

Wisconsin Towns Association

May 2026



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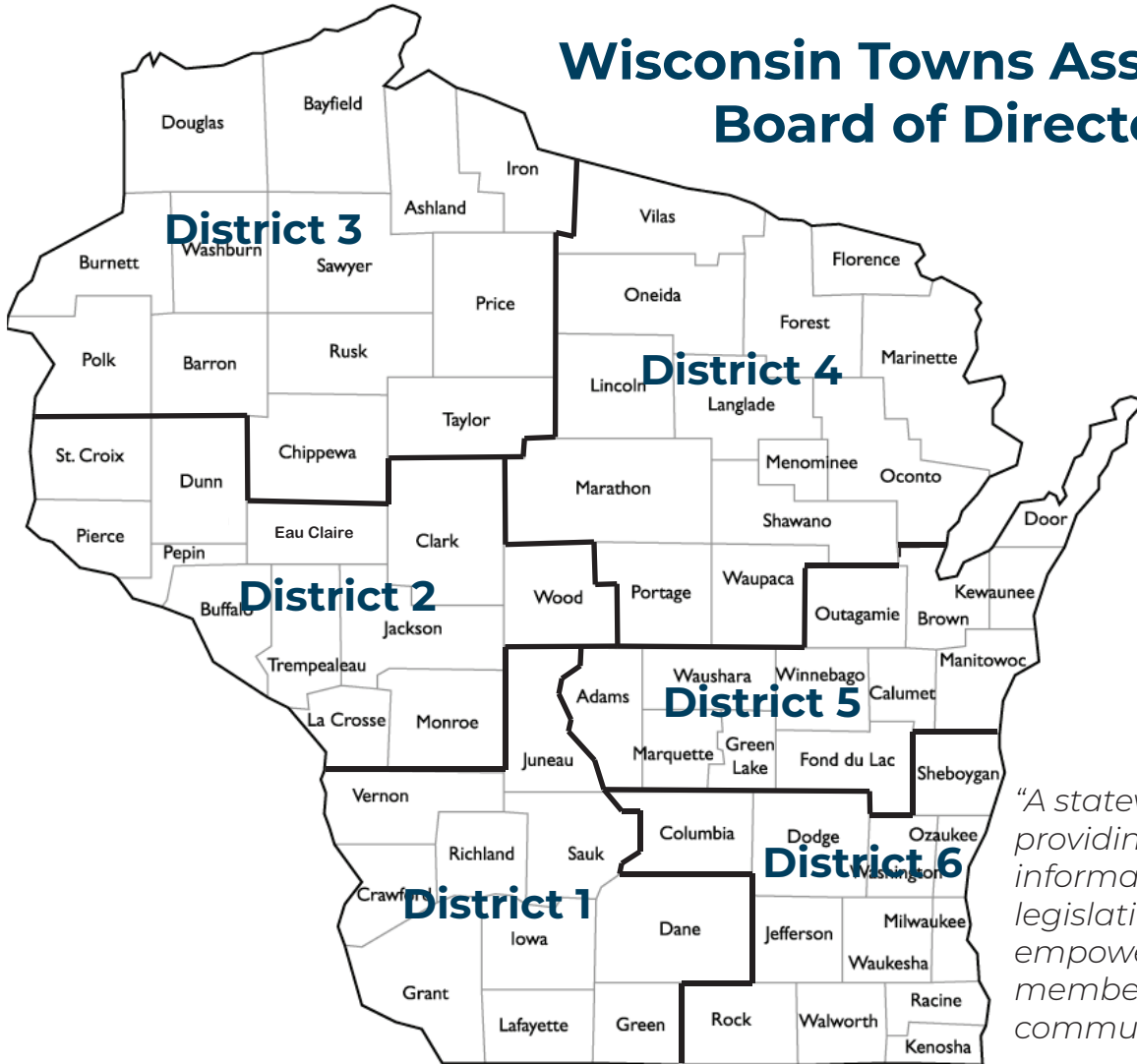
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Wisconsin Towns

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Empowering Town Officials

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



By
Mike Koles

Absolutely not Marginally Important

There's an old proverb that one should never talk about politics or religion at the dinner table because both are easy gateways to offending friends. This wisdom typically permeates my magazine articles. While I must frequently write about the WTA legislative advocacy efforts, I try to avoid writing about the underlying politics. As for religion, I believe I've tiptoed there once in the last decade. This month I'm going to throw caution to the wind and write about both.



First the religion...

Last month, Christians around the world celebrated Easter, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. For Christians, it is the fulfillment of God's plan to bring salvation to the world. Without the resurrection, nobody can be saved from death.

Many of you might remember the book that was turned into a movie called *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. The book's author, C.S. Lewis, was a devout Christian. He once said: *"Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, is of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."*

Think about this for a moment. If Jesus Christ's resurrection is real and the resurrection produces the only foundation for being saved from death, then Christianity is of "infinite" importance to anyone wanting to achieve salvation.

On the other hand, if the resurrection is not real or is not the foundation for being saved from death,

then Christianity really doesn't matter to someone who wants to be saved. Lewis communicates that Christianity totally matters or doesn't matter at all. For him, there is no middle ground.

In full disclosure, I'm Catholic. I grew up in a mixed family. My Dad was a Missouri Synod Lutheran. I got my undergraduate degree from an ELCA institution. While at college, I had an opportunity to take a course about the world's religions. Although it's been over three decades, if memory serves me correctly, what Lewis said about Christianity can be said about many religions – the path to a favorable afterlife travels only

through beliefs of that particular religion, making it of absolute and definitely not marginal importance.

Now for the politics...

Our representative democracy is filled with absolutes. For example, the principle of **popular sovereignty** demands that the government's right to govern comes from the people. Like what C.S. Lewis said about Christianity, the ability of the people to elect those who are governing them is of absolute importance or our representative democracy is of no importance. Popular elections cannot be of marginal importance.

If the ability to elect those who are governing you is of absolute importance, then how is it that in Wisconsin town citizens can still be regulated by city and village officials – who they cannot elect? The fact that regulation can be imposed without representation and without popular sovereignty begs the question – do town citizens really live in a representative democracy?

“...the ability of the people to elect those who are governing them is of absolute importance or our representative democracy is of no importance. Popular elections cannot be of marginal importance.”

Perhaps an even more important question is why has the legislature failed to restore representative democracy despite bills authored by Representative Hurd and Senator Testin in both of the last two legislative sessions that would have done exactly that?

There are many potential answers, but it all boils down to what a member of the committee that held a hearing on the bill communicated. During the hearing he verbally recognized the lack of democracy...but...also stated he likes the lack of democracy because it allows the city in which he lives to control the town citizens' land. In a nutshell, for what is apparently a majority of legislators, popular sovereignty - and by consequence representative democracy - are expendable so long as the majority of their constituency controls the reigns of dictatorship.

The United States form of democracy also relies on the absolute principles of **separation of powers into coequal branches of government** and a related **system of checks and balances**.

Government is divided into three branches. The legislative branch makes laws; executive branch implements laws; and, judicial branch interprets laws. No branch is more or less powerful. They have separate responsibilities that are equally important. If one branch is elevated above the others, or if a branch begins to infringe on a different branches' duties, then our form of government no longer matters. If we believe in representative democracy, then separation of powers into coequal branches of government that can check each other's power is of absolute importance. The one thing it cannot be is marginally important.

The absolute principles of co-equal branches of government and its companion system of checks

and balances recently influenced a Wisconsin Supreme Court decision that recalibrated executive and legislative branch power. In our state, laws can generally be drawn back to statutes, administrative rules, and court decisions. The Legislature creates statutes pending gubernatorial approval. Often the statutes are so general in nature that the Legislature directs the executive branch to create administrative rules to put more meat on the statutory bones. Administrative rules have the effect of law and are indeed law written by the executive branch agencies (e.g., Department of Transportation) as directed by statutes.

For decades, the court's allowed the Legislature to review, pause implementation, and cause to be changed any agency made administrative rule. Basically, the conclusion was that if the legislative branch created the statute directing the agency to do something, they ought to be able to double check the administrative rule to make sure the unelected state employees got it right. Last summer, the court changed its mind and moved away from this interpretation. Now, once the Legislature passes the statute, they are no longer entitled to "check" the administrative rule.

I will let legal scholars debate and history be the judge of whether this recalibration to provide state agency staff with significantly more power to make laws is consistent with the Constitution. My guess is it will prove to be a situation where the party in charge of the executive branch loves the power when they have it but decries it as unconstitutional when they don't. It's funny how that happens.

I am, however, certain that the court decision has indeed emboldened agency staff. I cite two examples. In addition to administrative rules, which must go through a rigorous process, agencies have invented "policy guidance." While not legally binding, this is often treated as if it were

by agency staff who created it outside the formal rulemaking process. For one of the administrative rules affecting town government, policy guidance grew from nearly 70 pages before the aforementioned court decision to over 100 pages just a few months after the court implemented the recalibration despite no changes to statutes or administrative rules. The continued ballooning of rules and regulations absent a nexus to legislative action is creating an environment in which a growing number of towns do not have the wherewithal to access important programs and grant opportunities.

The second example is Governor Evers' rationale behind his recent veto of Assembly Bill 326. This bipartisan bill, authored by Representative Kurtz and Senator Marklein, received a voice vote (meaning it had overwhelming support) in both houses. AB326 would have created a program to provide communities under 7,500 people up to \$5,000 to obtain grant writing services. In today's grant driven world, this would have helped even the playing field for smaller communities.

The program was modeled after the lake planning and also aquatic invasive species planning start up grants of late 20th and early 21st centuries, respectively. Under AB326 a community only would have needed to: a) give the name of the community, county, and person responsible; b) choose one of five purposes for the grant (public works, transportation infrastructure, public safety, utility costs, or cybersecurity); d) give a short description; and, e) indicate how much money the grant they were applying for would provide them.

This would fit on a postcard because the legislative branch intended this to be simple. In the bill, they even told the Department of Revenue, who was to administer the program, that they "shall prescribe a simple and clear application that is reasonably accessible to political subdivisions with limited staffing capacity." In other words, create a postcard application, accept the postcards, choose if the community qualified for the up to \$5,000,

send the money until the \$3 million appropriated for the program ran out, and ensure the money was used properly. This could have been easily tracked using a spreadsheet. Postcards and spreadsheets.

For bills that affect state agencies, they provide an estimate of how much it will cost them to implement the proposed law. This is referred to as the fiscal estimate. For postcards and spreadsheets, the DOR initially indicated they would need \$442,600 to upgrade their computer system, \$252,100 annually for the four years of the program, and two new full-time employees, a whopping \$1.45 million and two full-time employees to implement the simple \$3 million program noted above. The legislative branch questioned this amount, and the DOR responded indicating they actually only needed \$829,800.

The legislative branch called their bluff and expected the DOR to implement the postcard-spreadsheet system with current resources. Despite numerous Democrats co-authoring the bill and a voice vote in both the Assembly and Senate, Governor Evers sided with agency staff and nixed the bipartisan effort with a veto because it didn't fund the DOR's \$829,800 request. In his veto message, the Governor stated: "If we want communities throughout Wisconsin to benefit from a program that can help them draw down state and federal investments, it must be adequately staffed and resourced to ensure the agency responsible can actually do that important work."

The abrogation of absolutes by both sides of the political aisle is troublesome. As we near the August and November elections, I encourage town officials to ask candidates their position on popular sovereignty for all, including town citizens, as well as the recent recalibration of power between the executive and legislative branches. One thing is certain, **absolutes are not marginally important.**



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Competitive Bidding Law and Recent Changes Under 2025 Wisconsin Act 188

Wisconsin Statute § 60.47 establishes the competitive bidding requirements for towns. Effective April 6, 2026, Wis. Stat. § 60.47 was amended to create two different categories of public contracts. First, there are now general “public contracts,” defined by statute as contracts “for the construction, execution, repair, remodeling or improvement of any public work or building or for the furnishing of materials or supplies”. Secondly, there are now “public highway contracts” which are defined as contracts for the construction, execution, repair, remodeling, or improvement of a highway. Wis. Stat. § 60.47(1)(as). What is the purpose behind creating a separate category for highway contracts? Well, the new law increases the applicable bidding thresholds for *general* public contracts, but lawmakers decided *not* to increase the thresholds for public *highway* contracts.

Q. What are the bidding requirements and new cost thresholds for general “public contracts”?

A. The bidding requirements for *general* “public contracts” vary depending on contract price:

The bottom threshold is now public contracts that cost \$10,000 or less: There are no bidding requirements for public contracts in this price range. (The bottom threshold was \$5,000 or less under the previous law.) Projects that will cost \$10,000 or less still need to be made an agenda item for a properly noticed board meeting and the board will need to vote to hire someone to complete the work. To avoid the need for such a vote on small projects and materials/supply purchases, some boards choose to delegate the authority to enter into contracts in this or some other limited price range to the town chair or another town officer or employee. The delegation of such authority may be accomplished by board motion at a properly noticed board meeting or through the adoption of a local purchasing policy. For example, a board might adopt a local policy that the chair can sign contracts for work or purchase materials and supplies totaling up to \$10k per month (or a lesser amount if the board wants to retain more control) without prior board approval.

The middle category is now public contracts between \$10,000.01 and \$50,000: Contracts valued between \$10,000.01 and \$50,000 still do *not* require sealed bids, but they do require the town to give a Class 1 notice under ch. 985 of the proposed contract, at least seven days before the contract is executed. This notice may be posted in three physical locations, posted in one physical location and on the town’s official website, or published once in a qualified newspaper. Wis. Stat. §§ 60.47(2)(a) & 985.02(2).

We are often asked what information the Class 1 notice for contracts in this price range should contain. We recommend that the notice include: 1) the name of town; 2) a description of the project(s) to be completed and the estimated cost; 3) the date of the posting or publication,; and 4) the name of the official(s) (such as the clerk and/or chair) posting the notice on behalf of the town. If the board knows who they plan to hire for the work to be performed, that information may also be included. If they

don't have a vendor in mind, the Class 1 notice may be used to solicit quotes for the work and information about where to submit such quotes, the submission deadline, etc. should then also be included in the notice. In this price range, ask for quotes and do NOT ask for "bids" as the bidding rules are not applicable. If the Class 1 notice uses bidding terminology, you will accidentally make the project or purchase subject to the bidding laws and have to award the "bid" to the lowest responsible bidder, etc.

The top threshold is now public contracts over \$50,000: Contracts valued over \$50,000 require the town to seek sealed bids and accept the bid from the lowest responsible bidder. The bids may not be opened prior to the public bid opening. A Class 2 notice must be provided to the public prior to the deadline for receiving bids. A Class 2 notice means that two notices must be published. The first notice must be published at least 14 days prior, and the second notice must be published at least one week prior to the bid submission deadline. While this Class 2 notice technically could be posted versus published, WTA recommends that towns publish the bid notice in a qualified newspaper in order to provide notice to as many potential bidders as possible. Moreover, some bid notices, such as those required on Local Road Improvement Projects, must be published in the newspaper in order to qualify for state reimbursement money. Finally, while it is not legally required, a local government may also mail or e-mail the bid notice directly to potential contractors (or publish it in a trade journal) to make sure that your preferred contractors are aware of the project.

Q. Are there new bidding thresholds or requirements for "public highway contracts" as defined above?

A. No. Unfortunately, the applicable cost thresholds for public *highway* contracts remain exactly the same. This means that highway projects that will cost \$5,000 and under are not required to be bid out and can just be voted on at a properly noticed board meeting. For highway projects over \$5,000 and under \$25,000, a Class 1 notice (as described above for general projects over \$10,000 and up to \$50,000) must be provided to the public at least seven days before execution of the contract. And, for highway projects that will cost \$25,000 or more, a Class 2 notice soliciting sealed bids must be posted or published as described above and awarded to the lowest responsible bidder. These are the same cost thresholds and bidding requirements that have existed for many years, and no substantive changes were made to the bidding rules for public highway projects.

Q. Do these law changes affect the bidding rules for villages?

A. Yes, the bidding rules for villages are referenced in Wis. Stat. § 61.54 and basically state that villages are subject to the same bidding rules as cities. The city bidding statute, Wis. Stat. § 62.15 was also amended by Act 188 and contains similar threshold increases for *general* public construction contracts and kept the lower thresholds for public highway construction. Refer to Act 188 and § 62.15, as amended, for the exact wording of the new definitions and the bidding rules applicable to villages.

Q. Are there any exemptions to the bidding requirements?

A. General public contracts and public highway contracts with other governmental entities (such as the county) are exempt from public bidding requirements. See Wis. Stat. § 60.47(4). Additionally, a general public contract or public highway contract for the emergency repair and construction of a public facility that is threatened with damage or has been damaged is not required to be bid out if the board adopts a resolution declaring that there is an emergency that endangers the public health or welfare of the town. The exemption ends when the board declares the emergency no longer exists. Also, bidding is not required when either all materials are being donated or when volunteers are completing all of the labor on a contract. See Wis. Stat. § 60.47(5). A new exemption provision was added under 2025 Wisconsin Act 188 and it states that bidding does not apply when a private person constructs an improvement that is donated to the town after the completion of construction. Wis. Stat. § 60.47(5)(c).

Q. Are services or equipment purchases required to be bid out? We need to hire a new assessor, and we are looking at purchasing a new fire truck which is expected to cost close to \$1 million.

A. No. Contracts for services such as garbage hauling, EMS, assessing, grass mowing, tree trimming, engineering, insurance, legal services (and others) are not required to be bid out. The town will still likely want to seek quotes or put out a request for proposals so that it can compare service providers and the different options available from potential vendors and get the best services at the best price for the town. That said, advertising and competitive bids are not required for services and “bids” should NOT be requested. Similarly, equipment purchases (including vehicles) are not required to be bid out, regardless of price. Again, it would be wise for the town to shop around and get multiple quotes and negotiate with vendors, but in the end, the board decides which piece of equipment to buy and from what vendor.



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LEGAL OPINIONS



By Atty. Joe Ruth
Government Affairs
Director

2025-26 End of Session Legislative Update

The 2025–26 legislative session produced several statutory changes affecting towns and villages, including laws related to emergency medical services, housing development, and environmental regulation. This article summarizes many of these recent updates.

Emergency Medical Services

Act 35 strengthens the state’s EMS workforce pipeline by expanding grant programs to support training and education costs for emergency medical responders and EMS practitioners. Eligible uses include tuition reimbursement, certification expenses, and related instructional materials. The act also authorizes a pilot program exploring enhanced 911-connected technologies intended to improve real-time coordination between dispatch and responders.

Act 36 modernizes reimbursement under Wisconsin’s Medical Assistance program (Medicaid) for emergency medical services. Historically, reimbursement structures were tied to patient transport. The act expands reimbursement eligibility to include certain EMS services provided without transport, reflecting common practices where treatment is delivered on scene.

Act 145 expands workers’ compensation coverage for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to include volunteer and part-time firefighters and EMS personnel. Previously, PTSD coverage was limited to full-time firefighters and law enforcement officers. This change recognizes the mental health impacts of emergency response work are not limited by employment status.

Act 212 creates a limited levy limit exemption for qualifying regional EMS systems serving at least eight municipalities or covering 232 square miles. Eligible systems must also be approved by a referendum of voters within the service area, with continued eligibility requiring a referendum every five years. The exemption allows levy increases to fund regional EMS costs that would otherwise exceed municipal levy limits, with annual growth capped at inflation plus two percent.

The Wisconsin Towns Association originally proposed the concept of a regional EMS levy limit exemption to help address ongoing funding challenges. While the framework as enacted reflects that goal, ongoing referenda requirements likely limit its practical use for many towns.

PFAS and Environmental Regulation

Acts 200 and 201 release more than \$125 million in previously authorized PFAS funding for testing, monitoring, and remediation programs administered by the Department of Natural Resources. Act 201

also modifies the state’s spills law by creating targeted liability exemptions for municipalities and other “innocent landowners” who did not cause PFAS contamination at affected sites.

Act 169 allows municipalities and counties that own landfills to retain Environmental Repair Fees for the purpose of repaying Clean Water Fund loans used to install wastewater treatment systems.

Planning and Development

Act 68 revises subdivision plat approval procedures by requiring nonbinding pre-submission review, allowing conditional approval of preliminary infrastructure plans, and limiting requirements related to installation or acceptance of public improvements. Towns and villages should review subdivision ordinances and administrative practices with legal counsel ahead of the act’s July 1, 2026 effective date.

Act 173 makes changes to comprehensive planning, rezoning approvals, and tax incremental financing **for cities and villages only**. Towns were excluded following opposition by the Wisconsin Towns Association, while city and village advocates did not oppose the measure.

The act requires cities and villages to include minimum and maximum residential density standards in the land-use element of their comprehensive plans and to approve rezoning or development requests that are consistent with those plans. This elevates comprehensive plan density language from guidance to a binding regulatory framework, making coordination between comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances essential.

Village officials should work with a municipal attorney prior to the January 1, 2028 effective date to ensure that comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances are aligned and legally defensible.

Utility Aid for Energy Storage

Act 163 extends Wisconsin’s utility aid program to include qualifying energy storage facilities (such as battery storage) and liquified natural gas storage facilities. New utility aid payments of \$1,000 per megawatt of nameplate capacity begin in 2027, distributed to municipalities and counties in the same manner as traditional utility aid.

Property Tax Exemption for Campgrounds

Act 117 exempts certain prefabricated recreational structures, including camping trailers located in licensed campgrounds, from property taxation. This act was adopted as a follow-up to the 2023 personal property tax repeal, clarifying that these camper units should be treated as exempt personal property rather than taxable real property.

As with past personal property tax exemptions, the act includes ongoing state aid to replace lost local revenues. Beginning in 2027, aid payments will be made through the personal property tax repeal aid program and recalculated at regular intervals to account for changes in campground structures statewide.

WisDOT: Project Solicitation Announced for the Agricultural Roads Improvement Program (Round 2)

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) recently released application materials for the Agricultural Roads Improvement Program (ARIP) 2026–2027 Round 2 project solicitation cycle.

ARIP is a segregated revenue (SEG) funded grant appropriation that was initially established in the 2023– 2025 biennium. For the current 2026–2027 biennium, this program sets aside \$120 million to reimburse local governments to improve deteriorating Class B and weight restricted roads classified as local roads or minor collectors that restrict the ability of agricultural and forestry producers to transport full loads of goods. The highway, bridge, or culvert improved by the project must provide access to agricultural lands or facilities used for the production of agricultural goods, including forest products, and the improved route or structure must be used by at least one producer.

ARIP is a reimbursement program, which may pay up to a maximum of 90% of total eligible project costs, with the balance of the eligible costs funded by the local unit of government. The program is housed under the Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP) statute, Wis. Stat. 86.31 (3o). More information about ARIP, including the full list of eligibility requirements, is available [here](#).

In the previous Round 1 project solicitation, WisDOT awarded ARIP funding to 29 new projects across 28 Wisconsin counties totaling nearly \$50 million in state cost share.

The 2026 Round 2 ARIP solicitation period will distribute \$70 million in ARIP funding. Unsuccessful project applicants from Round 1 will have the opportunity to advance their application for award consideration in this round. Applications for Round 2 will be due to WisDOT by 5:00 PM on Monday, June 29. Projects awarded in Round 2 are anticipated to be announced by late October 2026. The awards are selected by a statewide discretionary selection committee comprised of approximately 21 members from the agricultural sector, forestry/timber sector, and representatives from Wisconsin municipalities.

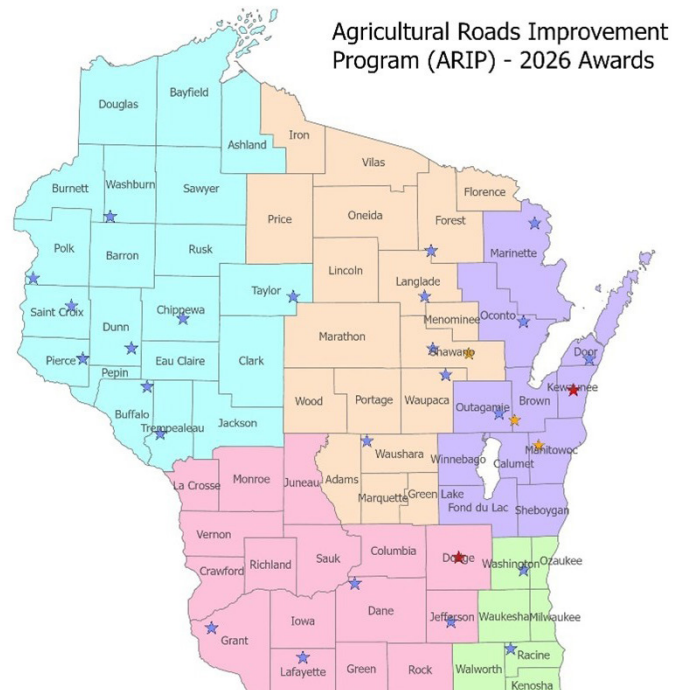
Additional information and a video tutorial for the ARIP Round 2 solicitation is available on the WisDOT ARIP Program Webpage.

If you have any questions about ARIP, please contact ARIP Program Manager Hillary Pelton at hillary.pelton@dot.wi.gov or 608-261-4443.

WisDOT will notify municipalities regarding the availability of additional ARIP training opportunities in the future, along with any other important dates and deadlines.



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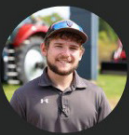
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Cleaning Up Junk: Public Nuisances, Dilapidated Buildings, and Junked Vehicles

Q. What authority does a town have to order property owners to clean up junk piles in their yards?

A. Many local government officials ask what can be done about property owners who fail to maintain their homes and allow unsightly junk and debris to accumulate on their land, creating potential health and safety hazards. Nuisance properties can be difficult to deal with, as property owners may be uncooperative, and preventing nuisances from recurring may require ongoing monitoring and enforcement action. Generally, the best first step is to send a warning letter to the property owner describing the nuisance and how it violates local ordinances, setting a deadline for specific clean-up action, and outlining potential penalties for failure to comply. If the owner refuses to negotiate a plan for resolving the issue, then the municipality may take further legal action as authorized by state law and local ordinances.

Villages and towns authorized to exercise village powers may enact public nuisance ordinances to regulate junk storage and other nuisance issues under chapter 823 of the Wisconsin Statutes. The statutes do not define the term public nuisance, so your local ordinance must clearly identify exactly which activities and conditions constitute nuisances, as well as any exceptions to the rules, such as agricultural exceptions to vehicle and tire storage restrictions. The ordinance should indicate how notice will be provided to property owners prior to enforcement action. Listed penalties should include daily forfeitures for violations, in addition to authority for the municipality to seek injunctive relief, abatement orders, and other equitable relief in court. As with any local ordinance, the municipality must have a plan for issuing and enforcing citations. A sample ordinance is available in the Wisconsin Town Law Forms.

Village powers only allow the regulation of public health, safety, or welfare concerns. A public nuisance ordinance generally cannot require the removal of junk for purely aesthetic reasons. If an ordinance exceeds legal authority, or infringes on any constitutionally protected rights, it may be challenged in court. Therefore, it's important to work with your local municipal attorney to draft enforceable ordinance terms. Local zoning ordinances may provide some further authority to regulate nuisances as prohibited land uses, such as limiting the circumstances in which RVs may be parked in front yards or prohibiting salvage businesses in areas zoned for residential use. Commercial junkyards and salvage dealers are also subject to Wisconsin DOT and DNR licensing and regulation requirements. County health departments may be able to help investigate and address nuisances that present health hazards, as well.

Q. What can local governments do to clean up old buildings that have fallen into disrepair?

A. One tool a town or village can use to address dilapidated structures is a raze order. Under Wis. Stat. § 66.0413, if a structure is determined to be “old, dilapidated, or out of repair, and consequently unsafe, unsanitary, or otherwise unfit for human habitation and unreasonable to repair,” the municipality may

order the owner to raze the building. Repairs are presumed to be unreasonable if the cost of repairs would exceed 50% of the building's value (according to a statute-specified formula). To make this determination, the town or village board would typically work with a building inspector to identify necessary repairs, get a contractor's estimate for the cost of those repairs, and compare the estimate to the structure's assessed value as provided by the local assessor. A building inspector may need to apply to the court for a special inspection warrant under § 66.0119 if a property owner refuses to consent to the inspector entering their property for inspection purposes.

A raze order must be properly served on the property owner according to statutory requirements, and the order must contain a deadline for the owner to comply. If the owner misses the deadline, the town or village may seek a court order requiring compliance and/or arrange for the structure to be razed at the municipality's cost and then add a special charge to the property's tax bill for the expense. Municipalities also have the option to file a public nuisance claim against the property owner in circuit court, though this type of court claim may be costly and difficult to prove. See § 823.21 and § 66.0413(1)(k). A sample "Resolution and Order to Raze Building" is available in the Wisconsin Town Law Forms.

Q. An area resident is storing multiple junked cars and car parts on his property, some of which are in the town road right of way. Can the town board require him to remove these eyesores?

A. State law requires landowners to get a permit from their town or village board before storing junked automobiles or auto parts outside. Wis. Stat. § 175.25. The statute also requires a permit to store junked automobiles or parts within certain setbacks from highways, including within 500 feet of the center line of any town road; within 2,000 feet outside of the corporate limits of a city or village; or within 750 feet of the center line of any county trunk, state trunk or federal highway. A storage permit issued by a municipality must specify the number of junked vehicles and/or parts allowed on a property and set forth the conditions under which the junk may be stored. The town or village board may revoke a permit after a hearing at which the permit holder is found to have failed or refused to comply with the permit's requirements. Statute violations are enforced by the county sheriff's department – landowners may be fined up to \$50 for each day junked vehicles and vehicle parts are improperly stored.

In addition to the permitting authority granted by the statute, a village or a town that has been authorized to exercise village powers may adopt a junked vehicle ordinance to address public health, safety, and welfare concerns related to the storage of junked vehicles and parts. For example, such an ordinance could require the removal or draining of all junked vehicle tanks and engines to prevent pollution and limit fire hazards. A sample permit and ordinance are available in the Wisconsin Town Law Forms.

If vehicles are left in the right of way of a town or village road, Wisconsin law also gives town and village boards the authority to order the removal of "highway encroachments" under § 86.04. A sample removal order is in the Wisconsin Town Law Forms. If a landowner fails to remove an encroachment within 30 days after being served with such an order, a dollar per day fine begins to accrue. The board may then seek a court judgment ordering the landowner to pay the fine and remove the encroachment by a certain date. If the landowner fails to comply with the court order, the board may remove the encroachment and charge the cost of removal to the landowner.

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Wisconsin Towns Association

Clerk College

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Deadline to register: May 18, 2026.

Dates, locations and all other details available at www.wisctowns.com.

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Town

County

Mailing Address

City/State

Zip

Telephone

Email

Make check payable to the Wisconsin Towns Association and mail along with registration form to:
Wisconsin Towns Association; W7686 County Road MMM; Shawano, WI 54166.
Full refund available until June 4, 2026. After this date, no refunds will be made.



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

Upcoming Training Opportunities for Clerks

Spring is an especially busy time for clerks due to the Spring Election, preparation for the Board of Review and the Annual Meeting, and a barrage of reports on top of the already heavy workload assigned to the clerk. To support clerks with timely education, the Wisconsin Towns Association has partnered with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Local Government Education program and the Wisconsin Department of Revenue to develop several webinars and workshops to help clerks tackle these springtime deadlines.

Spring Clerk Workshops throughout Wisconsin

The Spring Clerk Workshops are underway in locations across Wisconsin throughout the month of May. These workshops are an opportunity for *all* clerks to network and to learn more about some of the most pressing issues for town clerks. Incorporating the results from the clerk needs assessment survey on the top training needs, these workshops cover the Form C/CT report, alcohol beverage licensing, accounting software, election administration, and grantwriting. These workshops are designed to be highly interactive so in-person attendance is strongly encouraged, however, the nature of being a town clerk is that many clerks work at full-time jobs outside of their clerk role and have other commitments. To that end, a virtual session will be offered June 1st -3rd from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. each day, and these sessions will be recorded. For full agenda and registration see: <https://www.wisctowns.com/bootcamp-form/>.

Clerk College Class of 2026-2027 starting in June

Clerk College is designed to be a dedicated, year-long program centered on mastering the role of clerk while developing leadership skills to build a network of clerks who are leaders and mentors. Clerk College is structured in a hybrid format, with many courses in the curriculum offered virtually and students must commit to attending all sessions of the program, including three in-person courses each lasting two days. Clerk College is often mistaken for a beginners-only course, and while it is very beneficial for new clerks to have all the training and support possible, Clerk College is designed for seasoned clerks as well, and having a mix of expertise in the group enhances the experience. The schedule for 2026-2027 Clerk College is now available at: <https://www.wisctowns.com/clerk-college/>.

Form C/CT webinars

The Municipal Financial Report Form C/CT is due by May 15th and failure to meet this deadline results in a reduction of General Transportation Aid. Due to its complexity, completing the Form C/CT was the top training request amongst town clerks in the Clerk Needs Assessment survey. To meet this demand, a series of webinars on completing the Form C/CT were held throughout March and April. These webinars were recorded and can still be accessed by registering at: <https://localgovernment.extension.wisc.edu/distance-education/>. Registering for the webinar provides access to all three of the recorded webinars, along with supplemental materials.

Alcohol Beverage Licensing Webinar

Springtime also means preparation for the retail alcohol license application period. The Alcohol Beverage Licensing webinar is offered as a two-part series covering Wisconsin's alcohol beverage licensing laws, updates on recent law changes, current guidance, administrative requirements, and common challenges. The webinar was held April 30th and May 1st but was recorded and available to access at anytime, for more information and to register to view the recording see: <https://localgovernment.extension.wisc.edu/distance-education/>.

Lunch and Learn Webinar Series

The monthly Lunch and Learn webinar series featuring clerk-focused content continues to be well-received, and I am excited about several upcoming offerings including an overview of the Wisconsin Deferred Compensation program in early May and Maintenance of Effort webinar with the Department of Revenue at the end of the month. The Lunch and Learn webinars are recorded and can be accessed at: <https://www.wisctowns.com/resources/videos/>. I am always taking suggestions from clerks on topics for future Lunch and Learn webinars, please email ideas to: wtowns@wisctowns.com.

Municipal Clerk Appreciation Week May 3rd-9th

Lastly, May 3rd through May 9th is recognized as Professional Municipal Clerks Appreciation Week both by the International Institute of Municipal Clerks and here in Wisconsin by proclamation by Governor Tony Evers. This week is set aside to recognize and celebrate the contributions of all of Wisconsin's 1,850 municipal clerks and 72 county clerks and our commitment to public service. We are recognized for our many vital responsibilities, the essential role we play in election administration, and dedication to transparency and neutrality in our duties. Thank you to all my fellow clerks for all you do for local government and for the people of Wisconsin.

Spring 2026

Wisconsin Towns Association

TOWN CLERK WORKSHOPS

Agenda available at www.wisctowns.com.

Lunch, snacks, materials included.

\$50

Payment must be received 10 days in advance of workshop.

\$65 Late Registration



Select date and location you will be attending below.

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Fri., April 17 | Darien Public Library, 46 Park St., Darien |
| Tues., April 28 | Western Technical College, 120 E. Milwaukee St., Tomah |
| Wed., April 29 | Town of Cross Plains, 3734 County Road P, Cross Plains |
| Thurs., May 7 | NorthCentral Technical College, 312 Forrest Ave., Antigo |
| Thur., May 14 | Town of Grand Chute, 1900 W. Grand Chute Blvd, Grand Chute |
| Mon., May 18 | Jump River Electrical Cooperative, 1102 W 9th St. N, Ladysmith |
| Thurs., May 21 | Town of Grand View, 22010 Grandview Blvd, Grand View |
| June 1-3 | Virtual 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. each day. *Will be recorded. |

Name

Email

Town

County

Make check payable to the Wisconsin Towns Association and mail along with registration forms to: Wisconsin Towns Association; W7686 County Road MMM; Shawano, WI 54166.

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 food. Refund requests submitted 30 or more days after the event will not be processed.

Wisconsin Towns Association

Work Zone Training Course 201:

2026 WISCONSIN WORK ZONE TRAINING MANUAL

\$99

This course is for town road workers and officials to obtain work zone safety training according to WisDOT’s new requirements contained in the updated 2026 Wisconsin Work Zone Field Manual. The program builds on the 101 training provided at Town Road School, but can be taken as a stand alone workshop.



Registration Deadline: May 4.
Select your training below.

| ✘ | 10am – 2pm | Location |
|---|--------------|---|
| | Wed., May 6 | Old Hickory Golf Club, W7596 WI-33, Beaver Dam |
| | Wed., May 13 | Village of Harrison, W5298 STH 114, Menasha |
| | Wed., May 20 | Bank of Cashton, 724 Front Street, Cashton |
| | Wed., May 27 | Town of Clinton Community Center, 940 STH 8, Poskin |

Name

Email

Town

County

Address

Make check payable to the Wisconsin Towns Association and mail along with registration form to: WTA; W7686 County Road MMM; Shawano, WI 54166. Questions: Gary Kennedy, 920-323-6500 or hwygaryk@gmail.com

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 food. Refund requests submitted 30 or more days after the event will not be processed.



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Together, we'll reflect on the progress we've made and the challenges still ahead as we work to preserve a safe, modern, and interconnected transportation system that keeps Wisconsin moving forward, strong, and competitive.

Candidates and legislators will be in attendance.

**Your voice and perspective matter.
We hope you'll join the conversation.**

Regional Roundtables

7:30-9:00 a.m.

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Appleton, WI 54914

MONDAY, MAY 18
Southwest: La Crosse

Radisson Hotel La Crosse
200 Second Street South
La Crosse, WI 54601

TUESDAY, MAY 19
Northwest: Eau Claire

Lismore Hotel Eau Claire
333 Gisbon Street
Eau Claire, WI 54701

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20
North Central: Wausau

Hilton Garden Inn Wausau
151401 County Rd NN
Wausau, WI 54401

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27
Southeast: Oak Creek

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Hilton Oak Creek Milwaukee
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Oak Creek, WI 53154

THURSDAY, MAY 28
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- Know how many culverts you have and where they are located?
- Know if any of your town's culverts are at risk of failing?
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