

Wisconsin Towns Association

August 2025



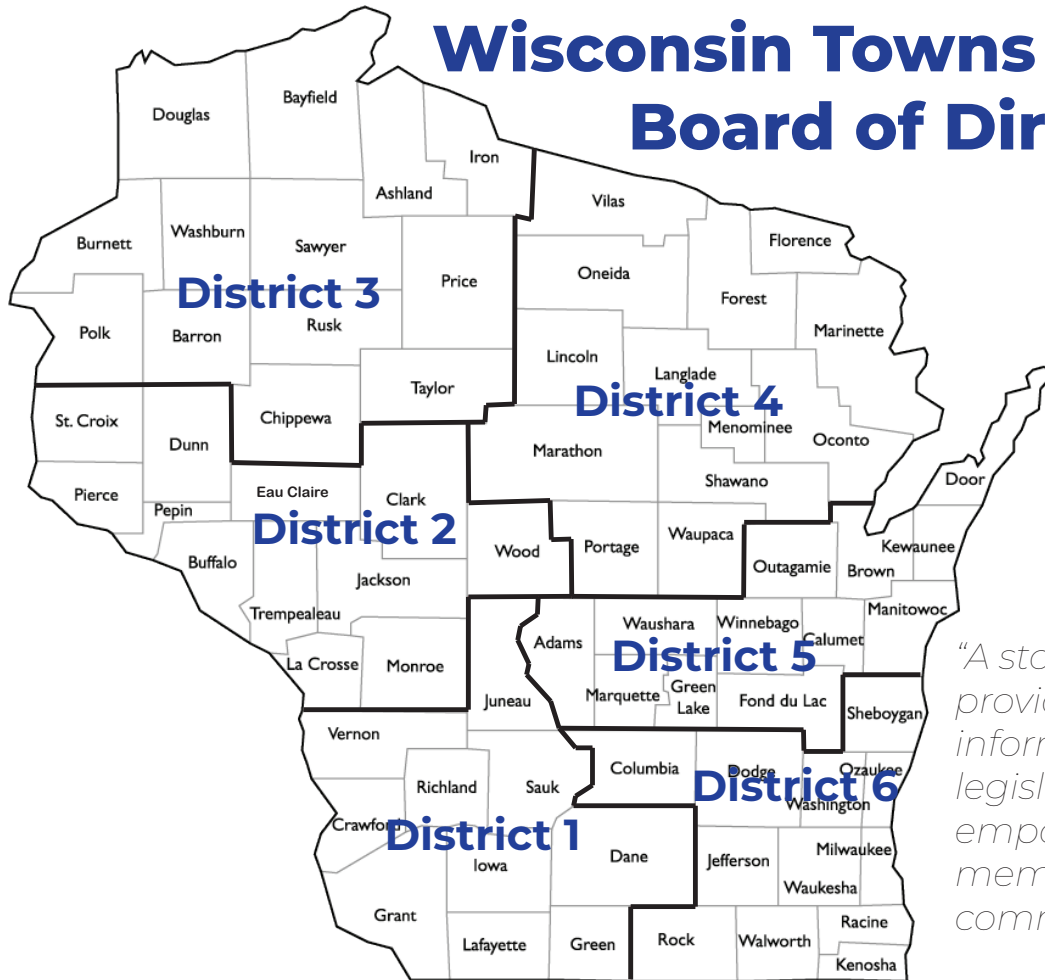
W7686 County Road MMM
Shawano, WI 54166

Website: www.wisctowns.com

Email: wtowns@wisctowns.com

Phone: 715-526-3157

Wisconsin Towns Association Board of Directors



"A statewide association providing education, legal information and grassroots legislative advocacy to empower and inspire our members to lead in their communities."



Betty Manson
District 1
608-462-5034



Jack Herricks
District 2
608-487-3094



Steve Dickinsen
District 2
715-533-3360



Jeneene Rydberg
District 3
651-428-6935



Dale Houdek
District 3
715-339-3307



Jackie Beyer
District 4
920-250-0949



Brad Wyss
District 4
715-701-1833



Lee Engelbrecht
District 5
920-755-4042



John Piechowski
District 5
920-566-2855



Sharon Lear
District 6
262-968-3166



Tom Winker
District 6
262-224-6691



Volume 450

President

Tom Winker
Belgium, Ozaukee Co.
hkwwink@hotmail.com

Vice President

Dale Houdek
Emery, Price Co.
dalehoudek@gmail.com

Secretary

Betty Manson
Plymouth, Juneau Co.
toply@centurytel.net

Executive Director

Mike Koles
wtowns@wisctowns.com

The publication *Wisconsin Towns* is published by the Wisconsin Towns Association at W7686 Co. Rd. MMM, Shawano WI 54166
715.526.3157
Third Class Postage Paid at Shawano, WI

Wisconsin Towns

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Empowering Town Officials

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



By
Mike Koles

Town Advocacy Council Paying Big Dividends

My daughter is entering her junior year of college and has chosen to add a second major (finance) to her original major (marketing) while continuing to minor in Spanish. At risk of sounding like the prototypical proud Dad, I will say that when she makes time for the old man, that it is awfully cool to have adult conversations with her on items like P/E ratios, dividends, return on investment, etc. It seems like only yesterday we were talking about Dora the Explorer and Mickey Mouse!

As part of a recent class activity, she chose to mock invest in a company that has a 10.1% ten-year average dividend. Even if there is never a stock price increase, a dividend this high over a decade is certainly impressive. If it was your money, would you be happy with that? Most of us would.

What if your overall return on investment was a thousand percent or even tens of thousands? Of course, anyone in their right mind would be elated.

Well, that's exactly what has happened for WTA members. With the adoption of the most recent state budget, the conclusion of the current biennium will find that towns have had a direct injection of nearly \$1.2 billion resulting from association advocacy efforts from 2015 - 2027. Please see Joe's article summarizing a number of significant 2025-27 budget victories for town and village governments. Compared to regular WTA dues changes during that 12-year period, the return on investment for WTA members is 21,941%. If you invested \$1 in the stock market and got \$21,941 back, would you be happy? Furthermore, an additional \$522 million has been made available

to towns (and others), but we can't accurately identify how much actually benefitted towns.

While a 21,941% return compared to regular dues changes is a good metric, it is imperfect because regular dues has been used for much more than legislative advocacy. It has been used to offer health insurance for the first time (starting in 2019), add an attorney and outreach specialist to keep up with increased legal hotline and educational demand, and start up the recent clerk outreach program.

In reality, a vast majority of legislative advocacy is funded separately through voluntary membership in the Town Advocacy Council (TAC). The more perfect way to measure return is to consider your own town's TAC investment compared to what you have received in direct additional state funding.

If your town has not chosen to invest in TAC (only one-third have not), then your return on investment is off the charts because you invested nothing and received a ton. If you're in that boat, I encourage you to consider investing...or at least thanking a TAC member for helping you. We have a lot of new town board members. If you don't know if you're a TAC member, just ask your clerk or call Sandy Wanta in the office and she'll let you know.

The town I live in (Scandinavia) has been a perennial TAC member. TAC dues is only \$0.25 per person of population and has not changed in 39 years. For the Town of Scandinavia, over the period of 2015 to 2027, that will come out to approximately \$3,129 of TAC dues.

If we look at **only** their increased general transportation aids over the 12-year period, the Town of Scandinavia gained \$286,321.20, a 9,151% return. Now, if they were benefitted by any of the other road investments like LRIP (especially Supplemental), ARIP, STP-Local, additional bridge money, aid limitation adjustment, etc., then their road-only return on investment would be even higher.

Over 100 laws that WTA has advocated for have been signed into law in the last decade. All have included important policy changes. Some have resulted in cost savings for towns, such as, the elimination of some pricey publication requirements. Many have helped produce the aforementioned \$1.2 billion impact. Let's look at just one more for the Town of Scandinavia – shared revenue.

Previous to the shared revenue changes in 2023, the Town of Scandinavia received \$15,261 in shared revenue. In 2024, they received an additional \$47,676. By the end of 2027, that number will jump to nearly \$200,000 more. Combined with only their GTA increases, the total return on only those two items is \$483K, producing a 15,423% return on investment.

So, what's my point?

Well, only 1 town is not a member of WTA (we'll get them one day). The Board would like to say the same about TAC. I do believe the TAC Executive Committee, Ambassadors, and staff team has made a compelling case for each town and village in Wisconsin to be a TAC member. If you are not and would like to become an active part of a winning team, you can simply have your clerk request the same information that was sent to your town in March.

CLASSIFIEDS

Town of Perry, Dane County



The Town of Perry, Dane County, is offering for sale a 2013 Model Western Star Dump Truck, equipped with 11-foot Universal plow, 9-foot Universal side wing, a Swenson tailgate spreader with 9-inch auger and extreme discharge and heavy-duty hitchplate. 62,000 miles. Contact Town Patrolman at 608-444-6242 or eastman2012@hotmail.com

The Town of Perry reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to accept the bid most advantageous to the Town.

\$25/month. Email wtowns@wiscitowns.com for complete details.



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✉ Dan: hwype@wwt.net

✉ Mark: hiwaymark@gmail.com

✉ Gary: hwygaryk@gmail.com

✉ Emmer: emmer.w.shields@gmail.com



Short-Term Rental Regulations--Review and Update

Q. We are receiving questions and complaints from residents about people using their properties as short-term rentals. Is there a state law about regulating short-term rentals?

A. In recent years, many property owners have decided to pursue the idea of renting out their homes, cabins, and other investment properties for overnight stays to the general public. In 2017, a state law was passed addressing the regulation of short-term rentals. The key provisions of that law are laid out below:

- 1) A political subdivision may not enact or enforce an ordinance that prohibits the rental of a residential dwelling for 7 (seven) consecutive days or longer. Wis. Stat. § 66.1014(2)(a). The inability to ban short-term rentals of 7 days or longer appears to apply regardless of any zoning classification and, therefore, the local government cannot ban these rentals in any part of the municipality. Proceed with caution if you want to require a conditional use permit for short-term rentals as such a permit cannot be overly restrictive and effectively ban certain dwellings from being used for short-term rentals in violation of state law.
- 2) If a residential dwelling is rented for periods of more than 6 but fewer than 30 consecutive days, a political subdivision may limit the total number of days within any consecutive 365-day period that the dwelling may be rented to no fewer than 180 days. The political subdivision may not specify the season(s) during which the residential dwelling may be rented, but the political subdivision may require that the maximum number of allowable rental days within a 365-day period must run consecutively. A person who rents their residential dwelling must notify the clerk of the political subdivision in writing when the first rental within a 365-day period begins. Wis. Stat. § 66.1014(2)(d).
- 3) Any person who maintains, manages, or operates a short-term rental for more than 10 nights each year must obtain a local license for conducting such activities, if a political subdivision enacts an ordinance requiring such a person to obtain a license. Wis. Stat. § 66.1014(2)(d)2b. They would also need to obtain a tourist rooming house license from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture and Consumer Protection.
- 4) Under the law, a “short-term rental” is defined as a residential dwelling that is offered for rent for a fee and for fewer than 30 consecutive days. Wis. Stat. § 66.1014(1)(c).
- 5) The room tax statute makes it clear that “lodging marketplaces” (such as an online 3rd party rental platform like Airbnb or VRBO and other entities, like property management companies that rent short-term rentals for the owner) and owners of short-term rentals must collect room tax and forward such amounts to the municipality if there is a local room tax ordinance in place. Wis. Stat. § 66.0615(1m)a. Towns with a room tax should review their room tax ordinances and amend them, if necessary, to make sure that lodging marketplaces and owners of short-term rentals are included in the definitions of who is subject to the ordinance.

Q. If our town has concerns about short-term rentals, are we still able to pass regulations to address the board's concerns and complaints we are getting from the neighbors?

A. People staying in short-term rentals, like any other person in the town, would be required to comply with noise ordinances, parking regulations, and other generally applicable local ordinances your town may already have in place. The short-term rental law also provides that political subdivisions may enact ordinances regulating the rental of a residential dwelling in a manner that is not inconsistent with the provisions of the statute. Wis. Stat. § 66.1014(2)(c). So, your town or village board might decide to establish an ordinance with additional regulations owners of short-term rentals must comply with and require them to obtain a local rental license or permit. In doing so, think carefully about what legal authority your board has to establish such regulations. Notably, if your town has been authorized to exercise village powers under Wis. Stat. § 60.10(2)(c), your board may wish to consider whether there are any public health, safety, or welfare type concerns created by short-term rentals and whether reasonable local regulations are needed to address such concerns. For example, communities with village powers might consider adopting public health and safety provisions that do the following:

1. Prohibit the use of temporary lodging (like tents) on the property in a way that allows the property to have more overnight guests than would otherwise be allowed under the property's tourist rooming house license. For example, if the tourist rooming house license allows the property to safely accommodate up to 12 overnight guests, your ordinance might prohibit the use of additional tents on the property to accommodate overnight guests beyond the allowable number.
2. Require that there be a named property manager or other agent available by phone in case the town, emergency services, or members of law enforcement need to get ahold of that person.
3. Require building and fire code inspection and compliance with all state and county building codes and regulations.
4. Require proof of appropriate insurance for the short-term rental.
5. Require all guests to register and that records be kept with names, addresses and dates of rental. The town might also require that records be kept on the amount of consideration paid for the rental if a room tax ordinance is in place.
6. Require the dwelling to have adequate parking available for those using the property at a given time.

Note that any restrictions or conditions must be reasonable and not so restrictive as to amount to an illegal prohibition on short-term rentals. A sample short-term rental ordinance is available on the WTA website.

Q. Given the wording of Wis. Stat. § 66.1014, can our town or village adopt an ordinance prohibiting short-term rentals of 6 days or less?

A. If you establish this restriction under your town *zoning* ordinance, maybe. In 2019, the Village of Summit adopted an ordinance using its police powers to regulate vacation rental establishments in the Village. Included in the ordinance were provisions that 1) required the rental establishment to obtain an annual license from the Village; 2) required that each rental establishment require its guests to sign a log with their legal names and addresses; and 3) prohibited rental of a residential dwelling for six (6) consecutive days or fewer. Wildwood Estate, LLC sued the Village arguing that, among other things, the ordinance was void and unenforceable because it was actually a zoning ordinance and the Village had

failed to follow the required procedures in adopting a zoning ordinance. In Wildwood Estate, LLC v. Village of Summit, No. 2024AP178, unpublished slip opinion, (WI App July 9, 2025), recommended for publication, the Wisconsin Court of Appeals held that although the ordinance applied throughout the entire Village and did not divide the Village into multiple districts, “it makes certain use of the land—namely short-term rentals for periods shorter than six days—prohibited”. Id. ¶ 31. Further, the Court found that this provision of the ordinance amounted to a zoning regulation because it allowed *no* 6-day or less short-term rentals to take place in the Village and was not a regulation about *how* short-term rentals take place. Id. In addition, the Court was concerned that since short-term rentals (of 6-days or less) had been legal in the Village prior to passage of the ordinance, the new ordinance effectively resulted in a change to Wildwood’s permitted uses of its property. ¶ 32. For its part, the Village asserted that its ordinance did not violate Wis. Stat. § 66.1014. However, the Court determined that this was not relevant in deciding the question of whether the ordinance was actually a zoning ordinance. Because the Court found that the ordinance was a zoning ordinance and that the Village had failed to follow the proper procedures to enact a valid zoning amendment, the ordinance was declared void and unenforceable. ¶¶ 37-38. For those towns that have adopted short-term rental ordinances relying on village powers as their authority to regulate to protect the public health, safety or general welfare (rather than local zoning authority), now would be a good time to re-examine your ordinance and determine whether any of its provisions might be construed as an improper land use restriction and amend the ordinance, if necessary. As of the writing of this article, the Village still has time to petition for review of this decision. Should this decision be overturned in the future, we will be sure to write a follow-up article.

Q. Our town is thinking of including a provision in our short-term rental permitting ordinance that would require that the short-term rental property be the “primary residence” of the applicant. Is this allowable?

A. Most likely not. In 2022, the Wisconsin Realtors Association sued the City of Neenah over its Tourist Housing Ordinance which included such a provision. In a recent decision, the Wisconsin Court of Appeals ruled that the explicit language of Wis. Stat. § 66.1014 indicates that a local government cannot prohibit the short-term rental of “any” buildings that are “residential dwellings” and that the City’s ordinance was therefore preempted by state law and thus void. Wisconsin Realtors Association, Inc. v. City of Neenah, No. 2024AP994, unpublished slip opinion, ¶15 (WI App July 9, 2025), recommended for publication. The City also still has time to decide whether to petition for review of this decision.

Q. Does our town or village have to regulate short-term rentals?

A. No, if your town does not have concerns about short-term rentals, you may find there is no need to regulate them locally. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) must license “tourist rooming houses” which would include any short-term rental that operates for more than 10 nights per year. When a license application is submitted to them, they assign a sanitarian to inspect the business. The sanitarian will check for building safety issues (clear exits, door locks, fire extinguishers, recent private well test, etc.) and other public health concerns (facility cleanliness, proper linen and towel handling, size of sleeping rooms, garbage disposal, etc.) So, your town or village board may decide that little or no additional regulation is needed.



Fall Workshops September 2025



Join us to learn about budgeting, levy limits, financial procedures, tax bills, EMS funding, capital improvement planning, town road safety, and more!

Tuesday, 9/9: Barneveld, Deer Valley Lodge
Wednesday, 9/10: Fond du Lac, Prairie Theater
Thursday, 9/11: Green Bay, Rock Garden

Monday, 9/15: Stevens Point, Holiday Inn
Tuesday, 9/16: Eau Claire, Florian Gardens
Wednesday, 9/17: Cable, Lakewoods Resort
Thursday, 9/18: Rhinelander, The Pines

Monday – Thursday, 9/22 – 9/25: Webinars

All workshop registrants will receive access to recordings of the presentations. Register on the Wisconsin Towns Association website, wisctowns.com, or by mail.

2025 Fall Town & Village Workshops

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Budget and Levy Adoption Procedures

Carol Nawrocki and Lara Carlson, Wisconsin Towns Association

Learn the step-by-step procedures required to hold your town or village's budget public hearing, adopt a final budget and make amendments to it, set your total property tax levy, and exceed your allowable levy limit.

Municipal Levy Limit Worksheet Reporting

Andrea Newman Wilfong and Frank Bozich, WI Department of Revenue (DOR)

Join staff from the DOR's State and Local Finance Division for a walkthrough and discussion of Wisconsin's levy limit law, with a focus on reviewing key lines of the 2025 Municipal Levy Limit Worksheet. This session equips attendees with a deeper understanding of the worksheet, shares helpful filing tips, and highlights available resources.

Closing the Books: Year-end Duties for Clerks & Treasurers

Melissa Kono, Wisconsin Towns Association / Local Government Education

This presentation will cover several end of year responsibilities, including an overview of how to complete the Statement of Taxes report and best practices for financial reconciliation for clerks and treasurers.

Building Your Tax Bill

Karl Green, Local Government Education

This course will examine who contributes to your local tax bill, handling special assessments, best practices for tax collection, the tax apportionment process, and how to calculate your municipal mill rate. Participants will walk through the steps to create a tax bill, based on sample levy limit worksheet information.

Useful Local Government Financial Procedures

Jake Langenhahn, Wisconsin Towns Association

Does your town or village have a policy for reimbursing officers? Or an alternative claims procedure ordinance to allow certain bills to be paid in advance of board meetings? This session will review useful financial procedures for local governments, where to find sample policies and ordinances in the Wisconsin Town Law Forms, and steps for adoption.

Capital Improvement Planning for Local Units of Government

Karl Green, Local Government Education

An introduction to Capital Improvement Planning (CIP), a critical process for local governments to strategically manage their long-term infrastructure and asset investments. You'll gain knowledge and tools to develop, implement, and monitor an effective CIP that aligns with community goals and provides transparency to the public.

Bringing Effective Leadership Skills Into the Town Boardroom

Bill Oemichen and Daniel Foth, Local Government Education

Build core leadership skills in the context of specific needs of effective town government, including team building and group decision making, change management and conflict resolution, and effective communication strategies.

Improving Town Road Safety Using the Safe System Approach

Andi Bill and Ben Jordan, Wisconsin Local Technical Assistance Program

The Safe System Approach (SSA) integrates engineering solutions with behavioral countermeasures to create a road safety strategy aimed at eliminating fatalities and serious injuries. The SSA recognizes that human errors are inevitable and emphasizes creating a transportation system that is resilient to these errors. Review examples of how the SSA can be implemented on a town road system and discuss the challenges and opportunities in applying this in rural areas.

Legislative Update

Mike Koles and Joe Ruth, Wisconsin Towns Association

WTA staff will provide an update on recent legislative changes and an explanation of what those changes mean for your town or village. With a focus on the 2025-27 state budget, this presentation will highlight changes in state aid and help

town and village officials remain compliant with state law.

Navigating the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Funding Maze

Bill Oemichen, Local Government Education

This program will focus on efforts being made by local units of government and EMS providers to ensure local EMS services are adequately funded at a time of greater demand, rapidly rising costs, and decreased voluntarism. We'll examine efforts across Wisconsin to fund EMS services through the county tax levy, as well as current studies of local EMS funding options being financed by the State Collaboration Grant Program.

IN-PERSON WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Clerks and Treasurers		General Topics	
8:00 - 8:30 a.m.	Registration	8:00 - 8:30 a.m.	Registration
8:30 - 9:30 a.m.	Budget and Levy Adoption Procedures	8:30 - 9:30 a.m.	Capital Improvement Planning
9:30 - 11:00 a.m.	Municipal Levy Limit Worksheet Reporting	9:30 - 10:30 a.m.	Effective Leadership Skills
11:00 - 11:15 a.m.	Break	10:30 - 10:45 a.m.	Break
11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.	Year-end Clerk and Treasurer Duties	10:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.	Improving Town Road Safety
12:15 - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch	12:15 - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.	Building Your Tax Bill	1:00 - 2:00 p.m.	Legislative Update
2:00 - 2:15 p.m.	Break	2:00 - 2:15 p.m.	Break
2:15 - 3:00 p.m.	Local Government Financial Procedures	2:15 - 3:00 p.m.	Navigating the EMS Funding Maze
3:00 p.m.	Evaluations / Adjourn	3:00 p.m.	Evaluations / Adjourn

LIVE WEBINAR / TELECONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Monday, 9/22	9:00 - 10:00 a.m.	Legislative Update
	10:15 - 11:45 a.m.	Improving Town Road Safety
Tuesday, 9/23	1:00 - 2:00 p.m.	Capital Improvement Planning
	2:00 - 2:45 p.m.	Navigating the EMS Funding Maze
	3:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Effective Leadership Skills
Wednesday, 9/24	9:00 - 10:00 a.m.	Budget and Levy Adoption Procedures
	10:15 - 11:45 a.m.	Municipal Levy Limit Worksheet Reporting
Thursday, 9/25	1:00 - 2:00 p.m.	Year-end Clerk and Treasurer Duties
	2:00 - 2:45 p.m.	Local Government Financial Procedures
	3:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Building Your Tax Bill

2025 FALL WORKSHOPS REGISTRATION FORM

All registrants (including in-person attendees) will receive access to the live webinar presentations, as well as on-demand access to recordings of each session. **Limited printed materials will be provided to in-person attendees; copies of PPT slides and materials for virtual attendees will be provided on the WTA website.** Registered attendees will receive an email (at the email address you provide below) with information about how to join the webinars and how to access the materials and recordings on the website. **AN EMAIL IS REQUIRED FOR REGISTRATION.** **If you plan to attend the webinars via telephone, the phone number from which you will be calling is also required.**

Name _____ Office _____
Town _____ County _____
Mailing Address _____
City/State _____ ZIP _____
Telephone (**REQUIRED for teleconference access**) _____
Email (**REQUIRED**) _____

I plan to attend the following workshop (please check one):

- ☐ Tuesday, September 9: Barneveld – Deer Valley Lodge
- ☐ Wednesday, September 10: Fond du Lac – Prairie Theater and Event Center
- ☐ Thursday, September 11: Green Bay – Rock Garden
- ☐ Monday, September 15: Stevens Point – Holiday Inn
- ☐ Tuesday, September 16: Eau Claire – Florian Gardens
- ☐ Wednesday, September 17: Cable – Lakewoods Resort
- ☐ Thursday, September 18: Rhinelander – The Pines Event Center
- ☐ Virtual Programming Only (Live Webinars Sept. 22 – 25 + On-Demand Access to Recorded Presentations)

FEE: \$70 – Early registration (**payment must be received at least 10 days in advance of the workshop date**)
\$85 – Late registrations and walk-in registrations

Cancellations received 10 days or more in advance of the workshop date will receive a full refund, less a \$15.00 administrative fee. Cancellations received less than 10 days in advance will be charged a \$15.00 administrative fee plus the cost of the meal. Refund requests submitted 30 or more days after the event will not be processed.

If you are or have recently felt ill or have been in contact with someone that is ill, please stay home! Contact the WTA office to either cancel your registration as explained above or change your registration to “Virtual Programming Only.”

This form should be copied for multiple registrations. Make checks payable to the Wisconsin Towns Association and mail along with registration forms to:

Wisconsin Towns Association; W7686 County Road MMM; Shawano, WI 54166.

If you plan to attend virtual programming only, please return your registration form(s) and check(s) to the WTA office by Wednesday, September 17, 2025 to ensure you receive information about where to download materials and how to connect to the live webinar/teleconference sessions in a timely fashion.

Registration and payment may also be submitted online on the WTA website, www.wisctowns.com. A \$2.65 credit card processing convenience fee will be added for payments made via credit card.

Questions? Please email wtowns@wisctowns.com or call (715) 526-3157.



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Fence Viewing and Fence Disputes

Q. When is a boundary line fence between two properties legally required?

A. State law requires the respective occupants of adjoining lands to share responsibility for maintaining a boundary line fence whenever one of the adjoining properties is used for “farming or grazing purposes.” See Wis. Stat. § 90.03. However, neighbors may agree not to have a fence or may agree to different fencing arrangements than those outlined in the statutes. For example, neighbors may agree to use boundary line markers instead of a fence or assign one neighbor responsibility for maintaining more of the fence than the other. If a fence agreement is written down, signed by both neighboring property owners and two witnesses, and filed in the clerk’s office, the agreement is considered binding on both current property owners and future owners until a new fence agreement is made, per § 90.05(1). In contrast, past *oral* agreements are not binding on current property owners.

Q. When are municipalities required to intervene in fence disputes as fence viewers?

A. If neighbors cannot agree on how to construct or maintain a partition fence, either party may request that two or more town or village board members act as “fence viewers” to resolve the dispute. See Wis. Stats. §§ 90.07 and 90.10. The board members who will act as fence viewers must give each neighbor at least 8 days’ written notice, by service of a summons or by registered mail, of the date and time when they will visit to inspect the properties. The fence viewers must determine whether a fence is required by law, or whether an existing fence has been adequately maintained according to statutory requirements. If action is required, the fence viewers must draft a written determination dividing responsibility for the fence.

Whenever practicable, fence viewers should assign responsibility for a fence so that each person, standing on their own property and facing their neighbor’s property, is responsible for the half of the fence on their right and the neighbor is responsible for the half on the left. Wis. Stat. § 90.07(3). The fence viewers’ written determination must assign a reasonable timeline (considering the circumstances, weather, etc.) for each neighbor to build or repair their assigned sections of the fence. Finally, the document must be filed in the town clerk’s office. As with fence agreements drafted by the neighbors themselves, the fence viewers’ written determination binds current and future property owners to build and maintain the fence in accordance with its terms, until another determination is made. Sample documents for this process are in the Wisconsin Town Law Forms.

Q. What happens if one neighbor refuses to construct or maintain their share of the fence?

A. If one neighbor refuses or neglects to complete the work by the assigned deadline, the other neighbor may finish the job and then ask two or more board members to act as fence viewers for the purpose of

assessing the value of the extra work performed. See Wis. Stat. § 90.11. The fence viewers must again provide 8 days' notice to each neighbor by summons or registered mail prior to visiting the site. If the fence viewers find the fence sufficient, they must give a certificate to the neighbor who built or repaired the fence, indicating the amount of expense they think is fair to cover the cost of completing the delinquent neighbor's share of the work, as well as the amount of fence viewer fees charged for this second viewing.

The landowner who built or repaired the fence may then demand payment of the certified expenses and fees from the delinquent neighbor. If that person fails to pay within one month, the amount of expenses and fees, together with 1% interest per month, are treated as a special charge and lien against their property. The neighbor who did the work may file the fence viewers' certificate with the clerk to obtain reimbursement from the municipal treasury. The clerk then places the amount paid, with interest, on the next tax roll as a special charge against the delinquent neighbor's property.

Q. What fees can fence viewers charge for their services?

A. Fence viewers may charge fees for daily employment (at a rate set by the town or village board), mileage, and any costs associated with sending the required notices and drafting the written determination. See Wis. Stat. § 90.15. Fees are generally split equally between property owners, except that a delinquent party is liable for all viewing fees incurred due to their failure to timely complete required work (see above). Fence viewers may collect double the amount of fees and costs due from an individual who fails to pay the required fees within 30 days after the fence viewers' services were performed.

Q. Can fence viewers resolve disputes over the *location* of a property line?

A. No, fence viewers do *not* have any authority to intervene in boundary disputes. If neighbors disagree about the proper location of the property line, they must settle the matter privately.

Q. Is a town or village required to pay for fences bordering land owned by the municipality?

A. The fence laws outlined in Chapter 90 of the state statutes *may* apply if one of the neighbors involved is a municipality, but only if both parties *agree* that it applies. See Wis. Stat. § 90.035 and 55 *Op. Atty. Gen.* 177 (1966). Therefore, a town or village would not be subject to fencing requirements unless the board voluntarily agreed to assume such responsibility.

Q. What is considered a legal fence? Are there minimum specifications for fence construction?

A. Fences may consist of rails, boards, wires, or walls (or a combination of these). In general, fences must be 50 inches high with the bottom not more than 4 inches off the ground, though different specifications apply to electric, barbed wire, and high tensile fences. Detailed requirements are outlined in Wis. Stat. § 90.02. Electric fences are only permitted if both neighbors agree in writing. A brook, river, or other water source that divides two properties may be considered a sufficient fence. However, if a fence is necessary, but water would make its construction impracticable along the true boundary line, fence viewers can assign the fence to be built on either side or alternating sides of the water. Wis. Stat. § 90.09.

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Convention

Kalahari Resort

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October 12 - 14, 2025

Looking for an opportunity to gain more in-depth knowledge about your role as a municipal official? Our annual convention is filled with exciting opportunities to network with your peers, learn from experienced educators, become acquainted with state agency staff, and enjoy some time away. Mark your calendar and come spend some quality time with us this October!

Sunday October 12th

Registration will be open from 1:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. The exhibitor area will open at 1:00 p.m. Come meet, learn from, and build relationships with vendors and companies that provide products and services of interest to towns. Highlights of the afternoon will include projection of the Green Bay Packer game on the big screen in the Exhibitor Area along with complimentary beer, soda, and snacks during the game. If you are lucky, you might even win a prize at half-time! Dinner is on your own Sunday evening.

Sunday Evening

Curious about Clerk College? WTa Clerk Specialist Melissa Kono will be meeting with the current Clerk College participants and anyone interested in learning more about Clerk College and educational options for Town Clerks.

Monday October 13th

Breakfast will be served in the General Assembly Area from 6:45 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. for those attendees who pre-registered for the buffet on their convention registration form. **The cost for breakfast is \$33.00 per person and is not included in the general convention registration fee.** Breakfast will include fresh cut fruit, muffins, breakfast breads, fruit-filled Danish, scrambled eggs, smoked bacon, turkey sausage links, breakfast potatoes, orange juice, apple juice, coffee, and tea.

There will be a general assembly from 8:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. We'll be having two keynote speakers this year! First, Sam Toles, former Chief Content Officer of Bleacher Report and a former City Council Member, will present, **"From Chaos to Connection: Transforming Social Media In Your Town"**. This special presentation will transform the way you think about social media. Discover the secrets behind the data to unlocking a more positive, proactive communications approach. Learn how to handle your STPs—the "same ten or twenty people" who often stir up chaos for Towns like yours in the comments and community groups. Next, Paul Mellor, a Communications graduate of Western Carolina University, will present, **"Memory Power"**.

Continued...

In today's business world, having the ability to remember names and faces, beat absent-mindedness, and recall facts and figures puts you at the head of the pack. In this interactive session you'll learn time-tested techniques for recalling names, speaking without notes, and gaining control of your day without the fear of forgetting. When you're skilled in memory all your other skills get better. This program shows how!

Workshops will begin at 11:00 a.m. and run through 4:45 p.m. Join us for lunch at noon while we enjoy roasted pork loin, green beans, carrots and onions, new potatoes, and rolls.

Monday Afternoon Exhibitor Reception

There will be a reception in the exhibitor area with complimentary beer, soda, and snacks for all registered attendees. Note that the exhibitors will close down at the end of the day Monday and they will **not** be present on Tuesday. Be sure to visit the exhibitors on Sunday and Monday to complete the Scavenger Hunt game card which you will need in order to enter the prize drawings to be held on Monday night. Deposit your completed game card into one of the designated boxes in the Exhibitor Area by 5:00 p.m. Winners will be announced after the awards banquet.

Monday Evening Banquet

The annual banquet and awards ceremony will be held on Monday night of the convention with doors opening at 6:00 p.m.

Long-standing town officers will be recognized for their service. To receive this recognition, please mark your registration form accordingly and indicate you will be attending the banquet. We will also be awarding the WTA, Scott Construction, and Rural Mutual Insurance Scholarships to the essay contest winners.

The banquet is an optional event which will feature a buffet dinner at a cost of \$45 per person and this cost is not included in the general registration fee. The dinner buffet will feature roasted chicken and pot roast, salad, rolls, chef's vegetable, starch, and mini dessert buffet. (Spouses and guests are also welcome to attend the banquet at a cost of **\$45 per person**).

Monday Night Entertainment

All registered convention attendees are invited to join us for the "Neil Tribute and Nostalgia" show featuring tribute artist, Eric Diamond, following the banquet. Eric has been wowing crowds not only with his spot-on vocal performance of Neil Diamond's biggest hits, but also his tributes to artists like Johnny Cash, John Cougar Mellencamp, and the nostalgic "one-hit-wonders" of the 60s and 70s. So, grab a drink, find a seat, and listen to your favorites. Enjoy complimentary beer, soda, and snacks. You won't want to miss out on the FUN!

Visit the exhibitors on Sunday and Monday to complete your Scavenger Hunt game card which you will need to enter the Monday night prize drawing. Before the music starts, we'll be announcing the winners. Good luck!

Tuesday October 14th

On Tuesday morning breakfast will be served from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. as an optional event for \$33.00 per person for those attendees who pre-registered on their convention registration form. The breakfast will consist of fresh-cut fruit, muffins, breakfast breads, fruit-filled Danish, orange juice, apple juice, coffee, tea, scrambled eggs, smoked bacon, turkey sausage links, and roasted red bliss potatoes. After you have enjoyed breakfast, get ready to learn with a variety of workshops that begin at 8:30 a.m. and conclude at 12:00 noon in time for a taco buffet lunch featuring chips and salsa, ground beef, soft tortillas, borrracho beans, shredded cheese, chopped tomatoes, lettuce, and sour cream.

Tuesday BINGO

Registered spouses and guests are invited to join us for BINGO at 10:00am. Cash prizes will be awarded.

Workshop Schedule and Topics

Please Note: There will be a three-hour long election training class provided by the Wisconsin Elections Commission on Tuesday. Please indicate on the registration form if you plan to attend the **Election Training** so that we can accurately gauge the number of attendees and plan accordingly.

Workshops are scheduled for both Monday and Tuesday. Many have one hour time slots and will be repeated a second time. Some of the workshops will be presented only once, as noted.

Monday: 11:00 a.m. - Noon
(Repeated 1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.)

1. Clerk Cracker Barrel: Join us for an informal question and answer session on clerk topics. Presented by WTA Clerk Specialist Melissa Kono and other WTA Staff.

2. Taking Action: Adopting and Enforcing Local Ordinances: Ordinances can be used for a variety of purposes, and it's important for local government officials to understand the steps necessary to ensure that the local regulations they adopt will be fully legal and enforceable. This session will answer common questions about when and how ordinances can be used, how to draft and format ordinances, procedures required to adopt various types of ordinances, how ordinances can be amended or repealed, notice requirements related to ordinances, and how to set up a system for ordinance enforcement. Presented by WTA Legal Counsel Lara Carlson.

3. 2% Fire Dues Self-Certification: In this session, clerks will learn what the fire dues certification is and receive a live start to finish demo of the complete 2% Fire Dues self-certification process. Presented by Sarah Brown, Operations Program Associate & NFIRS State Program Manager and Aaron Andre, District 2 Fire Coordinator, Fire Prevention/Safety and Health Program, Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services.

4. Does your community need a RESET in Planning for Large-Scale Renewable Energy Installations?: Over the past five years, Wisconsin has seen large-scale renewable energy and battery storage projects built or approved in 22 counties, and it is projected that large-scale renewable energy will occupy approximately 3% of Wisconsin's harvested cropland by 2050.

RESET (Renewable Energy Siting & Engagement for Tomorrow) is a UW-Madison Extension program that helps local governments and communities plan for large-scale renewable energy projects. RESET offers tools and resources to help communities understand and engage in the siting process based on community priorities, and develop agreements and ordinances based on community input. Although the Public Service Commission has the permitting authority for projects of 100 megawatts or larger, local governments and communities can still provide input during the process. Large renewable energy projects also provide a significant revenue stream for local governments. Join this session to learn how RESET's education and engagement can benefit your community! Presented by Jessy Bradish, MA/MBA, Renewable Energy Specialist, University of Wisconsin, Division of Extension and Diane Mayerfield, Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator, UW-Madison Extension.

5. DSPS Delegation Program for Residential and Commercial Construction: This presentation will provide an overview of the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) delegation program. We will discuss which permitting, plan review, and inspection responsibilities the municipality has by default, and which are delegated to the municipality by DSPS. The presentation will include a walk-through of the delegation request process, requirements and conditions of a delegated municipality, and offer time for Q&A. Presented by Etta Strey, Industry Services, WI DSPS.

Monday 2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. (Repeated 3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. except for Leveraging Generative AI which is a two-hour session and will not be repeated)

1. . Legal Cracker Barrel: Join WTA legal staff for an informal question and answer session on any town topic. This is always a popular session with convention attendees and we encourage you to bring your questions!

2. Local Government and Social Media: Social media's ability to efficiently communicate information to the public has prompted many towns and villages to create social media accounts. While this can make the work of local government easier, social media webpages can create many issues such as, public records retention, the creation of online public forums, etc. This session will explore these issues so that attendees will gain a better understanding of how to manage their social media pages. Towns and villages who are considering creating a social media page are encouraged to attend. Presented by: Jake Langenhahn, WTA Outreach Specialist.

3. Cemeteries Come to Life!: Cemetery management has long been a challenge for Towns. It's a big responsibility. Not only are cemetery records often kept in old record books that may be falling apart or getting harder to read, but there are also questions such as how many burials are in a cemetery, who is buried where, or how many plots are still available for purchase? The use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) can assist in not only knowing where individual plots and grave sites are located but also help preserve records for years to come. This session will discuss and demonstrate the benefits of converting cemetery records into a GIS format and the capabilities that come with having an all-in-one system to search for records and help manage your Town's cemetery. Presented by Nicole Barbiaux, GIS Coordinator and Ken Jaworski, Director, Cedar Corporation.

4. Leveraging Generative AI (Artificial Intelligence) for Local Government—A Practical Introduction: Economist Richard Baldwin, speaking at the 2023 World Economic Forum's Growth Summit, stated "AI won't take your job, it's somebody using AI that will take your job." This course will introduce government leaders and employees to practical uses of generative AI in their work to help them prepare for a future in which AI use is expected and integrated into our daily lives. We'll cover what generative AI is, how to use it responsibly, some common pitfalls to avoid, and gain hands-on experience using freely available commercial AI chatbots. This session will focus on the human-centered implications of AI, as articulated in the UW-Madison RISE AI initiative. This is a two-hour session. In the first hour (2:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.) we will cover understanding AI and responsible use of the technology and in the second hour (3:45 p.m.-4:45 p.m.) we will cover practical applications and provide hands-on practice. Presented by educators from Extension's Local Government Education Program, Extension's Office of Digital Solutions and from U.W.-Madison's Data Sciences Institute.

5. Recycling Rule Revision--Changes for Responsible Units (RUs): DNR staff have been working on revisions to the administrative code that oversees Responsible Units' (RUs) Effective Recycling Programs and other aspects of the Recycling program. After over three years of development, public comment and approvals, the rule revisions became effective on July 1, 2025. This session will go over changes for RUs as a result of the code revision including: RU education, collection requirements, recycling ordinance modifications/multi-family recycling, elimination of a pounds/person collection standard, changes for haulers and Material Recovery Facilities (MFRs) that affect RUs. Presented by Jennifer Semrau, Waste Reduction and Diversion Coordinator, WI DNR.

Monday 3:45 p.m. until conclusion

The Town Advocacy Council (TAC) will hold its Annual Meeting. Learn more about WTA's Town Advocacy Council and its efforts advocating for towns and villages in Madison. From listening sessions to Capitol Day, TAC has been essential in WTA's efforts to secure a plethora of recent legislative victories. The TAC annual meeting is your opportunity to engage with WTA's lobbying team and better understand how WTA navigates the legislative issues important to your community. TAC will also elect three board members to its Executive Board during this meeting. All town and village officials are welcome to attend the annual meeting, although voting will be limited to current TAC member towns and villages

Tuesday 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Election Training (will not be repeated)

Elections 2026: Preparing for the Year Ahead: This session will be a high-level overview of things to keep in mind in a general election year. From the basics like Photo ID vs. Proof of Residence to the more complex like the new judicial privacy law processes, WEC staff will cover a wide range of pertinent information to help clerks and other election officials get back in the election mindset. This session will count for 3 hours of recertification training for clerks. Please note on the registration form that you plan to attend this session.

Tuesday 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. (Repeated 9:45 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.)

1. Frequently Asked Questions About Roads: Managing your highway infrastructure is a core responsibility for town officials. Learn the basics and nuances of town road creation, abandonment, speed limits, and more. Presented by Joe Ruth, WTA Government Affairs Director.

2. WISLR 101--A Brief Overview: WISLR is a useful tool for decision making and managing roads. WisDOT staff will cover helpful features in WISLR for local governments and answer questions along the way.

3. Improving Highway Safety at Railroad Crossings: Participants will learn about the Office of the Commissioner of Railroads processes related to improving railroad safety across Wisconsin. The presentation will provide an overview of general railroad safety principles, the OCR's role and decision-making processes, and how towns, railroads, and state agencies share responsibilities at public railroad crossings. Attendees will hear about the Top 5 safety issues inspectors find at railroad crossings while conducting routine inspections. Attendees will gain a better understanding of how to identify safety issues, navigate OCR processes, and collaborate effectively to improve crossings in their communities. Presented by staff from the Commissioner of Railroads office.

4. To Be Determined

Tuesday 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (will not be repeated)

1. Simplify your PASER Ratings and Road Planning: Compiling PASER ratings and using the WISLR system can be an overwhelming task. This session will highlight what is important and how to simplify your job. We will focus on practical methods for decision making for road maintenance and how to maximize your road budgets. Presented by Jeff Delmore of Delmore Consulting LLC.

2. Innovation Grant Program: This session will provide information about the Innovation Grant (IG) program that was created under 2023 Wisconsin Act 12 and designed to provide funds to counties, municipalities, and tribes who completely transfer one or more of certain eligible services/duties to another county, municipality, tribe, nonprofit organization, or private entity to create cost savings. We will share IG stats, provide helpful IG filing tips, and explain the beneficial changes to the program that were included in the most recent state budget. Presented by Valeah Foy, State and Local Finance Administrator, WI Department of Revenue.

3. Highway to Harmony—Shared Roads to Shared Solutions: Through open dialogue and *shared responsibility*, farmers and officials are *paving the way* for rural road systems that work for everyone. Presented by a panel of guest speakers on behalf of Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin.

4. Slow the Flow: Opportunities to Increase Flood Resilience in Wisconsin Towns: This interactive session will highlight a collaboration between the Wisconsin Towns Association, WI Wetlands Association (WWA), and Trout Unlimited (TU) to help towns work proactively to reduce flood risks and damages to road infrastructure. Presenters will share examples of assessing the root causes of infrastructure risks and flood vulnerabilities and discuss natural flood management solutions that can be used by towns to protect and improve the resilience of culverts and bridges. This session will also highlight new programs and resources that can support assessment and implementation projects in your communities. Presented by Kyle Magyera, WWA; Atty. Larry Konopacki, Stafford Rosenbaum LLP; and Sara Strassman, TU (tentative).



2025 WTA Convention

Registration

Copy form for multiple registrations and return by September 27, 2025. Online registration available at www.wisctowns.com.

October 12th - 14th 2025, Kalahari Resort and Convention Center, WI Dells

Name _____ Office or Title _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Name of Town/Village _____ County _____

Email: _____ Spouse or guest name (for name tag _____

Years of Service as a Town Officer _____ Were you recognized with a certificate at the 2022, 23 or 24 Convention? Yes / No

Full Convention Registration includes: Monday and Tuesday lunch, 2 exhibitor receptions, digital materials, Monday evening entertainment, all Workshops and General Assembly Admission.

Single Day Convention Registration includes: Monday OR Tuesday lunch, exhibitor receptions, digital materials, Monday evening entertainment, all Workshops and General Assembly Admission.

FULL CONVENTION REGISTRATION

Amount \$\$\$

_____ Town/Village Officer **\$210.00** _____

_____ Spouse or Guest **\$50.00** _____

_____ Election Training for Clerks
(Registered Officers only)

_____ Optional Officer Breakfast **\$33/day** _____
Mon. _____ Tues. _____

_____ Optional Spouse Breakfast **\$33/day** _____
Mon. _____ Tues. _____

_____ Optional Spouse Lunch **\$20/day** _____
Mon. _____ Tues. _____

_____ Optional Monday Evening Banquet _____
\$45.00 per person

TOTAL \$ Amount _____

SINGLE DAY: Monday _____ Tuesday _____

Amount \$\$\$

_____ Town/Village Officer **\$130.00** _____

_____ Spouse or Guest **\$50.00** _____

_____ Election Training for Clerks
(Registered Officers only)

_____ Optional Officer Breakfast **\$33/day** _____
Mon. _____ Tues. _____

_____ Optional Spouse Breakfast **\$33/day** _____
Mon. _____ Tues. _____

_____ Optional Spouse Lunch **\$20/day** _____
Mon. _____ Tues. _____

_____ Optional Monday Evening Banquet _____
\$45.00 per person

TOTAL \$ Amount _____

Spouse/Guest Registration includes: Exhibitor reception(s), Bingo, Monday night entertainment, General Assembly admission.
Meal tickets must be purchased separately.

Please return completed registration and payment to Wisconsin Towns Association, W7686 County Road MMM, Shawano, WI, 54166-6086 **by September 27, 2025**. Registrations received after that date will be \$15.00 per person higher for late registration fee.

Cancellations received 10 days or more in advance of the start of the convention will receive a full refund less a \$15.00 administrative fee. Cancellations received less than 10 days in advance of the start of the convention will be charged a \$15.00 administrative fee plus the cost of ALL meals. Refund requests submitted 30 or more days after the event will not be processed.

Convention Lodging

Sunday, October 12 - Tuesday, October 14, 2025
Kalahari Resort & Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells

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Key Takeaways from the 2025–27 State Budget

The 2025–27 Wisconsin State Budget (2025 Wisconsin Act 15) marks another major investment in transportation and local infrastructure. With a total budget of \$111.1 billion, this biennium introduces nearly \$200 million in new transportation revenue alongside targeted programs to support towns, rural roads, and community resilience. The budget also reflects a continued commitment to local government funding through indexed shared revenue increases and improvements upon last’s session’s \$300 million innovation grant program.

General Transportation Aids

One of the most impactful provisions for towns and villages is the growth of General Transportation Aids (GTA). The 2025-27 budget includes a baseline increase in the rate-per-mile formula, aligning it with share-of-cost formula increases from the previous biennium. This adjustment represents a 4.2% increase, or approximately \$10 million for towns. An additional 3% increase in each year of the biennium applies to both rate-per-mile and share-of-cost communities, resulting in another \$16 million increase for towns over two years. All told, the rate per mile formula will see a 7.2% increase in 2026 and another 3% increase in 2027, resulting in the following new rates:



Local Road Improvement Program – Supplemental (LRIP-S)

The budget allocates \$100 million in one-time General Purpose Revenue (GPR) to LRIP-S, a competitive grant program for town, village, city, and county road projects. While the program allows for up to 90% state cost-share, the awarding committee has historically opted for 70% to distribute funds more broadly. Towns receive 39% of this program, or about \$39 million.

Agricultural Road Improvement Program (ARIP)

For the second biennium in a row, ARIP received a one-time, \$150 million investment. Focused on weight-posted critical agricultural routes, ARIP requires eligible roads to be rebuilt to standards that eliminate the need for future weight restrictions. Grants here also offer up to 90% state cost-share. In light of significantly higher project costs, the ARIP grant committee last session elected to award the full 90% state cost share rather than reduce the percentage to stretch funding.

Of the total ARIP funding, \$30 million is designated for small bridge and culvert repair and replacement, targeting key chokepoints in rural transportation. Funding will be prioritized for structures identified as being in critical or poor condition based on ongoing statewide inspections. The Department of Transportation has not yet finalized the structure of this component. More information will be available as inspections finish up and the new program takes shape.

Transportation Revenue Measures

To support these infrastructure investments, the budget includes a \$565 million one-time transfer of general-purpose revenue to the transportation fund in addition to the following revenue-generating provisions:

- ✓ A \$50 increase in vehicle title fees (\$116.3 million).
- ✓ A 10% increase in registration fees for vehicles over 6,000 pounds (\$26.3 million).
- ✓ Increases in driver's license and license plate issuance fees (\$28.9 million).
- ✓ Introduction of "blackout" and "retro" license plates with a \$25 annual fee (\$16.7 million).

Shared Revenue and Local Grant Funding

The 2025-27 budget continues to enhance shared revenue for local governments. Under the indexing provisions created by 2023 Wisconsin Act 12, County and Municipal Aid is projected to receive a 2.3% increase in fiscal year 2025–26, followed by a 3.4% increase in 2026–27, tied to growth in state sales tax. Note that these estimates reflect state fiscal year projections and are not the calendar year increases that will ultimately occur. Calendar year increases are released by the Department of Revenue each September.

The budget also includes \$3 million to establish a local grant writing and compliance assistance program. This initiative is designed to help towns and villages access state and federal funding opportunities by providing technical support and resources for preparing competitive grant applications. It also aims to ensure compliance with program requirements, making it easier for smaller municipalities to successfully secure and manage external funding. While funding has been appropriated for this new program, the Legislature and the Governor must now pass and sign legislation creating the full framework before funding will be released. This is likely to occur in late 2025.

Pre-Disaster Flood Resilience Grants

Building upon the success of this program in the last biennium, the budget provides \$2 million in General Purpose Revenue for pre-disaster flood resilience grants. These funds will continue to help local governments proactively address flood risks by assessing and mitigating flood vulnerabilities. This investment supports long-term community safety and reduces the financial and human costs of future disasters.

Innovation Grant Changes

The Innovation Grant Program, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR), was originally created in 2023 Wisconsin Act 12 to promote innovation and efficiency by incentivizing the consolidation of services. Initially, local governments were required to demonstrate a minimum 10% cost savings to qualify for funding.

Under 2025 Wisconsin Act 15, the 10% cost savings requirement has been eliminated. Instead, the program now allows for newly combined service costs up to 115% of the original cost, giving communities more flexibility to pursue service-sharing arrangements that may not immediately reduce costs but still offer long-term value or improved service delivery. Additionally, the program has been extended by two years, allowing DOR more time to solicit, approve, and distribute grants.

DOR had planned to release application materials in early July 2025, but this has been delayed due to the recent changes. Updated guidance is expected once the program revisions are finalized.

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Wisconsin Local Technical Assistance Program

Using PASER and WISLR to Manage Your Roads

Eau Claire, August 12, 2025 | Deforest, August 14, 2025

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Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) is a web based system that Wisconsin local governments use to submit local road data and pavement condition ratings. WISLR can also map road conditions and provide suggested 5-year plans for maintenance and rehabilitation to assist local decision-making. WISLR uses PASER pavement condition ratings, road data, deterioration projections and locally supplied budget information to produce recommendations.

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About Your Instructors

Shelly Coleman

Highway Data Unit Supervisor, Wisconsin DOT

Ben Jordan

Staff Engineer

Wisconsin Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)

Isaac Park

Pavement Coordinator and Data Analyst

Wisconsin DOT

Who Should Attend

This online training is intended for Wisconsin town, village, city, and county officials and their consultants who rate the condition of their roads using PASER and/or submit their ratings to WisDOT through the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR).

How to Participate

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Course Topics

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Rating Your Asphalt Roads Using PASER

Using WISLR to Submit Pavement Ratings

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General Information

Cancellation

If you register, but cannot attend, you may enroll a substitute at any time before the course starts. If you need to cancel your registration, please notify us in advance and we will refund your fee.

Course Fee: \$50

For More Information

Call LTAP toll free at 800-442-4615, email us at ltap@engr.wisc.edu or visit our website at go.wisc.edu/PASERandWISLR

If you have additional questions contact:

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By: Melissa Kono, UW Ext./WTA Clerk Specialist

Making the Case for Early Budget Preparations

Preparing the Budget, Starting with a Mid-Year Financial Report

While I don't think there is such thing as a slow time of year for clerks, I do find that July and August give me just a bit of time to catch up and then prepare for fall, namely budget time. One of my major to-do list items in the summer is creating a mid-year financial report to present to my town board, which includes year-to-date spending compared to the previous year. I then use these comparisons to help map out a draft budget for next year, paying close attention to categories in which we have under and overspent. Municipal budgets are required to list all existing indebtedness and all anticipated revenue from all sources in the coming year; all proposed expenditures for each department, activity, and reserve account in the next year; actual revenues and expenditures for the preceding year; actual revenues and expenditures for at least the first 6 months of the current year; estimated revenues and expenditures for the balance of the current year; and all anticipated unexpended or unappropriated balances and surpluses, by fund. Wis Stat. § 65.90 (2)(a). The mid-year financial report helps to lay the groundwork for preparing this information for the budget.

Boards can meet as often as necessary to complete the draft budget. Some boards schedule "budget workshop" meetings specifically devoted to budget preparation. I include budget discussion as an agenda item at each regular monthly board meeting beginning in August to give my board adequate time to review current budget categories, anticipated increases, and any projects scheduled for the next year. Although Wis. Stat. § 60.40 delegates preparation of the budget to the town board, this duty largely falls upon clerks, as we have access to the information needed to prepare the budget, such as the past year's financials and next year's projected revenue documents. When preparing a draft budget to share with the board, I take into consideration any unique factors that will be in play next year. For example, 2026 is a busy election year, with at least four scheduled elections, compared with the two elections in 2025, which means additional election staff will be needed. In addition, a new term for election workers begins January 1, so I will budget additional dollars for both poll worker training and election hours. Our town was notified by our assessor that we are due for a revaluation and will need to allocate additional funds for assessment services. We also have a costly bridge replacement project scheduled for 2026. While we cannot anticipate every cost for next year, these considerations ensure we will allocate sufficient resources to major, planned projects and help us determine where we may need to cut costs or seek new sources of revenue.

Budget Hearing and Approving the Levy Limit

Towns are required to hold a public hearing prior to adopting the budget, which requires the clerk to prepare several documents. The notice of the budget hearing must include the time and location of the public hearing, as well as a budget summary that includes expense information by category (General Government, Public Safety, Public Works, etc.) for the proposed budget year and the current year –

including the percentage change in each category, as well as projected revenues by category, beginning and ending fund balances, and property tax revenue contributions to each fund. A full list of the items that must be included in the budget summary can be found in Wis. Stat. § 65.90(3)(b). The hearing notice and budget summary must be posted in 3 locations at least 15 days prior to the budget hearing. The notice of the budget hearing must also include the location where the budget may be viewed in its entirety (usually at the town hall). I post a copy of the full budget on the town hall door so that residents may view it at their convenience, since I do not hold regular office hours.

Towns must also hold a special town elector meeting for the electors to vote to approve the total town property tax levy to be collected. This meeting is often held immediately following the budget hearing. Clerks must prepare a public notice for this meeting, with the time and location of the meeting and the agenda items that the electors will vote on. The clerk must provide the notice to the public at least 15 and not more than 20 days prior to the meeting date, either by publishing the notice as a class 2 notice in the newspaper, posting it in at least 3 public places, or posting it in at least 1 public place and on the town's official website. Wis. Stat. § 60.12(3). If you are holding the budget public hearing and special town elector meeting to set the levy on the same night, you could plan ahead and post both notices at the same time. Importantly, note that the town electors do *not* vote on the budget itself – the final budget is adopted via a majority vote of the town board at a town board meeting prior to the end of the year. § 60.40(4).

Preparations for Exceeding the Levy Limit as Needed

Another benefit to getting a head start in drafting the proposed budget is that it helps the board determine whether the town may need to exceed the levy limit and prepare for the additional steps that process entails. Towns with a population under 3,000 can exceed the levy limit using the process outlined in Wis. Stat. § 66.0602(5). The clerk will likely be delegated responsibility for drafting necessary documents, including the written resolution the town board must adopt first at a town board meeting, specifying the proposed levy increase; then a special town elector meeting notice that must be posted or published for at least 15 days before the town elector meeting to vote on the proposed increase; and a separate written resolution to record the results of the elector vote. If the electors vote in favor of exceeding the levy limit in the amount proposed by the board, the clerk will then be responsible for submitting signed and dated copies of all these documents to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR), along with the town's completed Municipal Levy Limit Worksheet, to make the levy increase effective. As noted above, the special town elector meeting is separate from the budget public hearing, but both could take place the same night if you plan ahead and time your meetings and notices correctly.

Fall Workshops: Upcoming Training on Budgeting, Financial Topics

If you are new to the budget process, or could use a refresher, please consider attending one of the Fall Workshops in September. Staff from DOR will be holding a session on the Levy Limit Worksheet and will provide in-depth information on exceeding the levy limit, including the documentation that is required to be submitted to DOR. We'll also discuss how to create required resolutions and notices, best practices for financial reconciliation, financial policies and procedures to make your work more efficient, and much more. Registration information can be found in this month's magazine. I look forward to seeing you there!

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AGENDA

8:55am Welcome

9:00am-10:30am Wisconsin Public Records Law:

This session will review the essential concepts of the state public records law and then explore the common questions that arise with regard to storage, retention, and access to electronic records. Presented by Assistant Attorney General Paul Ferguson from the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Office of Open Government.

10:30am-10:45am Break

10:45am-11:45am Making Waves and Harnessing the Wind:

Whether your town is thinking about regulating wake boats or wind turbines, it's important to understand the limits of your regulatory authority and bear in mind some best practice tips for drafting defensible ordinances on these controversial subjects. Presented by Atty. Remzy Bitar, Municipal Law and Litigation Group, S.C.

11:45am-1:00pm Lunch Break

1:00pm-1:55pm Towns Under County Zoning --- and the Rezoning Process:

This session will review the rezoning process for towns under county zoning and provide in-depth analysis from a recent Wisconsin Court of Appeals decision which highlights the importance for towns under county zoning or town zoning to keep comprehensive plans and ordinances up to date to best preserve local decision making as part of the rezoning process. Presented by Atty. Rick Manthe, Stafford Rosenbaum, LLP.

1:55pm-2:00pm Break

2:00pm-3:00pm Room Tax Basics from Creation to Collection:

This presentation will outline the process for towns to establish a room tax, including the legal requirements and administration. It will detail the responsibilities of towns and lodging providers in collection and remittance. Finally, the presentation will explain the regulations governing the use of these funds. Presented by Atty. Sean P. Griffin and Atty. Andrew J. Adams, West and Dunn LLC.

***This program will be submitted to the Wisconsin Board of Bar Examiners for 5 CLE credits.**

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Humane Officer Training: Building Wisconsin's Animal Welfare Workforce

Dr. Yvonne Bellay, DVM, Wisconsin State Humane Officer

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

When calls come in reporting an animal in distress, whether roaming strays, neglect on a property, or suspected hoarding, someone must respond. In Wisconsin, that responsibility lies with county-appointed humane officers or law enforcement professionals who have the training and legal authority to assess, intervene, and resolve these often emotionally charged situations. Behind every successful case is a solid investment in workforce preparation.

That's why the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) offers an intensive Humane Officer Training Program, returning this fall from September 22–26, 2025, at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Madison.

Hosted in partnership with the University of Missouri–Extension Law Enforcement Training Institute, the course delivers 40 hours of rigorous training for individuals who have been appointed or are seeking appointment as humane officers, as well as law enforcement personnel investigating animal welfare cases.

The Humane Officer program isn't just about animal protection. It's about building a prepared and professional workforce that can serve communities where public safety, health, and compassion intersect. Animal-related calls may appear routine, but often involve legal nuances, complex human dynamics, and difficult on-the-ground judgment. DATCP's curriculum is designed to prepare officers to navigate all of that.

A Foundation in Law and Forensics

Led by seasoned veterinarians, attorneys, and law enforcement officers, the training covers:

- Laws and legal authority
- Search and seizure procedures
- Investigating animal crimes
- Recognizing abuse and neglect
- The link between animal cruelty and domestic violence
- Evidence collection and forensic documentation

These skills are the vital professional tools that Wisconsin's animal welfare workforce needs every day. Officers leave the program equipped not only with legal know-how but also with strategies for education, de-escalation, and collaboration.

Strengthening the Statewide Response Network

In Wisconsin, every non-law enforcement humane officer must be formally appointed by a municipality or county and must complete this training within one year of appointment. While not every jurisdiction has its own humane officer, more than 90 villages and cities and about one-third of counties currently do—each adding strength to a statewide response network that relies on cooperation and consistency. Law enforcement officers designated to handle animal cases may also benefit. With supervisor approval, this

training may count toward recertification hours. In either capacity, officers trained through DATCP's program become essential contributors to local governments' public service infrastructure.

Beyond Enforcement: Education and Prevention

Well-trained humane officers aren't just enforcers; they're educators. In many cases, officers help owners resolve issues without pursuing charges, working collaboratively to improve animal care standards and connect them with resources. When intervention is needed, humane officers provide the professionalism and evidence-based approach that prosecutors and courts require.

The balanced role of humane officer as an educator, investigator, and liaison is why humane officer training is also a workforce development tool. It creates professionals who can build trust with communities, reduce harm, and proactively identify patterns, such as the documented link between animal abuse and domestic violence.

Registration and Contact

The 2025 DATCP Humane Officer Training will take place from September 22–26 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Madison. The cost for the weeklong training is \$575, with more details and registration information available online:

https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/HumaneOfficerTraining.aspx

For program questions, contact Dr. Yvonne Bellay, Wisconsin State Humane Officer and training coordinator, at (608) 516-2664 or yvonne.bellay@wisconsin.gov.



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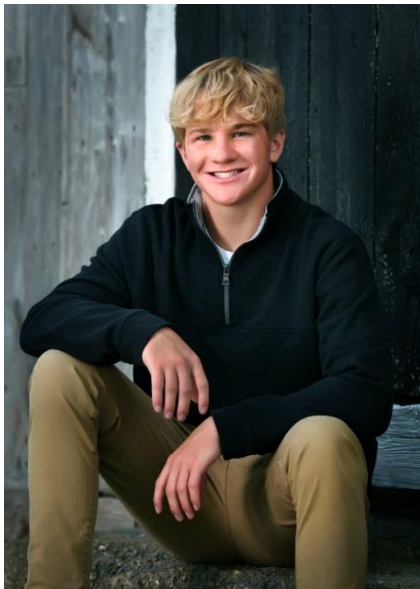
"What strategies can be implemented by town officials in collaboration with citizens to maintain civility in local government?"

Written By: Isaac Jerabek, Luxemburg-Casco High School

The Wisconsin Towns Association, Rural Mutual Insurance Company, and Scott Construction, Inc. award \$7000 in scholarships to high school seniors graduating from either a public or private high school that enroll in a Wisconsin public or private college or university. The winners are determined by independent judging of an essay contest.

Since the beginning of humankind, the structure and security of a government have ensured law and order, maintained a shaky economy, and looked over public services. Without the services and benefits the government provides, the population would be lost and without order. Though local government is merely an ant to the state or national government, its significance is on par with the two. The first steps taken in maintaining civility in local government start with the leader's ability to connect with their people, then involve public comment, and finally the meeting layout.

Moreover, a leadership position is one of the determining factors in the civility of government. As stated in Western City's article, *Breaking the Cycle: Steps for Reducing Negative Discourse and Incivility in Public Meetings*, "Without high-quality staff, cities will not be able to



tackle the range of complex and ever-changing issues facing local government." The need for an influential leader who looks to connect the citizens with the government doesn't go unnoticed and is likely the reason why a town thrives. An example seen in my community is the unending support, acceptance of personal responsibility, shared values, and practice of active listening. My dad, the town chairman, is always going above and beyond to make sure the right steps are being taken to benefit the town. He actively listens to and ignites conversations about improving the town; he is open-minded; he accepts personal responsibility; he demonstrates honesty and integrity; and he focuses on civil discourse. A dilemma he encountered was the need for a new town hall. Without running water, rotting walls, and the building being too old for any community events to take place there, the community came together

to form a consensus to build a town hall, despite the downsides of doing so. Not only was the town hall being built a step in the right direction, but there are also many ways a leader can shape a community through trust and willpower.

Commonly, a leader is not a leader at all without a community supporting him or her and providing them with feedback. It is extremely important for the local government to actively listen and participate, promote transparency, and encourage constructive dialogue. When speaking upon social justice and equity, Western City's article, *Breaking the Cycle: Steps for Reducing Negative Discourse and Incivility in Public Meetings*, states, "By seeking clarity on these complex issues and committing to civility, councils can work together to determine how best to explore these challenging issues productively and respectfully." If the public is unable to voice their opinions, they will feel disconnected, and the community will become dysfunctional. At every monthly meeting held at Lincoln Town Hall, a specified time is placed on the agenda where the public is able to speak up while the town officials actively listen. This small but crucial time in the meeting is when constructive criticism and other techniques are used in the edification of the town. Public comment on the agenda given in that meeting plays a key role in preventing the meeting from being uncivil and unproductive. John F. Kennedy once said, "Let us begin anew, remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness and sincerity is always subject to proof." Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems that divide us." Though this quote has aged, it is still applicable today. Through public forums, community engagement, and conflict resolution strategies, a town and its people are able to grow together.

Likewise, a meeting agenda assists in a meeting staying on track, covering the points that need to be hit, and ensuring time effectiveness. In MIT's department of Human Resources, an article titled *How and Why to Use a Meeting Agenda*, covers why it's important to use a meeting agenda, thus stating, "Time spent in planning an agenda will likely save time for all meeting participants by providing a clear set of topics, objectives, and time frames." It is not only important to have an agenda for time effectiveness but also the organization and follow-through technique it induces. Being thoughtful, managing expectations, agreeing on a process in advance, and more are all reminders that relationships based on communication are the best relationships. Instead of going into a meeting without knowledge, a plan, or organization, try being open, organized, thought-out, and ready for change.

In the end, the strategies most beneficial to maintaining civility in local government are community engagement, a meeting agenda, and an empowering leader. Through various acts and procedures, the government aims to embody the meaning of peace and harmony in its relationships with citizens. A government is defined as *the governing body of a nation, state, or community*. Trust, harmony, law and order, and more are the building blocks of a strong nation. Local government, state government, and national government all play vital roles, each playing a part in the structure to ensure civility.

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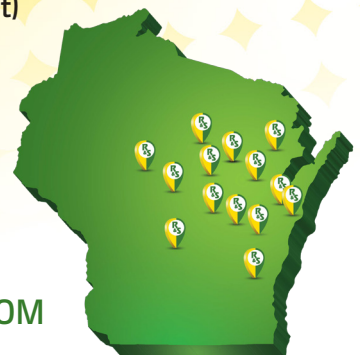


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Understanding the Impact of Municipal Debt

Reporting tips from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Due to various pressures, general obligation (GO) debt incurred by Wisconsin municipalities has significantly increased by more than 120% over the last twenty years. Based on the Municipal Financial Report data submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR), total long-term general obligation debt has increased from \$5.64 billion in 2003 to \$12.52 billion in 2023.

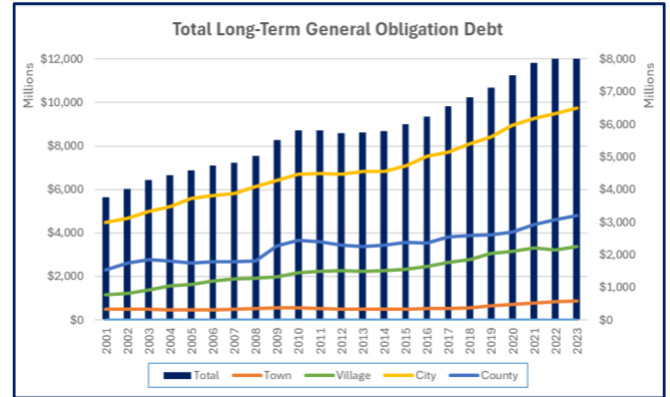
Villages are leading this growth with their debt levels rising 187% from \$780 million to \$2.24 billion; conversely, towns collectively have the slowest growth of 82% over the same time period, from \$321 million to \$585 million.

The Local Government Services Bureau (LGS) within DOR's State and Local Finance Division (SLF) interacts with municipal debt in various ways. Key efforts include collecting detailed debt information on the Municipal Financial Report and issuing the certificates of Equalized Values, used for loan purposes; the debt limit report, providing the debt limit amount that equals 5% of each municipality's Equalized Value, including tax increment district values; and the debt margin report, comparing each municipality's allowable debt limit to their actual debt load. These reports are available on DOR's [Reports](#) webpage.

In addition, LGS administers two programs that are significantly impacted by municipal debt. We'd like to share helpful information and common reporting errors related to municipal debt to assist municipalities with compliance and maximizing state aid eligibility. The first is the Expenditure Restraint Incentive Program (ERIP).

Expenditure Restraint Incentive Program

ERIP is a shared revenue aid program for municipalities with a municipal mill rate exceeding 5 mills (i.e., \$5 per \$1,000 of Equalized Value excl. tax increment district values). If a municipality's mill rate exceeds 5 mills, the municipality is eligible to file an ERIP Worksheet to determine whether they qualify for an ERIP payment in the following year. To qualify, the municipality's percentage increase in general fund



budget expenditures from year to year must be less than 60% of their net new construction (up to 2%) plus the increase in the Consumer Price Index as certified by DOR annually on October 1 (sec. [79.05\(2\)](#), Wis. Stats.).

When completing the ERIP Worksheet each year, the starting point on Line 1 is your total adopted general fund budget expenditures. Next, there are a series of adjustments (reductions) applied. Line 2 is a reduction for long-term debt, including principal and interest debt payments from the general fund, principal and interest debt payments transferred from the general fund to the debt service fund, as well as principal and interest debt payments funded by property tax levy that was allocated directly to the debt service fund. If your municipality has long-term debt payments that are included on Line 1, those debt payments can be deducted on Line 2. Note: Long-term debt is payable over a period that exceeds one year (Wis. Admin. Tax [19.05\(1\)\(a\)](#)).

To avoid misreporting on Line 2, do **not** include debt with a payable period less than one year, debt payments from funds other than the general fund, or debt payments from the debt service fund not funded by property tax levy or transferred from the general fund.

You can review the ERIP Worksheet [Instructions](#) for additional guidance on ERIP reporting.

The second LGS program impacted by municipal debt is the Levy Limit program. Levy limits restrict the

property tax levies imposed by municipalities, providing year-to-year permanent increases for net new construction and tax incremental district changes, as well as various permanent and single-year exceptions including general obligation debt service.

Debt Basics

The Wisconsin Supreme Court determined the following factors indicate debt: (1) Debt is an undertaking to pay money or its equivalent. The fact that a municipality must provide some municipal service does not create debt, even though it will require the expenditure of money. (2) Debt is a voluntary undertaking. (3) Debt must be certain in amount. (4) It must be an absolute undertaking; if the municipality may avoid its obligation or if conditions remain precedent to it, there is no indebtedness. (5) It must be an undertaking enforceable by the creditor against the municipality or its assets.

Specifically, general obligation debt is secured by the full faith and credit of the municipality, reliant on the municipality's authority to levy an annual tax sufficient to pay interest and principal as it falls due.

For the purposes of levy limits, "debt service" applies to debt issued or reissued to fund or refund outstanding municipal obligations, interest on outstanding municipal obligations, and related issuance costs and redemption premiums (sec. [66.0602\(1\)\(a\)](#), Wis. Stats.).

As a result, for the Levy Limit program, reported general obligation debt must be: (1) Secured by the full faith and credit of the municipality. (2) Within the municipality's allowable debt limit. (3) Executed by December 31 of the current year with payments scheduled for the upcoming budget year.

Levy Limits

Municipalities use the Levy Limit Worksheet during their annual budgeting process to determine their allowable levy limit. The starting point on the Levy Limit Worksheet is a municipality's prior year actual levy, plus their current year's personal property aid, less any prior year unreimbursed emergency expenses reported in Sec. D, Line G and any prior year general

obligation debt service payments (for debt authorized after July 1, 2005) reported in Sec. D, Line E.

Sec. D, Line E – used to report general obligation debt service payments (for debt authorized after July 1, 2005) – is the most commonly used line on the Levy Limit Worksheet. If your municipality needs to levy to fund its scheduled principal and interest general obligation debt service payments (for debt authorized after July 1, 2005), report the required payments in Sec. D, Line E. Since this amount is removed the following year, only report the debt service payments that will be included in your actual levy. A common mistake is over-reporting this amount and unnecessarily reducing your allowable levy limit in the following year. Note: your municipality's actual levy is reported to LGS on your Statement of taxes (SOT).

Municipalities should also avoid other common reporting mistakes on Sec. D, Line E – do **not** include the following: payments that are not scheduled or falling due for the upcoming budget year (e.g., early or additional payments); payments that are not secured by the full faith and credit of your municipality (e.g., equipment lease payments); or payments for loans that have not yet been obtained.

When these reporting errors occur, we work with municipalities to identify possible alternatives or other exceptions that may be used. However, in certain situations, if no other adjustments can be used, the municipality may exceed their allowable levy limit. This results in a levy limit penalty that is a dollar-for-dollar reduction of their shared revenue distributions.

For additional detail on the levy limits, review the Levy Limit Worksheet [Instructions](#) and [common questions](#). We encourage you to contact LGS at lgs@wisconsin.gov with any questions.



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