

Wisconsin Towns Association

June 2026



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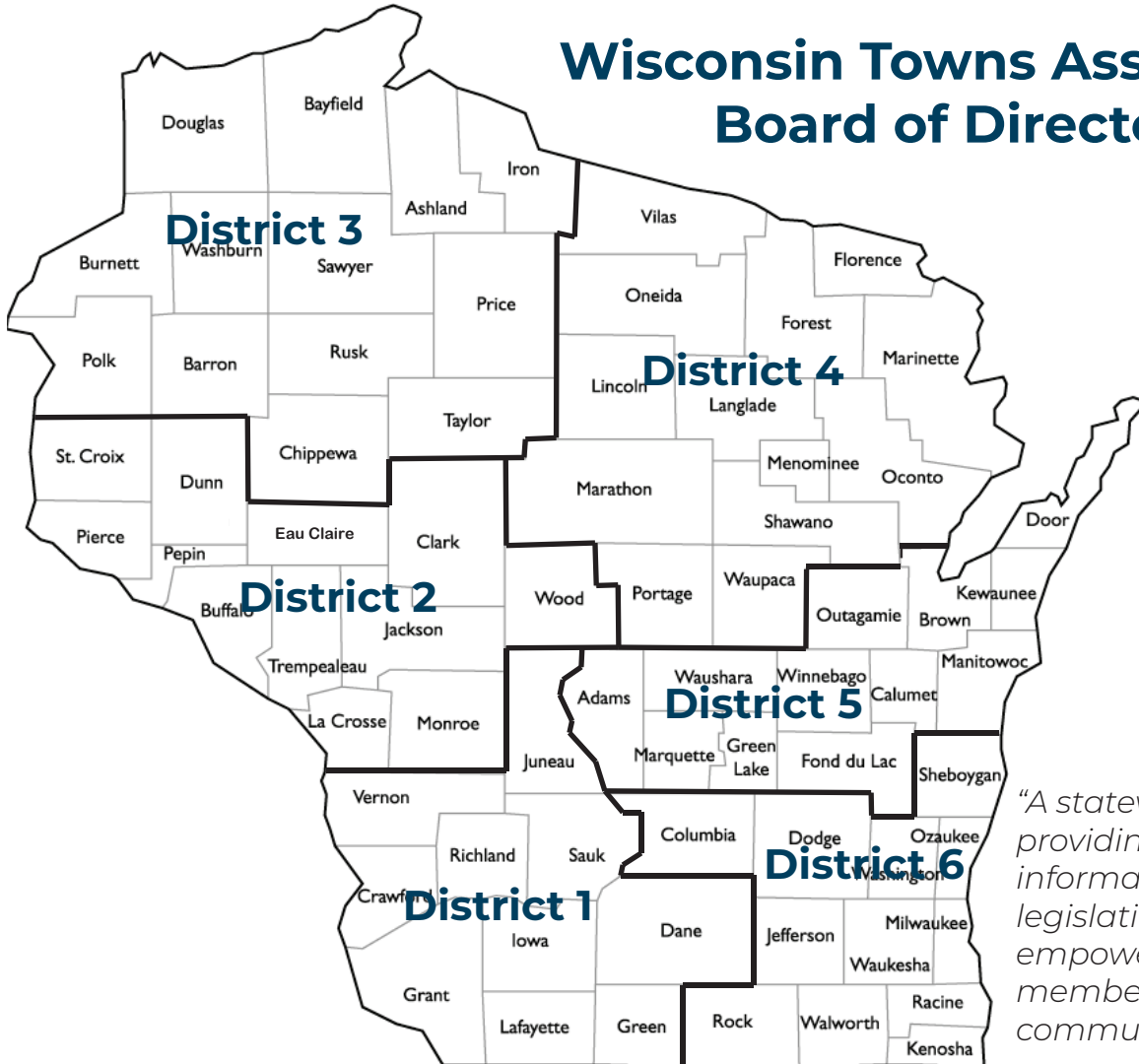
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Wisconsin Towns

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Empowering Town Officials

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



By
Mike Koles

NATaT Fly-IN

The WTA recently sent 11 participants to the National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT) Fly-In. NATaT is our sister organization that represents multiple state associations covering over 10,000 towns and townships across the country. All member states have “townships” except Wisconsin and New York, which have towns. Yes, if you’ve been calling your local government a township, then you’re not correct. New York pioneered the term “town” government, and Wisconsin’s constitution was largely borrowed from New York, hence our state also using the term.

For those unfamiliar with the term “Fly-In,” it is a frequently used term to describe a legislative advocacy event in Washington D.C. during which participants “fly” there to lobby senators and congressman.

Wisconsin’s nine town officials and two WTA staff focused our legislative requests on infrastructure investment and preserving local right-of-way authority. Regarding the latter, for the last nearly decade, WTA and NATaT have had to fight against the notion that a bureaucrat in Washington knows how to manage your road ditch better than you do. This idea has been spearheaded by the Federal Communications Commission Chair and some of the telecommunications companies who feel the rules you put in place to protect your road, transportation safety, culverts, and the environment are an impediment to deployment of broadband, cable, and cellular services. While there are instances of bad actor communities who implement too much regulation, most towns and

townships promote telecommunications deployment and efficiently permit use of the right-of-way while simultaneously protecting infrastructure and public safety. The solution to a few challenging situations is not to deregulate use of your road ditch by truly or de facto taking away local officials’ authority to manage their own affairs across the entire country. H.R.2289 and the associated amendments would do just that and is the antithesis to the federal system whose 250th birthday we are celebrating this year.



WTA Fly-In Attendees with Congressman Tiffany

As was noted in my April magazine article, the five-year surface transportation authorization, which was embedded in a much broader bill called the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), is set to expire on September 30, 2026. Thus, Fly-In attendees advocated that several town priorities be included in the pending reauthorization of transportation funding.

- Reauthorization must invest in infrastructure at a level that allows for not only condition stabilization, but also improvement.

- Existing funding needs to be reallocated from discretionary federal grants to formula funds that can be managed by the states (i.e., less federal grants and more direct money).
- Ensure bridge formula funding is equitably dispersed between the states and require that at least 25% of funding for non-federal bridges (called “off-system” bridges) is allocated to local government owned bridges.
- Change the definition of rural, which is currently any community under 200,000 (H.R. 502)
- Create a small bridge funding program for structures between 6 and 20 foot in span.
- Create a federal Agriculture Road Improvement Program similar to Wisconsin’s (H.R.4585).



WTA Fly-In Attendees with Senator Baldwin

Kono wins Wisconsin Idea Award

Melissa Kono, UW-Extension/WTA Clerk Outreach Specialist and Professor of Community Development, was recently provided the Wisconsin Idea Teaching Award. This is one of the most prestigious recognitions of University of Wisconsin work and the pinnacle award for

those engaging in outreach-based education. The Wisconsin Idea was first coined by UW President Charles Van Hise in 1905 when he stated: *“I shall never be content until the beneficent influence of the University reaches every family of the state.”* These few, but critical words are the foundation of the UW-Extension mission and the fuel behind the UW’s strong belief that the impact of the university should be felt by all citizens in every corner of Wisconsin.



Mike Koles, Carol Nawrocki, Melissa Kono, and Joe Ruth at Melissa’s award ceremony

While Melissa’s victories in helping to transform communities are many, research and education for clerks and related to elections was specifically noted for its importance in preserving democracy. One of her colleagues, Professor Pat L. Malone, best described Melissa’s work: *“Her career is an outstanding example of what outreach education to rural Wisconsin can achieve when it is rooted in community, driven by data, and led with compassion.”*

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Emergency Management

Q. How does a town declare an emergency?

A. Town boards have the authority to declare, by ordinance or resolution, an emergency within their jurisdiction. Conditions rising to the level of an emergency include a “riot or a civil commotion, a disaster, or imminent threat of disaster that impairs transportation, food or fuel supplies, medical care, fire, health or police protection, or other critical systems of the local unit of government.” Wis. Stat. § 323.11. If the town board is able to meet and adopt an ordinance or resolution proclaiming an emergency, it may then take whatever actions are necessary and expedient for the health, safety, protection, and welfare of persons and property within its jurisdiction. This includes the power to bar, restrict, or remove unnecessary traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian, from the highways. See Wis. Stat. § 323.14(4)(a). If the town board is unable to meet promptly due to the emergency situation, the town chairperson may order by proclamation whatever actions are necessary and expedient for the health, safety, protection, and welfare of the residents and their property. Wis. Stat. § 323.14(4)(b). However, the proclamation is subject to ratification, alteration, modification, or repeal by the governing body as soon as that body can meet. Note that any subsequent action taken by the governing body does not affect the validity of the prior proclamation.

There is a sample *Resolution Declaring an Emergency* available in the *Wisconsin Town Law Forms* book. The Forms book can be found online: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/townlaw/toc> and the clerk may have a hardcopy of the softcover book which is sent out to each town by the state every two years.

Q. Are towns required to adopt emergency management plans?

A. Yes. As part of implementing a consistent statewide emergency management system, the county board has been delegated the responsibility of adopting an emergency management plan and program that are compatible with the state’s plan of emergency management. See Wis. Stat. § 323.14(1)(a). This includes designating someone to serve as the head of emergency management and appointing a county emergency management committee to establish rules and policies.

A town also is required to develop and adopt an emergency management plan and program compatible with the state’s plan of emergency management. Wis. Stat. § 323.14(1)(b). As part of this provision, the town also must designate a head of emergency management services. The town chairperson is often designated the emergency management officer for the town. You may find a sample *Resolution Appointing Emergency Management Officer* in the *Wisconsin Town Law Forms* book.

Most towns have already adopted an emergency management plan. So, it would be wise to check with your clerk to see if it can be located. Under Wis. Stat. § 323.15(1)(b), the county’s head of emergency management is responsible for coordinating and assisting in the development of these local emergency management plans. This person is also responsible for integrating these local plans into the county’s emergency management plan. Some counties have provided a template to local municipalities to assist them in the development of these plans. If you are unable to locate a copy of the plan in the town’s office,

check with your county emergency management department as they may have one. If you cannot locate one at all, check with your county's emergency management department to see if they have a template that can be used to develop one.

Q. What kind of information needs to be included in an emergency management plan?

A. In general, the plan will review the town's risk factors and the emergency management officer's ability to make the determination on whether to implement the emergency management plan should an incident occur. The plan should list response procedures such as: 1) assessing the situation and determining the seriousness and extent of the incident; 2) establishing command posts; 3) locating and calling in emergency personnel; 4) providing notifications and communicating to the public; and 5) executing the tactical plans. The plan also will lay out the responsibilities of the fire department, EMS providers, public works, highway employees, and volunteers. It may also list emergency shelters, means of transportation, and relocation information. Finally, it should include a list of emergency contacts and their respective phone numbers. At a minimum, the emergency contact list will include the current chairperson, supervisors, clerk, and other contacts such as the fire chief, sheriff, public works supervisor, and building inspector. Since the individuals holding these positions may change it is best to review the plan often enough to ensure that it includes an accurate list of emergency contacts and their respective phone numbers.

Q. Can the town contract with other municipalities to obtain or provide joint emergency services?

A. Yes. A town may contract for emergency management services with other political subdivisions, agencies, and federally recognized American Indian tribes. If entering agreements with these type of entities across state lines, the agreements must be approved by and then filed with the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs. Wis. Stat. § 323.14(2)(b) & (c). If the town has the resources to do so, it also may enter into intergovernmental agreements under Wis. Stat. § 66.0301, to provide emergency management services, to combine offices, and to finance emergency management programs with other governmental units.

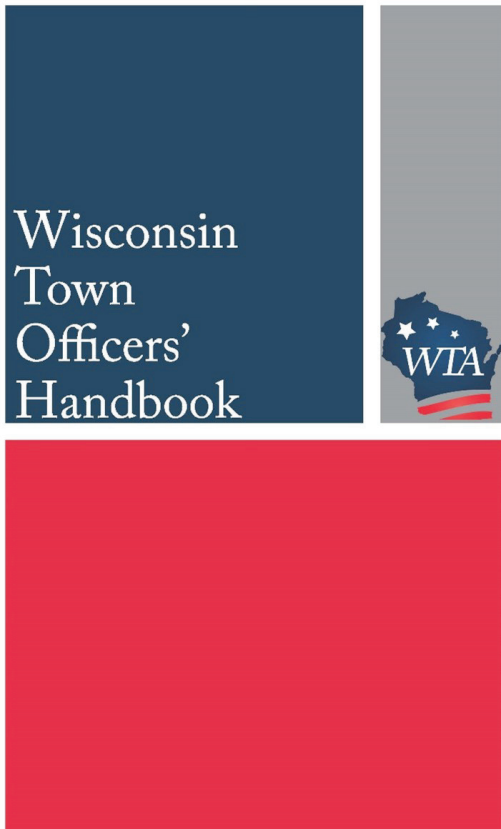
Q. May the town designate a different location to meet during a state of emergency?

Yes. If the town board is unable to conduct the affairs of the town at its usual place of business during an emergency, it may designate a temporary location to do so. The town board "shall proceed to establish and designate by ordinance, resolution, or other manner, alternate or substitute places as the temporary locations of government where all, or any part of the public business may be transacted and conducted during the emergency situation." Wis. Stat. § 323.52(1).

Q. Do the state public bidding laws applicable to towns apply in emergency situations?

A. Under Wis. Stat. § 60.47(5), the public bidding laws are optional "with respect to public contracts for the repair and construction of public facilities when damage or threatened damage to the facility creates an emergency, as declared by resolution of the town board, that endangers the public health or welfare of the town." However, this exemption no longer applies when the town board declares that the emergency no longer exists. So, it's possible to take advantage of this bidding exemption in the immediate aftermath of a storm, flood, or other event.

Fourth Edition Town Officers' Handbook



Fourth Edition, 2023

The 2023 version of the Wisconsin Town Officers' Handbook is now available! This newly revised Fourth Edition incorporates recent law changes through the end of the 2021-2022 Wisconsin Legislative Session.

Topics discussed include ethics, open meetings, public records, town highways, bidding for public contracts, and zoning and related land use regulation, just to name a few. This is the "go-to" reference book for seasoned town officers and new officials who want to understand their role, powers, and duties and do things "by the book".

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Maintenance of Effort Reporting for Emergency Services

All municipalities must annually certify to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR) that they have maintained a level of fire and EMS services that is at least equivalent to that provided in the previous year. Municipalities with populations of 20,000 or less are not subject to law enforcement certification requirements. See Wis. Stat. § 66.0608(2m)(a).

For fire and EMS, local governments must certify that any two of the following have been maintained at a level at least equivalent to the previous year. You need not certify the same two every year.

1. Expenditures for fire and EMS services, not including capital expenditures or expenditures of grant moneys received from the state or federal government.
2. The number of full-time equivalent fire and EMS personnel employed by or assigned to the local government, not including fire fighters and emergency medical services personnel whose positions are funded by grants received from the state or federal government. Note that volunteer personnel who responded to at least 40 percent of calls to which volunteers responded may be counted as full-time for these purposes.
3. The level of training and maintenance of licensure for fire and EMS personnel.
4. Response times for fire and EMS services, adjusted for call location.

WTA suggests that towns and villages maintain records for all four of these options, even those not used for certification, in preparation for future certification that may use alternate criteria. As these are self-certifications, interpretation of these criteria is ultimately up to each community with guidance provided by DOR (see below).

Reporting – Step One: Fill Out Appropriate Form(s)

The person(s) in charge of providing fire protective services and EMS services (i.e. the fire chief, EMS director, etc.) are required to fill out the appropriate certification form(s) indicating which criteria were maintained in 2024 at levels at least equivalent to 2023 (certification in 2026 compares calendar year 2025 to calendar year 2024). Completed forms must be signed by the person in charge of providing the relevant service(s) and returned to the municipal clerk by June 15th each year. A deputy or interim official should complete the certification form in departments with a vacant fire chief/EMS director position. DOR has indicated that the person in charge of providing a service is statutorily required to provide these certifications, regardless of whether they work for a municipal or private department.

- SL-306 – Law Enforcement Certification (if population exceeds 20,000)
- SL-307 – Combined Fire/EMS Certification
- SL-308 – Fire Services Certification
- SL-309 – EMS Certification

Form SL-307 may be used instead of separate Forms SL-308 and SL-309 in towns and villages served by a combined fire and EMS provider – use the form(s) that make sense for your situation. Provide copies of relevant forms and work with providers as soon as possible to ensure adequate time for filing.

Reporting – Step Two: Clerk Files Certification on MyDORGov.

All municipal clerks are required to submit a maintenance of effort report (Form SL-305) online to DOR by July 1st each year through MyDORGov. This submission will require the clerk to answer a few questions and upload the appropriate forms that have been signed by the person in charge of providing relevant services (see above). Note that Section A of the maintenance of effort report on MyDORGov, relating to law enforcement, should only be filled out by towns and villages with populations greater than 20,000. All towns and villages, regardless of population, must fill out the remainder of the report. Failure to successfully certify maintenance of effort by July 1st will result in a one-time penalty of 15% of the local government's total shared revenue (15% of regular and supplemental county and municipal aid). Importantly, while shared revenue may be spent on fire or EMS, towns and villages are not required to do so even though shared revenue is tied to this maintenance of effort requirement as a penalty.

The maintenance of effort report allows for certification of certain exceptions in lieu of normal certification. These exceptions only apply in the year following a change in how service is provided, with regular certification required again in subsequent years. See Wis. Stat. § 66.0608(2m)(c). Specifically, local governments may certify that one of the following occurred in lieu of the normal certification:

1. The local government consolidated fire and/or EMS service with another municipality, municipalities, or county.
2. The local government entered into a contract for fire or EMS service with a private entity.
3. The local government established or joined a newly established fire protection or EMS agency.

Consider, for example, a town with the same EMS service provider year-over-year that joined a newly created fire department in 2025. That town would need to certify maintenance of effort for EMS but not fire. Rather, that town would certify that it joined a new fire department in lieu of certifying maintenance of effort for fire protection. Both certifications occur on the same Form SL-305 filed on MyDORGov.

Additional Resources

Certification forms and additional resources, including answers to common questions, are available on DOR's MOE Reporting Webpage: <https://www.revenue.wi.gov/Pages/Form/moe-reporting.aspx>. You will note from DOR guidance that these are self-certifications based on local decision making. DOR provides examples of how to navigate MOE requirements, but those examples are not the only reasonable means of determining certification (there is a lot of flexibility in self-certification).

WTA will be hosting a Lunch and Learn webinar walking through the MOE reporting process step by step. Information about that webinar will be emailed and posted on the WTA website as it becomes available. Additional questions about the MOE certification, forms, and online reporting should be directed to DOR at lgs@wisconsin.gov.



“In Pursuit of Place Summit” Comes to Green Bay This June

Green Bay is set to welcome a powerful convergence of ideas and innovation this summer as it hosts the “In Pursuit of Place Summit” from June 22–25 at the legendary Lambeau Field. The national event will bring together community leaders, planners, and changemakers dedicated to shaping vibrant, connected places across the country.

Organized by UW–Extension in partnership with several major university extension programs—including the University of Minnesota, Missouri, Purdue, Michigan State, and Nebraska—the summit is supported by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development. Together, these collaborators have designed an immersive experience that blends inspiration with practical application.

Rooted in the principles of placemaking, the summit focuses on creating spaces that promote economic vitality, foster relationships, and enhance quality of life. Attendees will explore innovative approaches through a mix of speaker sessions, guided tours, and interactive workshops.

The event begins with a lively tailgate-style social at Stadium View Sports Bar, celebrating Wisconsin traditions of beer, cheese curds, and brats. Highlights throughout the week include a tour of the Tiletown District, an evening with the award-winning author and storyteller Michael Perry, and hands-on field tours showcasing both urban and rural success stories. A unique workshop at Ariens Hill will even feature a creative face-off between human and AI facilitators and illustrators to literally “draw conclusions” from attendee’s experiences.

The summit concludes with fast-paced “flash talks” and a collaborative closing session, ensuring participants leave energized and equipped to make an impact.

With registration closing June 15, this distinctive gathering offers a timely opportunity to connect, learn, and reimagine community. For more information, contact Todd Johnson at UW–Extension at twjohnson6@wisc.edu.



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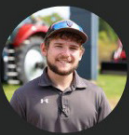
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Alcohol Licensing: Local Ordinances

Q. A local bar owner has a “Class B” liquor license but hasn’t had the bar open all year. If the town already issued its full quota of “Class B” liquor licenses, can the board refuse to renew this person’s license on the basis that they aren’t using it? The town board would like the license to go to someone who will actually operate a retail alcohol business in the town.

A. Under state law, a retail alcohol license holder is not required to operate or keep their business open a certain number of days per year. Licensees have discretion over whether and how long to keep their businesses in operation, meaning a bar owner could hold onto a liquor license even if their establishment is closed for most of the year or doesn’t open at all. However, municipalities may adopt local “continuation of business” ordinances requiring that licensees keep their licensed premises open for a certain number of months or days per year as a condition of retaining their license. Violation of such an ordinance could be used as grounds for non-renewing or revoking a license. However, if a town or village board newly adopts this type of ordinance, licensees should be given a full licensing year to come into compliance before the new regulation is enforced. A sample ordinance is available on the WTA website.

Q. Can the town board refuse to renew a bar’s license to sell alcohol if the owner has outstanding delinquent property taxes owed to the town?

A. A municipality may only refuse to issue or renew an alcohol license on this basis if there is a local ordinance in place requiring payment of municipal debts as a condition of obtaining a license. Importantly, such an ordinance may only be enforced in relation to amounts owed to the municipality (not delinquent county or state taxes, etc.). The ordinance must also apply to *all* licenses issued by the municipality, not just alcohol licenses. For example, the ordinance could require that, as a condition of obtaining or renewing any town license, all local taxes, assessments, special charges, fees, or other outstanding amounts, including but not limited to municipal forfeitures from a violation of any town ordinance, must be paid on a current basis. The ordinance must provide the applicant with notice and other due process protections as required by law. Applicants must also be given adequate time to come into compliance after such an ordinance is newly adopted. A sample ordinance is available from the WTA office.

Q. Can a municipality limit the maximum number of bars it will have by setting even stricter retail alcohol license quotas than those outlined in state law?

A. Yes, a town or village board may adopt an ordinance limiting the maximum number of each type of retail alcohol license it will issue at any time, beyond the restrictions of state law. State statutes only impose a quota for “Class B” liquor licenses. A municipality could use a local ordinance to adopt a stricter “Class B” liquor license quota (such as restricting the total number of “Class B” liquor licenses that may

issued at any time in the town to 5 despite the fact that the town's statutory quota is 8), or a municipality could adopt local quota restrictions for "Class A" liquor and Class "A" and Class "B" beer licenses.

Q. Can a town give town employees permission to sell beer at a concession stand in the town park?

A. Municipalities cannot issue retail alcohol licenses to themselves. For example, a town cannot set up a tavern in the town hall. However, municipalities can adopt an "ordinance, resolution, rule or regulation" to allow municipal officials and employees to sell beer in municipal parks without a retail alcohol license. Wis. Stat. § 125.06(6). Note that this exception is only for selling beer, *not* wine or intoxicating liquor.

Q. How long is the waiting period before a temporary ("picnic") license to sell beer and/or wine at a special event can be issued to a club, church, or other eligible community group?

A. The answer depends on the length of the event for which the temporary license was requested and whether the applicant plans to sell beer versus wine. If an event will last 4 or more days, or if a temporary **wine** license is requested, the minimum waiting period is 15 days between the date when the application is filed with the clerk and the date the license may be granted. However, state law gives municipalities the power to adopt local ordinances establishing the length of the waiting period required before granting a temporary license for an event that will last fewer than 4 days where only beer will be sold. Wis. Stat. § 125.04(3)(f). A town or village board could also use such an ordinance to delegate the authority to issue temporary licenses to a specific local official, such as the town clerk. See Wis. Stats. §§ 125.26(1) and 125.51(1)(a). Delegating this authority would make it possible for the designated local official to respond to last-minute requests for temporary licenses in a timely manner, without having to call a special town board meeting. A sample temporary license ordinance is available on the WTA website.

Q. Is the town board required to call a special board meeting to consider a request for a provisional license from someone who wants to open their bar or start work as a bartender as soon as possible?

A. The answer depends on whether the town has local ordinances regarding provisional licenses. A provisional license permits an applicant to engage in the activities that the regular retail alcohol license or operator's (bartenders') license they applied for allows while they wait for the board to consider their regular license application. A provisional license is good for up to 60 days or until a regular license is issued by the municipality, whichever comes first, but the provisional license must be revoked if the applicant fails to successfully qualify for a regular license. See Wis. Stats. §§ 125.185 and 125.17(5). Wisconsin law requires that any municipality that issues retail alcohol licenses or operators' licenses must also issue provisional licenses. However, municipalities may adopt local ordinances establishing standards for granting provisional retail alcohol licenses and provisional operator's licenses. Such an ordinance may also be used to designate a specific local official who will have authority to issue provisional licenses. For example, a town board could adopt an ordinance authorizing the town clerk to issue provisional licenses if certain standards laid out in the ordinance are met. This type of ordinance can be helpful to avoid having to hold a special town board meeting to vote on every provisional license request. Sample ordinances regarding the issuance of provisional retail alcohol licenses and provisional operators' licenses are available on the WTA website.

REACHING OUT



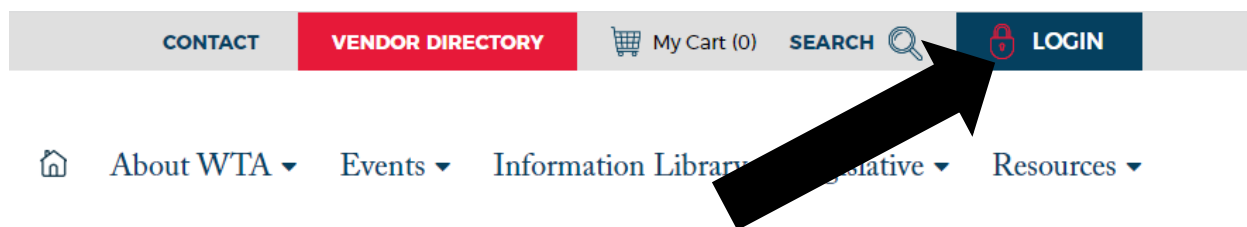
By Jake Langenhahn
Outreach Specialist

WTA Website Resources

One of the benefits of WTA membership is access to the WTA website (www.wisctowns.com). The WTA website serves many important functions. The website features news announcements, electronic workshop registration options, and has many resources that can assist town officials with their roles and responsibilities. This article will provide a brief overview of the website and explain a few useful features.

WTA Website Access

It is highly recommended that members login to their account when using the WTA website. Login access is only available to WTA members, and most resources on the WTA website are “locked” to those not logged in. Website access instructions were emailed to members on July 11th, 2025. If you are a continuing official that’s never accessed the website before, or you got into office since July 11th, 2025, please contact our office for instructions. You will have a username and password that is used to access the website. A common question the WTA office receives is what to do if someone forgets their password. If you provided your email during the website registration process, there is a way to reset your password through the website. When logging into the website there is a prompt that will allow you to reset your password. If an email was not provided, you will need to contact the WTA office. You can either call 715-526-3157 or email wtowns@wisctowns.com. Once your login credentials are set up, you will need to click the blue button that says “LOGIN” which is located at the top right of the WTA website page. Simply provide your credentials and you’ll be able to access website content that is locked to non-WTA members.



Look for the “LOGIN” button on the top right of the WTA website

Information Library

The Information Library is a repository for WTA magazine articles, website links, sample ordinances and resolutions, sample policies, and much more. It’s organized by topic so that users can simply navigate to their area of interest and review the information under said topic. There are currently **57** topics in the Information Library. Those topics include but are not limited to Bidding, Board of Review, Ethics, General Transportation Aid, Public Notices, Village Pagers, and a lot more! Please note that all information in the Information Library is general in nature and for informational purposes only. The contents of the Information Library should not be construed as legal advice. Additionally, there are many sample documents (e.g. ordinances, resolutions, policies) in the Information Library. It is important that

your town/village review these documents before adopting them, so that your town/village can adjust them to meet the needs of your community. Also, it is important for your town/village to work with its town/village attorney during the drafting and adoption process of those documents.

Contact Form

You can always contact the WTA office by calling 715-526-3157. There's also a Contact Form that's available through the website that you can use to submit emails to the legal hotline and general inquiries to other WTA staff. Here's an example of how this form could be useful. Let's say that it's past 4 p.m. and you have a question for the attorney hotline. Because the WTA phones are only available from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., you would have to wait until the following day to make your call. Alternatively, if you use the Contact Form, you can submit your question after 4 p.m. Note that because the attorneys only take calls and emails between 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., you will have to wait until typically the following business day for an email response.



Click on "CONTACT" to access the WTA website's Contact Form

Event Calendar

The WTA maintains an Events Calendar that features important upcoming events. These include workshop dates, county unit meeting dates, and more! On the home page, hover your cursor over "Events" and then select "Event Calendar" on the menu that appears. One useful feature is that you can click on the individual event in the Event Calendar to learn more about the event (e.x. location). Also, clicking on a county unit meeting will allow you to view the meeting agenda and location.

Member Update Form

We encourage our members to make necessary updates to your town/village officers' contact information in a timely fashion. If your town ever needs to make an update, you can do so through the online member update form. This new feature is available in the rotating banner on the front page of the WTA website. Simply look for the banner that says "Stay Connected" and click on "Member Update Form". After you click on the button, a new webpage will open. You can update the town/village's officers information on that webpage.

Give it a try!

There's a tremendous amount of features on the WTA website, too many to discuss in one magazine article. We really encourage you to give the website a try if you haven't already. It is truly a benefit of being a member of the WTA!



The Local Government Institute of Wisconsin

Local Government Summit 2026

Building a More Collaborative Wisconsin — Together

Wisconsin's local governments deliver better services and stronger communities when they work across jurisdictional boundaries. Join elected officials, administrators, department heads, and state partners for a full day of peer-led case studies, expert panels, and practical frameworks on Fire/EMS consolidation, shared administrative services, and other innovative models of local government collaboration.

Where: Dreyfus University Center, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point

When: June 11, 2026 (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

Cost: \$75

Online registration is available here: <https://www.localgovinstitute.org/events>

Daily Agenda

8:00 AM – Registration, Coffee & Networking

9:00 AM – Welcome to the Local Government Institute of Wisconsin's Local Government Summit 2026

- **Representative of UWSP**
- **Mike Wiza, Mayor, City of Stevens Point**

- **Lance Pliml**, County Board Chairman, Wood County; President, Local Government Institute of Wisconsin
- **Mike Pagel**, Town Chairman, Town of Lanark, Portage County; Town representative, Local Government Institute of Wisconsin

9:30 AM – The State-Local relationship in Wisconsin; The Wisconsin Innovation Fund and the power of collaboration

- **The Honorable Representative Robin Vos**, Speaker of the Assembly

10:00 AM – Collaboration in action- A presentation from a successful small municipal collaboration

10:30 AM – Morning Break & Networking - Coffee, tea, and assorted breads

11:00 AM – Collaboration in Action – Washington County shared services initiative

- Aaron Daul, Director of Administration, Washington County

11:30 AM - A model for local government collaboration

- **Mark Rohloff** - former Town Administrator; retired City Manager; Public Safety & Municipal Management Division Manager, McMahon Engineers & Associates

12:00 PM – Lunch & Networking

1:00 PM – Collaboration in Action – (INVITED) Wauwatosa/West Allis joint Fire Department

1:30 PM – Collaboration in Action - Northwoods EMS, Florence County EMS

- **Dana Sechler**, Strategic Management & Consulting

2:00 PM - Afternoon Break - Coffee, tea, soft drinks, and cookies

2:30 PM - Panel Discussion -

- **Andy Phillips**, Attorney, Attolles Law, S.C., WCA Legal advisor
- **Mark Rohloff**, former Town Administrator; retired City Manager; Public Safety & Municipal Management Division Manager, McMahon Engineers & Associates
- **Dana Sechler**, Strategic Management & Consulting
- **Jason Stein**, President, Wisconsin Policy Forum

3:15 PM – The future of Wisconsin’s Innovation Fund

- **Valeah Foy**, Division Administrator, Wisconsin Department of Revenue

3:45 PM - Closing remarks

2025 Scholarship Winner

Sponsored By:



"What are 3 top priorities your local town government officials should pursue to improve the quality of life in your community?"

Written By: Alexander Fischer

The Wisconsin Towns Association, Rural Mutual Insurance Company, and Scott Construction, Inc. award \$1000 scholarships to graduating high school seniors that enroll in a Wisconsin public or private college. Read all of the winning 2025 winning essays at www.wisctowns.com/resources/scholarship/.

Bridge Creek, Wisconsin, is a town defined by its natural beauty, strong community values, and rural charm. Like many small towns across Wisconsin, it faces the challenge of preserving its identity while also striving for progress. To improve the quality of life for its residents, I believe the top three priorities for Bridge Creek's town government should be: 1) supporting ongoing lake improvement efforts for Lake Eau Claire, 2) expanding rural broadband access, and 3) investing in youth engagement and community-building programs.

1. Continued Support and Restoration of Lake Eau Claire



Lake Eau Claire is a cornerstone of our town's identity and economy. It serves as a hub for fishing, boating, tourism, and family recreation. However, over the years, sediment buildup, erosion, and nutrient runoff have threatened the lake's health, reducing water quality and fish habitat. The Lake Eau Claire Protection and Rehabilitation District, in partnership with Eau Claire County and local volunteers, has made significant progress by implementing sediment traps and conducting dredging projects to restore the lake's depth and flow. These actions have helped reduce algae blooms and improved water clarity, but more needs to be done to preserve these gains and prevent future degradation.

Town government should prioritize sustained funding and logistical support for lake management efforts. This includes maintaining sediment traps, promoting buffer zone plantings, and educating residents on reducing phosphorus runoff from lawns and farms. By continuing to invest in Lake Eau Claire, Bridge Creek not only protects its natural resources but also ensures a better quality of life for both current residents and future generations.

2. Expanding Rural Broadband Access

In today’s digital world, reliable internet is essential—not just for entertainment, but for education, employment, telehealth, and small business development. Unfortunately, like many rural communities, parts of Bridge Creek still suffer from slow or unreliable broadband connections. This creates a divide between residents in rural areas and their urban counterparts, especially for students who need internet access for remote learning or adults working from home.

The town government should advocate for state and federal rural broadband grants and partner with internet service providers to expand infrastructure. Bridging the digital divide would empower residents with greater opportunities for remote work, online education, and entrepreneurship, all of which contribute to a thriving rural community. According to the Wisconsin Broadband Office, areas with improved broadband access also see greater property values and increased civic engagement.

3. Investing in Youth Engagement and Community Programs

One challenge many rural towns face is the gradual outmigration of young people who leave in search of better opportunities elsewhere. To counter this trend, the town government should invest in programs that create opportunities for youth involvement and foster a stronger sense of community belonging.

This could include expanding youth recreation programs, creating leadership opportunities through local government advisory boards, and partnering with schools and churches to offer volunteer and service learning initiatives. Community-building efforts like these give young people a reason to stay engaged and involved in their hometown. According to the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service, civic engagement among youth increases when local governments create meaningful ways for them to contribute.

Additionally, hosting community events—like lake clean-up days, farmers markets, or cultural festivals—can foster connections between neighbors, promote local business, and reinforce Bridge Creek’s identity as a close-knit and caring town.

Conclusion

Improving the quality of life in Bridge Creek will require vision, cooperation, and a commitment to protecting what makes the township special. By focusing on environmental stewardship through Lake Eau Claire improvements, closing the broadband access gap, and strengthening youth and community engagement, town officials can ensure that Bridge Creek not only survives but thrives. These efforts will help retain young families, support local economies, and build a future rooted in resilience and shared values.

Stay Connected - Keep Your Details Up to Date!

What we need to know:

- ▶ Town and County
- ▶ First and last name
- ▶ Office and who was replaced
- ▶ Mailing address
- ▶ Phone number
- ▶ Email address



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