantage Data Centers Lighthouse Campus. Ohlis ruled that Le Jeune did not comply when asked to leave and that Wanderer physically intervened. A third citation, issued to Paula Butler, was dismissed. Both defendants have 20 days to appeal.

Source: Ozaukee Press (Southeastern) | https://ozaukeepress.com/content/women-dragged-out-meeting-found-guilty

Council sends code of conduct resolution to ethics board

The Watertown Common Council voted to refer a proposed code of conduct resolution to the city's Ethics Board for review, on a motion by District 2 Ald. Jonathan Lampe seconded by District 5 Ald. Brad Blanke. The resolution, modeled on codes from Madison and Green Bay, sets conduct standards for elected and appointed officials, with sanctions ranging from informal censure and community service to fines up to $500. Several alders opposed provisions requiring mandatory mediation or counseling, arguing they lacked clear statutory authority under Wis. Stat. § 62.11(3)(e). No vote on final adoption has been scheduled.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/council-sends-code-of-conduct-resolution-to-ethics-board/article_f48573da-7ba5-4cd3-8748-e057e93b21c4.html

Elections Commission Says Federal Agents Should Not Be at Polling Places

The Wisconsin Elections Commission voted 5-1 at a special meeting to adopt guidance advising local clerks that law enforcement should not be present at polling places unless voting or responding to officials' requests. If agents arrive, the chief inspector must notify the local clerk, who contacts local counsel, the county clerk, and commission staff. Republican Commissioner Bob Spindell cast the sole dissenting vote. The guidance was adopted ahead of the Nov. 3 election, during which some voting rights groups have raised concerns about possible ICE or DHS presence at polls. Wisconsin elections are administered by about 1,800 local clerks reporting to 72 county clerks.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Statewide) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/10/16/elections-commission-says-federal-agents-should-not-be-at-polling-places/

Wisconsin Elections Commission says it's ready for November 3rd election day turnout

The Wisconsin Elections Commission briefed local clerks ahead of the Nov. 3 election, projecting about 2.6 million voters across more than 3,600 polling places staffed by more than 30,000 poll workers. Marathon County Clerk Kim Trueblood reported that absentee ballot requests in Marathon County are down 35 percent from the previous comparable election.

Source: WAOW ABC9 Wausau (Statewide) | https://www.waow.com/news/wisconsin-elections-commission-says-its-ready-for-november-3rd-election-day-turnout/article_9869be85-6159-436d-9b01-f7e1a2253a9d.html

"This incident will not shake us": Election officials undeterred after suspicious mail deemed 'non-hazardous'

A suspicious piece of mail addressed to the Wisconsin Elections Commission was tested and confirmed non-hazardous after a commission staff member identified it as potentially matching suspicious mail received in other states. No injuries were reported. The FBI and other agencies are investigating. Commission Administrator Meagan Wolfe said the incident will not affect administration of the Nov. 3 general election, and the agency republished a safe mail handling memo to local clerks.

Source: WKBT CBS8 La Crosse (Statewide) | https://www.news8000.com/news/politics/elections/this-incident-will-not-shake-us-election-officials-undeterred-after-suspicious-mail-deemed-non-hazardous/article_b675748c-d11c-497a-8745-d4333508ed2a.html

Who runs Racine County's voting machines? What the records show

Public records reviewed by Racine County Eye show that Command Central of St. Cloud, Minnesota, sells, services, and supports Racine County's voting equipment under contract, but no record gives the company authority to operate polling places, count ballots, or administer elections. County Clerk Wendy M. Christensen confirmed the company is a service vendor and

called claims that it runs elections inaccurate. Records confirm the county's Dominion tabulators use external modems connected after polls close. Who holds or can access tabulator passwords remains unresolved; officials say the county sets them but did not confirm whether the vendor can access them.

Source: WRJN 1400 AM Racine/Kenosha (Southeastern) | https://wrjn.com/news/2026/10/12/who-runs-racine-countys-voting-machines-what-the-records-show

EC City Council resolution affirms confidence in local election process

The Eau Claire City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to approve a non-binding resolution affirming confidence in the city's election officials and processes ahead of the Nov. 3 general election. Council Members Joshua Miller and Clara Serrano sponsored the resolution in response to constituent concerns about election integrity. The resolution is not expected to change how elections are conducted in Eau Claire.

Source: Leader-Telegram (Western) | https://www.leadertelegram.com/news/ec-city-council-resolution-affirms-confidence-in-local-election-process/article_abc133bc-fe83-40e9-86e7-d54c76022452.html

Wisconsin Rapids Alderman Faces October 27 Recall Election

Wisconsin Rapids District 7 Alderperson Michael Timm will face challenger Rusty Brown in an Oct. 27 recall election. The city certified a recall petition Sept. 18, and the Common Council voted Sept. 23 to schedule the election. The recall follows allegations that Timm used his office to pressure Hotel Mead Resort over its sale of "No Data Center" signs opposing PNK Group USA's AI data center proposal. Timm denies wrongdoing. The winner will serve the remainder of the District 7 term, which expires in April 2027.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (Central/Northern) | https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/10/15/wisconsin-rapids-alderman-faces-october-27-recall-election

Village of Marshall installs absentee ballot drop box for voters

The Village of Marshall installed a permanent absentee ballot drop box bolted outside village hall, purchased with a $2,000 election security grant. The box, manufactured by Inclusion Solutions of Evanston, Illinois, a vendor endorsed by the Wisconsin Elections Commission, is covered by exterior security cameras. Village Clerk Brandon Gingher said the drop box allows voters to submit ballots at any hour and that its opening will be sealed with a metal plate when no election is in progress.

Source: Sun Prairie Star (South Central) | https://hngnews.com/the_star/local_news/village-of-marshall-installs-absentee-ballot-drop-box-for-voters/article_abb76e04-a824-40d9-80d5-92ef1683d49e.html

How much will a new Lafayette Co. nursing home cost taxpayers?

Lafayette County's proposed $45.5 million referendum to replace Lafayette Manor carries different cost implications depending on how it is financed. A standard 20-year governmental bond would require about $5 million in annual payments, a near-50 percent increase on the county's current $10.4 million levy, adding about $237 a year to the tax bill on a $100,000 home. A 40-year USDA Community Facilities loan at 4.625 percent would reduce annual payments to about $2.47 million, or about $117 a year per $100,000 home. Lafayette Manor is projected to end 2026 with a profit and require no levy subsidy. The county placed the question on the fall ballot partly to show voter support ahead of a spring federal budget review of USDA loan applications.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/how-much-will-a-new-lafayette-co-nursing-home-cost-taxpayers/

First info meeting on Lafayette Manor held in Belmont

Lafayette County held the first of several October public informational meetings in Belmont on its $45.5 million referendum to build a new 50-bed nursing home on the former Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County site, replacing the 1961 Lafayette Manor building. Economic Development Director Allison Taylor noted the facility currently operates without levy support after regaining a two-star Veterans Administration rating. County Board Chair Jack Sauer said outside firms approached about taking over operations have consistently refused to guarantee that licensed beds would remain in the county. A companion four-year referendum question would shift any Manor costs off the general levy.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/first-info-meeting-on-lafayette-manor-held-in-belmont/

Dane County shelters strain as homelessness keeps climbing

The Salvation Army of Dane County's single-women shelter, the county's only such facility, served 128 women on a recent night, compared with 65 to 75 three years ago, and averages 110 a night in a 140-bed building. The family shelter, with capacity for 36, keeps a waiting list of 40 to 60 families. The Salvation Army is pursuing a new facility with 157 beds for single women plus expanded family emergency shelter, eyeing the west-side YMCA site. Dane County Executive Melissa Agard's proposed budget includes just over $2 million for the project, adding to $13 million already raised. The construction timeline depends on the YMCA vacating the site after its Fitchburg facility opens, expected in early 2028.

Source: WMTV NBC15 Madison (South Central) | https://www.wmtv15news.com/2026/10/17/dane-county-shelters-strain-homelessness-keeps-climbing/

Five potential measles cases reported in Rock County

The Rock County Public Health Department has identified five probable measles cases, all within a single family, with no established link to the ongoing southwest Wisconsin outbreak and no identified public exposure locations. Laboratory confirmation is pending; the cases meet the CDC definition of probable based on symptoms. As of Oct. 12, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services had recorded 267 cases statewide, only two of them among vaccinated individuals. The department is urging residents to verify vaccination status through the Wisconsin Immunization Registry and offers assistance to uninsured or underinsured residents at 608-757-5440.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/five-potential-measles-cases-reported-in-rock-county/article_739e27c3-fa2f-472d-abe7-4f050b0bf12b.html

Milwaukee anti-poverty agency has just $2,770 in cash left as financial crisis deepens

Milwaukee's Social Development Commission disclosed that it holds $2,770 in cash and faces a preliminary 2026 net deficit of about $3.5 million, with its board considering bankruptcy. Board members Pam Fendt and Richard Diaz resigned Tuesday, and United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County and the Milwaukee Area Labor Council each said they will not nominate replacements. Jorge Franco was reelected board chair and serves concurrently as interim CEO. SDC has been shut down since April 2024 and is seeking to reapply for the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program as a step toward restoring services.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Southeastern) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/milwaukee-sdc-social-development-commission-financial-crisis-board-resignations-deficit-anti-poverty-agency/

New Racine library social services program provides free help

The Racine Public Library has launched a social services program offering free, walk-in, one-on-one assistance from social worker Ashley Cedeño on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Services include housing referrals, food pantry lists, mental health referrals, employment assistance, and free bus passes. The library plans to renovate its social services space, expand dedicated social worker hours, and host community partner organizations in that space.

Source: WITI FOX6 Milwaukee (Southeastern) | https://www.fox6now.com/news/racine-library-social-services-program

School Districts

Greenfield school referenda: What to know about the 2 questions ahead of Nov. 3 vote

Greenfield voters will decide two school referenda totaling $55 million on Nov. 3. The first is a $20 million operational referendum, $5 million a year for four years from 2027-28 through 2030-31, that extends a 2022 referendum and would not increase current tax rates. The second is a $35 million facilities bond for HVAC, security, parking, and performing arts upgrades that would raise

property taxes by $9 per $100,000 of assessed value. The Greenfield School District enrolls about 3,300 students. Early in-person absentee voting begins Oct. 20 at Greenfield City Hall.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Southeastern) | https://www.wuwm.com/greenfield-school-referenda-what-to-know

Janesville School District lobbies on operational referendum in run up to Nov. 3 election

Janesville School District Superintendent Mark Holzman told the City Council that failure of the district's $98 million, four-year operational referendum on the Nov. 3 ballot would require about $14.5 million in staff reductions, eliminating roughly 145 of the district's 1,500 employees. The district faces an $18.5 million budget gap that it attributes to the state's frozen funding model, sustained cost inflation, and declining enrollment, now below 9,000 students. Washington Elementary, flooded with five feet of water in April and closed for at least two years, is a candidate for permanent closure if the referendum fails and enrollment keeps falling. Forward Janesville has endorsed the referendum.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-school-district-lobbies-on-operational-referendum-in-run-up-to-nov-3-election/article_c98a16b0-9b17-4a6f-acc3-7373fe40415b.html

Washburn schools ask voters for $4.8M after three years of cuts

The School District of Washburn will ask voters Nov. 3 to approve a $4.8 million operating referendum over four years, starting at $900,000 in the current school year and rising to $1.5 million in 2029-30. The estimated first-year property tax impact is $123 per $100,000 of assessed value. The district has already cut $450,000, reduced bus routes from five to four, and cut its 4K program from five days to three. Enrollment has dropped about 90 students since 2021-22. A separate $14.43 million building referendum passed in November 2024. If the operating referendum fails, the district projects a $700,000 shortfall this school year.

Source: Ashland Daily Press (Central/Northern) | https://apg-wi.com/ashland_daily_press/news/local/washburn-schools-ask-voters-for-4-8m-after-three-years-of-cuts/article_ac4a2208-89b9-480e-9f23-a1ad0a7d0dc2.html

Whitefish Bay School District referendum: What to know ahead of Nov. 3 vote

Whitefish Bay voters will decide Nov. 3 on a $90 million facilities bond to rebuild the middle school on its current site and upgrade infrastructure and fire protection systems at the high school and two elementary schools. The school board unanimously approved placing the question on the ballot Aug. 19, after an April referendum for $135 million failed by about 300 votes. The revised question lowers the property tax increase from $260 to $125 per $100,000 of fair market value, an average increase of $857 on the district's average home value of $685,800. In-person absentee voting begins Oct. 20 at Village Hall.

Source: WUWM 89.7 Milwaukee Public Radio (Southeastern) | https://www.wuwm.com/whitefish-bay-school-district-referendum-what-to-know

Beloit reports another sharp drop in enrollment

The School District of Beloit reported 2026-27 enrollment of 4,471 students, down 231 students, or 4.9 percent, from the prior year and continuing a decline from 7,488 students in 2014. Net open enrollment loss reached 869 students, with 955 opting out and 86 opting in. The board has begun preliminary discussions on school configuration options that could close two to four additional buildings. The district is seeking buyers for the former Wright Elementary School and holds three offers on the property.

Source: Beloit Daily News (South Central) | https://www.beloitdailynews.com/news/education/beloit-reports-another-sharp-drop-in-enrollment/article_8d10d6b5-cbda-4d6c-875e-c4311c5b366c.html

Janesville School District sees another sharp decline in enrollment

Janesville School District's third-Friday enrollment count for fall 2026 was 8,876 students, down 222 from the prior year and below 9,000 for the first time. The district's preschool program, P4J, fell to 456 students across 15 sites, down about 10 percent from 506. Net open enrollment showed a loss of 41 students, with 62 departing to Milton, 47 to the Wisconsin Virtual Academy, and 31 to Edgerton. The state uses third-Friday enrollment data to calculate district funding.

Source: Janesville Gazette (South Central) | https://www.gazettextra.com/news/janesville-school-district-sees-another-sharp-decline-in-enrollment/article_464c5b9a-c8ad-40fc-8f4f-f3a00909ba30.html

Third Friday count: WUSD enrollment falls by 201 students

Watertown Unified School District's September 2026 third-Friday enrollment count was 2,642, down 201 students from 2,843 in 2025. DPI set 2026-27 general aid for the district at $26,874,516, a decrease of $976,973, or 3.51 percent, from $27,851,489 the prior year. Interim Superintendent James Feil said sustained enrollment loss creates excess classroom space and higher per-pupil costs. A second enrollment count is scheduled for January 2027.

Source: Watertown Daily Times (South Central) | https://www.wdtimes.com/news/local/third-friday-count-wusd-enrollment-falls-by-201-students/article_1eb2834c-b0e4-48b1-8fdf-0a0c2833fbf7.html

62% of Wisconsin schools to receive a drop in state aid

The Department of Public Instruction's general aid figures show 62 percent of the state's 421 school districts receiving a decrease from the prior year. The Altoona School District's allocation fell from more than $15 million to $12.8 million, a 14.6 percent decrease, while the Eau Claire Area School District received a nearly 5 percent increase. In total, DPI's calculation shifted $113 million across Wisconsin school districts. Decreases in general aid require local taxpayers to cover the gap through higher property taxes.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Western) | https://www.weau.com/2026/10/15/altoona-school-district-receives-near-15-cut-state-funding/

Southern Wisconsin school leaders and legislative candidates gather to discuss public education funding

A coalition of 20 southern Wisconsin school districts representing more than 40,000 students held a public school funding forum at Evansville High School on Oct. 9, attended by 12 state legislative candidates from seven districts and both parties. More than 40 candidates were invited; attendees included Sen. Mark Spreitzer, Rep. Jenna Jacobson, and Rep. Clinton Anderson. Discussion centered on inflationary cost increases and special education reimbursement shortfalls. The coalition formed after a failed Monroe referendum and aims to advance state-level funding solutions rather than repeated local ballot measures.

Source: Monroe Times (South Central) | https://themonroetimes.com/local-election-coverage/southern-wisconsin-school-leaders-and-legislative-candidates-gather-to-discuss-public-education-funding/

Majority calls for re-election of Antigo School Board officers

Five of nine Antigo Board of Education members, Clerk Mike Parizek, Jean Adams, Melissa Cornelius, Randy Myers, and Danny Nicholson, signed an Oct. 4 letter requesting a special meeting to remove and re-elect board officers. They said current officers Danny Pyeatt, president, Kristen Mattmiller, vice president, and Jill Mattek-Nelson, treasurer, were elected before the full nine-member board was seated and lack majority support. The majority cited Wis. Stat. § 17.13(1), which it said allows removal of appointive officers by majority vote. The special meeting agenda also included items to clarify the district's role, funding authority, and closure authority over the Clara R. McKenna Aquatic Center.

Source: Antigo Daily Journal (Central/Northern) | https://www.antigojournal.com/news/majority-calls-for-re-election-of-antigo-school-board-officers/article_1051a0c7-7c75-4917-848d-f71a890c861e.html

Pewaukee school board member faces criticism over absences

Pewaukee School Board member Mary Larson has accumulated 14 absences from regular board meetings since October 2024, including five consecutive absences through Oct. 12, according to district records. The board agreed by unanimous consensus at its Sept. 28 meeting to send Larson a letter encouraging her resignation if she cannot fulfill her duties. Board members receive $4,000 a year, and the district has no policy setting penalties for excessive absences. A policy committee including Superintendent Mike Cady and Board President Bren Sawall is drafting language to address absenteeism. Larson, reelected in April 2026 to a term ending in 2029, declined to explain her absences or say whether she would resign.

Source: Waukesha Freeman (Southeastern) | https://www.gmtoday.com/the_freeman/news/pewaukee-board-member-absences/article_88b2820d-7a23-5866-8b7c-c52bbfa14fe3.html

Amery board OKs Clubhouse tuition hikes, delays staffing vote

The Amery Board of Education approved two rounds of tuition increases at a special meeting Oct. 7 for The Clubhouse Childcare, which ran a $526,619 deficit in 2025-26, up from $369,276 the prior year, after the Department of Public Instruction directed the district to end general fund

subsidies. Weekly infant rates rise from $220 to $235 on Nov. 1 and to $250 on Feb. 1, with comparable increases for other age groups. Changes to staff tuition terms are projected to generate $24,480 to $31,500 in added revenue, and the tuition measures together are expected to add about $82,780 this year. A proposal to move 12 assistant teachers below 30 hours, ending health insurance for roughly half of full-time staff and saving an estimated $195,072 a year, was postponed to a special meeting in early November, with no date set.

Source: Amery Free Press (Western) | https://theameryfreepress.com/news/amery-board-oks-clubhouse-tuition-hikes-delays-staffing-vote/article_20b438e7-79aa-4bdc-b311-530bae0b2c97.html

Haugen parents urge school board to consider what's best for kids

Three Haugen Elementary School parents presented a five-year alternative plan to the Rice Lake Area Board of Education at its Oct. 12 meeting and challenged the board's consideration of closing the school. Parent Kortney Nanstad cited a reported $2.4 million deficit in the district's Fund 10 operating fund and questioned whether closing the school would address the broader financial problem. Parents said they had spent six months submitting public records requests, organizing community support, and developing enrollment strategies, including letters of intent to attract new students. They asked the board to conduct a full district-wide financial analysis and consider alternatives before making a closure decision. Board discussion followed the presentation.

Source: Rice Lake Chronotype (Western) | https://apg-wi.com/rice_lake_chronotype/news/education/haugen-parents-urge-school-board-to-consider-what-s-best-for-kids/article_8a861233-1761-4dd1-92ae-fe65afb48dac.html

Superior School Board debates restrictions on school posters

The Superior School District Board of Education postponed approval of a proposed policy update that would limit district-sponsored club communications, including flyers and posters, to the club's name, meeting date, time, and location, subject to administrative approval. The language came from Neola, a private policy consulting firm. Advisers and board members raised free speech and student creativity concerns, and board member Laura Gapske questioned possible First Amendment implications. District Administrator Amy Starzecki said state law does not require the policy but that it is recommended because of past issues in other states. The board directed staff to gather input from principals and neighboring districts and bring examples of current and proposed posters to a future meeting.

Source: Superior Telegram (Western) | https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/superior-school-board-debates-restrictions-on-school-posters

Wisconsin PSC opens formal review of BECI transmission line developer's utility application

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin opened a Class 1 contested-case proceeding Oct. 15 in PSC Docket 2708-NC-100 to determine whether Midcontinent Grid Solutions Wisconsin, LLC may operate as an electric public utility and receive an exemption from state utility holding-company laws. The company is the developer of the proposed 765-kilovolt Bell Center-Columbia-Sugar Creek-Illinois transmission line. Residents, landowners, local governments, and organizations have until Oct. 29 to request formal intervention. A separate construction approval application is expected in early 2027. State Rep. Tony Kurtz raised concerns about the requested exemptions, and lawmakers including Brad Pfaff, Sarah Keyeski, Tara Johnson, and Travis Tranel sent letters asking the PSC for a full public hearing.

Source: WFHR 1320 AM Wisconsin Rapids (Statewide) | https://www.wfhr.com/news/2026/10/17/wisconsin-psc-opens-formal-review-of-beci-transmission-line-developers-utility-application

Billion-dollar natural gas plant projects passed by Wisconsin regulators

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin approved certificates of public convenience and necessity for two natural gas plants: the 1,120-megawatt Red Oak Ridge Energy Center in Paris, Kenosha County, and the 324-megawatt Foundry Ridge Energy Center in Darien, Walworth County. We Energies plans to acquire both, with Red Oak Ridge priced at $1.7 billion and the combined acquisition exceeding $2.2 billion. Red Oak Ridge is targeted to come online by early 2030, with up to 500 peak construction jobs. PSC Chair Summer Strand said the current statutory framework limits the commission's authority to consider air pollution impacts and called the deficiencies ripe for legislative action.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Statewide) | https://dailyreporter.com/2026/10/16/wisconsin-regulators-approve-billion-dollar-natural-gas-plants/

Gov. Evers announces end of fiscal year highlights

Wisconsin ended fiscal year 2026 with a general fund balance of more than $3.3 billion, about $350 million above budgeted estimates, according to the State Controller's Office. The Budget Stabilization Fund reached about $2.07 billion, the largest in state history and an increase of more than $1.75 billion since the end of fiscal year 2018. General fund tax collections grew 3.4 percent over the prior year and came in 2 percent above estimates.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Statewide) | https://www.weau.com/2026/10/15/gov-evers-announces-end-fiscal-year-highlights/

Gov. Evers, WisDOT announce over $152M in quarterly transportation aid payments to improve local roads statewide

WisDOT delivered $152,117,468.33 in fourth-quarter 2026 transportation aid on Oct. 5, completing more than $570 million in General Transportation, Connecting Highway, and Expressway Policing Aid payments for the calendar year. The fourth-quarter disbursement included $142,602,691.98 in General Transportation Aids to local governments, $4,258,801.35 in Connecting Highway Aids to 116 eligible municipalities, and $5,255,975 in Expressway Policing Aids to Milwaukee County. Green County received $231,583.69 and Lafayette County $138,221.78 in General Transportation Aids. The City of Monroe received $206,095.15 in General Transportation Aids and $16,967.52 in Connecting Highway Aids.

Source: Monroe Times (Statewide) | https://themonroetimes.com/local-news/gov-evers-wisdot-announce-over-152m-in-quarterly-transportation-aid-payments-to-improve-local-roads-statewide/

Two-thirds of Wisconsin schools will see decline in state aid

The Department of Public Instruction reported that 261 school districts, or 62 percent, will receive less general state aid in 2026-27 than in 2025-26, while 151 will receive more and nine will see no change. Total general school aid remains flat at $5.58 billion for the third consecutive year. The Madison School District faces a $7 million decline, a 14.2 percent decrease, which the district said it anticipated in the preliminary budget the School Board approved in June. Charter schools and choice programs will receive $438.8 million in general state aid for 2026-27. State Superintendent Jill Underly called on lawmakers in September to reform the school funding formula.

Source: La Crosse Tribune (Statewide) | https://lacrossetribune.com/news/state-regional/wisconsin/article_18fc7ba9-884e-5e12-b57e-686c02101a6b.html

Use of NDAs for Wisconsin data centers wider than previously known

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. signed at least five nondisclosure agreements with AI data center developers, in some cases keeping projects from public view for up to 23 months. Three of the WEDC agreements cover projects in communities that had no local secrecy pact, bringing the number of Wisconsin data center projects that used NDAs to at least eight. WEDC said NDAs are necessary to protect the competitive nature of pending economic development projects. State Rep. Clint Moses, R-Menomonie, said he will expand his pending legislation banning data center NDAs to include WEDC when he reintroduces it in January.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/wisconsin-data-centers-ndas-nondisclosure-agreements-wider-than-previously-known-wedc-economic-development/

What to know about Wisconsin's 3 statewide ballot questions

Wisconsin voters will decide three constitutional amendments on the Nov. 3 ballot. Question 1 would bar the governor from using partial veto authority to create or increase any tax or fee, a response to Gov. Evers' 2023 budget veto extending a school funding provision from 2024 to 2425.

Question 2 would prohibit the state or any political subdivision from ordering the closure of, or forbidding gatherings at, places of worship during a state of emergency, including a public health emergency. Question 3 would create Article I, Section 27, prohibiting governmental entities from discriminating or granting preferential treatment based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, education, contracting, or administration. Each amendment passed two consecutive legislative sessions before reaching voters.

Source: WEAU NBC13 Eau Claire (Statewide) | https://www.weau.com/2026/10/16/what-know-about-wisconsins-3-statewide-ballot-questions/

Wisconsin officials can count ballots that arrive late if officials make errors, judge rules

Dane County Circuit Judge Everett Mitchell ruled that ballots in a municipality's possession by 8 p.m. on Election Day, but delayed in reaching polling places because of election official error, must be counted. The case involved 23 Madison ballots held by the city before the April election that did not reach the polls by the 8 p.m. deadline. The Wisconsin Elections Commission had ordered that those ballots not be counted before Mitchell reversed that order in May. Mitchell said the decision does not extend deadlines for voters responsible for late ballot returns.

Source: Wisconsin Watch (Statewide) | https://wisconsinwatch.org/2026/10/wisconsin-election-officials-can-count-late-ballots-officials-errors-judge-ruling/

What's new in Wisconsin TIF: Key changes under Acts 173 and 235

Two recent Wisconsin statutes update tax incremental financing for residential development. Act 173 doubles the affordable housing TIF extension from one year to two and, effective Jan. 1, 2028, defines newly platted residential development to clarify project eligibility. Act 235, which took effect earlier in October, creates a new Residential TID type that permits newly platted residential development without the 35 percent area cap that applies in mixed-use districts. Municipalities, developers, and their advisers will need to assess whether proposed projects qualify under the Residential TID structure and review updated valuation thresholds, eligible cost limits, and procedural requirements.

Source: The Daily Reporter (Statewide) | https://dailyreporter.com/2026/10/16/wisconsin-updates-tax-incremental-financing-residential-tifs/

DNR issues Enbridge notice of violation over Line 5 reroute

The Wisconsin DNR issued a formal notice of violation to Enbridge on Oct. 13 alleging 35 permit and environmental law violations between late March and September during construction of the 41-mile Line 5 reroute around the Bad River reservation. The violations include two instances of unpermitted construction activity, nine erosion and sediment control failures, 18 unauthorized wetland and waterway impacts, and at least five discharges of drilling fluid into Bad River tributaries. An Aug. 25 natural gas spill released 1.3 million gallons. The DNR has called Enbridge

to an enforcement conference later this month and may refer the case to the Wisconsin DOJ for further fines and legal action.

Source: WJFW NBC12 Rhinelander (Statewide) | https://www.wjfw.com/news/local/dnr-issues-enbridge-notice-of-violation-over-line-5-reroute/article_3517d845-6ad0-470f-8bc0-9bcd57338548.html

FEMA Disaster Recovery Center opens Monday in Menasha

A FEMA Disaster Recovery Center will open Oct. 19 at UW-Fox, 1655 University Drive in Menasha, serving residents and businesses affected by the July 27 tornado under a federal major disaster declaration issued Oct. 7. The Menasha center will remain open at least 30 days. A second temporary center will operate at the Grand Chute Fire Department, 2250 Grand Chute Boulevard, from Oct. 26 through Oct. 31. FEMA Individual Assistance applications are due Dec. 7 and can be submitted at DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling 1-800-621-3362.

Source: WHBY 1150 AM Appleton (Statewide) | https://www.whby.com/2026/10/16/186054/

Wisconsin Wins $218 Million Grant To Extend Hiawatha To Madison

The Federal Railroad Administration awarded $218 million through its CRISI program to the Hiawatha West project, covering about 80 percent of the $273 million total cost. Wisconsin must provide $54.5 million in matching funds plus an estimated $2.5 million annual operating subsidy. The project would extend two of Amtrak's seven daily Hiawatha round trips from Milwaukee to Madison, with stops in Pewaukee and Watertown, and is projected to generate 260,000 additional passenger trips and $46.3 million in annual economic impact. Infrastructure work includes replacing 11 of 26 corridor bridges, upgrading 52 of 61 road crossings, and building three temporary passenger stations. Amtrak identified 2029 as a best-case opening, pending environmental review, final engineering, and construction coordination.

Source: Urban Milwaukee (Statewide) | https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2026/10/16/wisconsin-wins-218-million-grant-to-extend-hiawatha-to-madison/

New juvenile facility step toward end of juvenile prisons in Lincoln County

The opening of the Southeast Regional Care Center for Youth in Milwaukee County advances the state's long-standing goal of closing Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Schools in Lincoln County, which Wisconsin Act 185 mandated after a 2015 raid found systemic problems. Gov. Tony Evers marked the opening as a step toward modernizing corrections and moving youth closer to family and community support systems. The Lincoln County facilities are to transition to adult prisons once enough new regional juvenile capacity comes online statewide.

Source: WXPR 91.7 FM Rhinelander (Statewide) | https://www.wxpr.org/wisconsin-news/2026-10-15/new-juvenile-facility-step-toward-end-of-juvenile-prisons-in-lincoln-county

Wisconsin DOJ reaches $245K settlement with CAFO over manure pollution

The Wisconsin Department of Justice reached a $245,000 settlement with Central Sands Dairy, a now-closed concentrated animal feeding operation in Nekoosa, Juneau County, over manure

pollution violations between 2017 and 2023. Groundwater monitoring wells exceeded state ammonia standards on at least 22 days during that period, and the farm over-applied nitrogen from 2019 to 2023 and exceeded phosphorus levels. Juneau County Circuit Court Judge Paul S. Curran signed the settlement Oct. 5. Central Sands must abandon its waste storage facilities by July 1, 2027, at an estimated cost of $315,000.

Source: WPR News Madison (Statewide) (Statewide) | https://www.wpr.org/news/wisconsin-doj-reaches-245k-settlement-with-cafo-over-manure-pollution

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