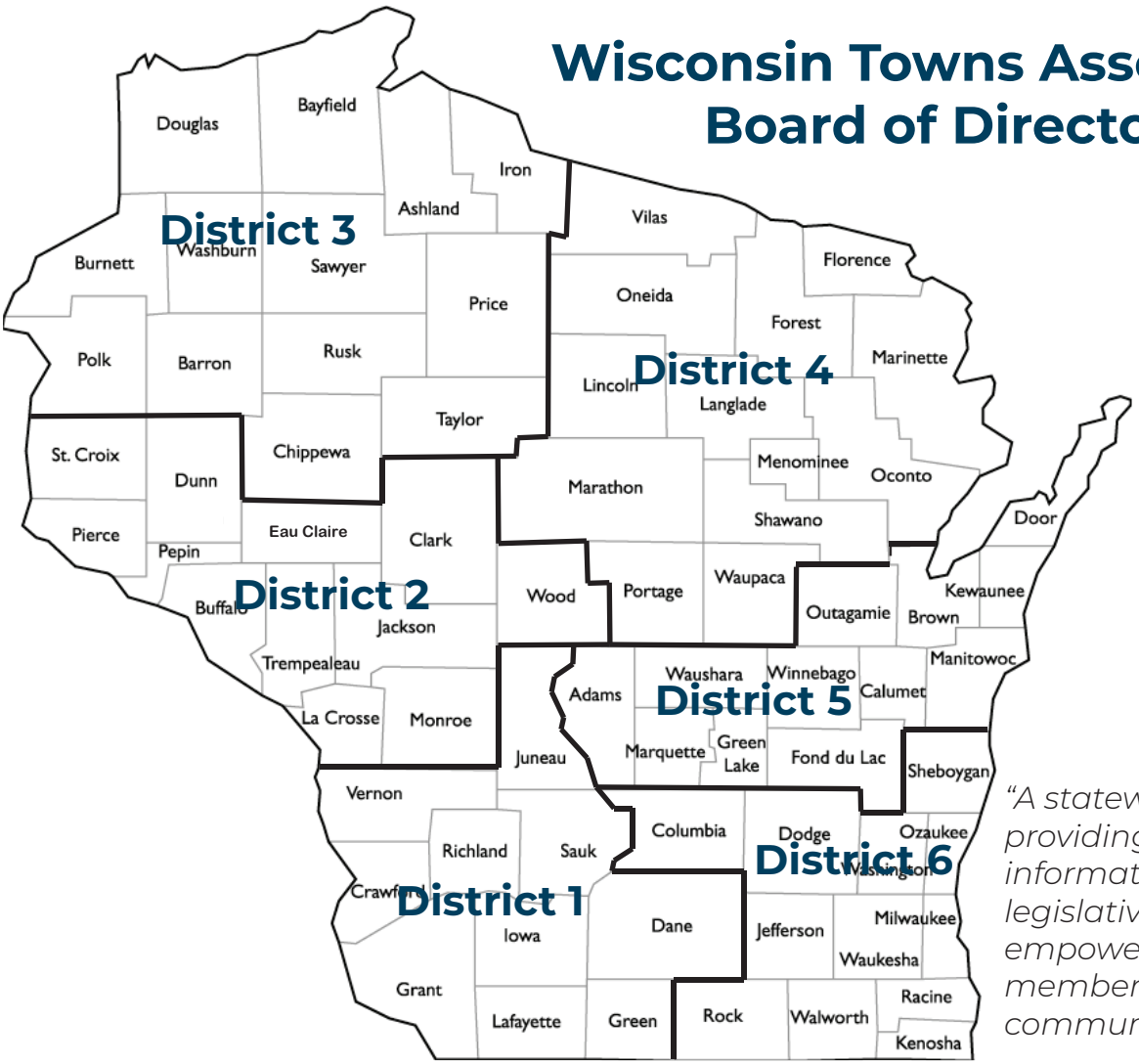
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November 2026

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Empowering Town Officials

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



By
Mike Koles

If we give up, they win.

It was the 2nd inning of Game 4 of the National League Championship Series between the Dodgers and the Brewers. The Dodgers top star, Shohei Ohtani, had just hit a three-run homer to put the Dodgers up 4-0, his first since August 18th. Despite the Brewers having the series lead 3-0, Ohtani's drought was over and momentum had shifted to the two-time juggernauts that sport a payroll a quarter of billion dollars larger than the blue-collar Brewers.

I wasn't worried. Although it happened in 2025, Championship Series sweeps don't frequently occur. I was, however, somewhat concerned given the Brewers have broken my heart every year for the last 5 decades. At the moment, my sparks of concern were extinguished by my thoughts that they would simply win Game 5.

That's when a town official, who is as passionate about baseball as me, texted: **"If we give up, they win."** Two innings later, the Brewers scored a pair, making the score 4-2. My phone buzzed. It was Ken Jaworksi from Cedar Corp texting me the identical words: **"If we give up, they win."**

By now, you know the rest of the story. I'm writing this article just in time for our publisher to print the magazine (I was too busy watching baseball to write it in advance) and less than 12 hours after the Brewers clinched their first pennant since 1982.

David slayed Goliath.

As Manager Pat Murphy said immediately after the game, *"They have Hall of Famers. We have gamers. This week the gamers won."*

By the time you're reading this, we'll know if the Brewers actually brought home a World Series crown. Regardless of the outcome, those two identical texts succinctly describe the attitude of the Milwaukee Brewers and most certainly town officials – **"If we give up, they win."**

If town officials fail to maintain our infrastructure, *they* win. If fire/EMS systems are not properly attended to, *they* win. If clerks don't vigorously and perfectly implement elections, *they* win. If towns don't fight for a fair share of the sales and income taxes your citizens pay coming back to towns, *they* win. Whoever or whatever is the *"they"* - if town officials give up, *they* win.

For those of you following the Brewers, you're familiar with the letters from Bob Uecker to the team. After Ueck's passing last year and upon the team winning the Central Division, Manager Pat Murphy read a letter to the team that "Ueck" had seemingly written just prior to his death. It was both emotional and motivational.

Some time later it was revealed that Murphy himself had written the letter, but that didn't matter. "Murph" was absolutely channeling "Ueck."

It came as a bit of a surprise this year, that Ueck had also written a second letter after the Brewers won the Central Division a few months ago. On the night they won the National League Pennant, according to Murphy, Ueck simply texted after the game. The letters from Ueck

have taken on their own story and are wisdom filled messages to educate, motivate, and congratulate.

What Murph didn't tell the team is that Ueck also texted at the end of the second inning after the team went down 4-0. Here's what the text read:

"Hey Murph. 3 great wins. I'm watching the game with some guy from Wisconsin that fancies himself an expert card player. He's not very good, but I have to go to the bank after this text. He told me to let you know that if you give up, they win. - Ueck"

Murphy thought about it for a moment and got the boys in a huddle before the beginning of the third inning. All he said to them was, **"If we give up, they win."**

The rest is history.

Now why did a town official and my old friend Ken Jaworski, two strangers living miles apart, both text me such a wisdom filled statement?

Well, they had both attended the annual convention a few weeks earlier and heard me review six of my favorite quotes from former and now deceased WTA President Jerry Derr. My favorite of the six – **"If we give up, they win."**

I ran through Jerry's quotes because WTA is remembering him by naming our new conference/board room after him. This quote will adorn one of the walls. For those of you that were not fortunate enough to know Jerry, he was a giant of man who passed away while still serving as WTA President. WTA and town government wouldn't be where we all are without him. You can learn more about him and his legacy by reading my January, 2025 magazine article.

Yes. You read that right. WTA is finally building its very own conference/board room, something we haven't had for over a decade. The current building was constructed in 1997 to house 5 people. We had 4 employees at the time. We added a fifth person in 2001, filling up our space. A sixth was added in 2006, a seventh in 2017, an eighth in 2019, and a ninth in 2025. After repurposing storage spaces into offices, learning how to stack a lot of materials into very tight corners, and breaking up the conference/board room into small offices, we simply have no room. We only have 8 offices for 9 people, no board/conference room, and inadequate storage. The space deficiency and building produce an environment in which most 21st technology solutions are out of reach. Much of the infrastructure in the current building is nearing the end of its life, and the windows have leaked almost since day one. And, that's just a small part of the entire picture.

Of course, there's a lot more information that convention attendees learned. We will be communicating the same and more in the coming months. For now, please know that there will be plenty of communication and bountiful opportunities for town officials, private individuals, businesses and town governments themselves to voluntarily support building the facilities needed to house our staff of 9 gamers who will never give up fighting for towns.



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Looking for Leaders:
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Hosts Local-Level Campaign School

The decisions that shape your community are made by people who choose to get involved. You know your community, you understand the issues and your perspective matters. Have you ever considered stepping up and playing a bigger role in local leadership?

If your answer to any of these questions is yes, we have just the opportunity for you!
This November, Wisconsin Farm Bureau will be holding a series of local government campaign schools that will focus on running for local offices like county and town board. The Local Campaign School will walk you through what it takes to run for local office, from deciding whether public service is right for you to building and running an effective campaign.

Topics will include:

- The questions you should be asking family, friends and yourself before answering "Should I run?"
- The roles and responsibilities of local elected officials and the issues you would be discussing as a community leader
- How to build a winning strategy
- What you need to do to win on Election Day

Dates and locations of Local Campaign School:

November 10, 2026:

- River Falls – UW-River Falls 501 Wild Rose Avenue, River Falls, WI 54022
  Chippewa River Room, 3rd floor of the University Center

November 12, 2026:

- Legacy Family Restaurant 5110b Main Street, Stevens Point, WI 54481

November 17, 2026:

- Madison – Wisconsin Farm Bureau 1241 John Q. Hammons Drive, Madison, WI 53717
  Farm Bureau Conference Rooms, 2nd floor

Campaign schools will run from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with registration beginning at 9:30 a.m. Lunch will be provided. The cost to attend will be $15 for Wisconsin Farm Bureau members and $85 for non-members. All are welcome to attend. Each of the three schools will follow the same agenda and materials. More information can be found at wfbf.com.

Whether you have thought about running for years or have only just begun to consider the possibility, Campaign School is for you!

LEGAL OPINIONS



By Atty. Carol Nawrocki
Assistant Director

Frequently Asked Questions About Ordinances and Resolutions

Q. Our board is thinking about adopting regulations for the use of our town park. How do we know if the town board should take action by ordinance or resolution? Or, would a simple motion suffice?

A. It's important to start with a basic understanding of what these different terms mean. Let's start with some definitions:

Motion: A motion is a suggestion for legislative action made orally at a meeting. Town boards typically use motions to take actions on matters that are not ongoing in nature. They are also a way of expediting the proceedings and should be recorded word for word in the minutes. Example: Motion to appoint Jane Brown to fill the vacancy in the town treasurer position made by Herricks/Olson.

Resolution: A resolution is a formal determination or expression of opinion of a deliberative body. Resolutions do not contain penalties and are commonly employed by governmental bodies to deal with special matters not affecting the general public. They often are used to establish internal policy positions and should be prepared in writing prior to adoption. Example "Be it hereby resolved, by the Town Board of the Town of _____ that the attached document shall serve as the public records access policy for the Town of _____."

Ordinance: An ordinance is an authoritative rule or law of a deliberative body of government. They are often used for regulating or prohibiting certain types of conduct or action on the part of citizens. Ordinances that have prohibitions or regulations typically have penalty provisions for failure to comply that are enforced using citation procedures adopted under Wis. Stat. § 66.0113.

Often, in answering the question of whether to adopt an ordinance or resolution, the best thing to do is look at whether any state statute on the matter specifies to adopt one or the other. If neither type of action is specified or there is no applicable statute, make the selection based on the definitions above. Park regulations would generally be adopted via ordinance so that you could include penalties for violations.

Q. We want to adopt an ordinance about charging for fire calls. How do we determine if we have the legal authority to adopt such an ordinance?

A. Towns are statutory bodies. So, that means that, first, the town board must determine whether a specific state statute give the municipality the authority to adopt this type of ordinance. Next, if there is no clear statutory authority, the board should determine if it has village powers. If the town board has been granted the authority to exercise village powers under Wis. Stat. § 60.22(3) by a vote of the town electors at a special town elector meeting (such an annual meeting) the board will then have the additional power to

adopt regulations intended to protect the health, safety, welfare, and convenience of the public. See Wis. Stat. § 61.34. Note that towns DO have specific statutory authority to charge for fire calls pursuant to a written schedule adopted by the board. See Wis. Stat. § 60.55(2).

Q. If our town has village powers, does that mean that we can adopt an ordinance regulating anything we want?

A. No. Ordinances may face challenges on various legal fronts. First, an ordinance can still exceed the legal authority of the town. For example, it might be overly restrictive and a judge might determine that the ordinance was not enacted in good faith and in the public interest. Or, the town might be pre-empted from adopting the ordinance by a state or federal law. For example, towns are limited in their ability to regulate shooting ranges by Wis. Stat. § 895.527. Ordinances can also be found to violate a constitutional protection. For example, a judge might void the ordinance if one or more of the following is found:

a. It deprives a person of property without substantive or procedural due process
b. It denies someone equal protection under the law
c. It takes property without just compensation
d. It inappropriately restricts civil liberties by limiting free speech, the right to assemble, etc.
e. It unduly burdens interstate and foreign commerce

And, don't forget that an ordinance can also be voided if a town or village fails to follow prescribed legal procedures in adoption of the ordinance. So, make sure to provide proper public notices, conduct any required public hearings and/or plan commission referrals, and ensure that proper publication or posting occurs after adoption.

Q. How do we go about amending or repealing an ordinance or Resolution?

A. The process that was used to adopt the original ordinance or resolution is the same procedure that must be used to amend it or repeal it. So, if a public hearing and/or referral to the plan commission were required to adopt an ordinance, the same steps must be used to amend or repeal it. If no special steps were required to adopt the original ordinance, it may simply be made an agenda item at a properly noticed board meeting to adopt a new ordinance amending or repealing the original ordinance. Similarly, if a resolution needs to be amended or rescinded, an item should be added to the agenda indicating that the body will be considering the adoption of a new resolution amending or rescinding the previous resolution.

State law requires that towns post or publish notice of the initial adoption (and amendment or repeal) as described under Wis. Stat. § 60.80, within 30 days of adoption. Resolutions and ordinances *without* forfeitures can either be published as a Class 1 notice in the newspaper OR posted in three (3) physical locations, OR posted in one physical location and the town's website. Ordinances that contain forfeiture (cash penalty) provisions *must* be published in the newspaper and posting is not an option. In lieu of publishing the entire ordinance or resolution, it is possible to publish a summary. See Wis. Stat. § 60.80(5) for the list of information that must be included in the summary.


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LEGAL OPINIONS



By **Atty. Joe Ruth**
Government Affairs Director

TAC Ambassador Program

The Town Advocacy Council is looking to expand its newest and potentially most influential initiative: the **TAC Ambassador Program**. Since its launch, the program has grown to more than 50 ambassadors, with representation in more than half of Wisconsin's counties. This early interest has strengthened WTA's legislative advocacy and proven the value of greater involvement by town and village leaders in advancing local issues. We look forward to building on this success and expanding the program statewide.

Much of our legislative advocacy heavy lifting is accomplished by the Town Advocacy Council (TAC). Founded in the 1980s, the TAC is a subsidiary of the Wisconsin Towns Association that has evolved over time. TAC is the primary instrument through which we provide legislative advocacy. Without the investment in TAC, we would not be able to provide the lobbying efforts that have recently produced a plethora of both offensive and defensive victories. But effective advocacy begins long before legislation reaches the Capitol. It starts with ideas, experiences, and concerns shared by local officials like you.

The TAC Ambassador Program builds on that foundation by creating a statewide network of engaged town officials who develop relationships with their state legislators and engage them on WTA's legislative priorities. Ambassadors help legislators better understand the issues facing towns and villages and the practical effects that state policy decisions have on local communities. These relationships complement our existing advocacy efforts and help ensure your voices are heard.

You do not need to be a legislative expert to participate. Ambassadors receive educational opportunities and updates on current legislative priorities, along with an overview of Wisconsin's legislative process and tips for engaging with legislators. The primary goal is straightforward: build relationships and have meaningful conversations about local issues. We believe good communication and active relationships between local and state officials are essential to effective governance.

The time commitment for ambassadors is not intended to be burdensome. The group meets virtually a few times per year to discuss legislative priorities and receive updates. Ambassadors are then encouraged to meet or speak informally with their state legislators to discuss local issues and maintain relationships. Your experience as a town or village official and your understanding of local needs are what make your perspective valuable. Additionally, ambassadors may be invited to participate in special legislative events, such as a fly-in to Washington, D.C. or state legislative bill signings.

This program offers an exciting opportunity for increased engagement by passionate local officials. We are confident that with your help and involvement we can take this next step and create a powerful voice for Wisconsin towns and villages. To be considered for TAC Ambassador Program, **please fill out and submit the Ambassador Program application found on the following page.**

Town Advocacy Council

Champions of Town Government

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LEGAL OPINIONS



By **Atty. Lara Carlson**
Legal Counsel

Compensation 101

Q. How can we give a raise to town or village board members and other elected officials?

A. Compensation amounts paid to *elected* town and village officials are "locked in" for the entirety of the term of office. Changes made to elected officials' compensation do not go into effect until the beginning of each affected position's *next* term of office, meaning an official must be reelected to get the raise. Any raises or compensation changes intended to take effect in elected officials' next terms must be finalized before the deadline for filing nomination papers for the affected offices. See Wis. Stats. §§ 60.32(4) and 61.193(2). After that date, no increase or decrease to an elected official's compensation can be made that will apply to the upcoming term. This means that if you wish to make changes to the compensation for positions up for reelection this coming spring, you must make those changes before **January 5, 2027**. Raises for elected officials whose current term of office will not expire until April of 2028 will not go into effect until after *that* election.

In **towns**, the compensation for all elected officials must be set by a vote of the town electors at either an annual or special town elector meeting. See §§ 60.32(1)(a) and 60.10(1)(b)1. Town electors may vote to give the town board authority to set the compensation for non-board elected offices, such as the elected clerk or treasurer positions. However, voting town board members (chair and supervisors) may not set their *own* compensation, so an elector vote is required to give town board members a raise.

Q. Are town and village elected officials paid in salary, per diems, or wages?

A. Elected official compensation may be a salary, per diems, or a combination of the two. Wis. Stats. §§ 60.32(2) and 61.193(1). This compensation is taxable and must be reported as income. If elected officials are paid per diems, it's important to clarify which meetings and events qualify for per diem payments, in what amounts, whether attendance at a meeting must be authorized in advance before per diems may be paid, etc., to ensure consistency. In towns, the per diem policy should be set by the town electors. If the electors have not specified when per diems are to be paid, we suggest that the town board adopt a policy temporarily until the electors can vote on the issue. Elected officials are never paid an hourly wage for doing their regular elected official duties, but they may be paid an hourly wage for doing part-time work outside of their regular duties, as explained on the next page.

Q. How are compensation amounts established for appointed officials and employees?

A. Compensation amounts for *appointed* officials and employees are set by the town or village board and may be adjusted at any time by a majority board vote at a properly noticed board meeting. This means that a board could vote to make changes to the compensation provided to municipal employees, poll workers,

plan commission members, etc. at any properly noticed board meeting, and the changes could be scheduled to go into effect immediately or at any specified time. Importantly, appointed clerks and treasurers' wages may ***not*** be *decreased* by a town board during the term of office to which the clerk or treasurer was appointed, but mid-term *increases* are allowed. Wis. Stat. § 60.10(1)(b)2m. Governing bodies should also check local employment contracts/handbooks/agreements to see if additional limitations apply before making any changes to employee compensation or benefits.

Q. Can an individual work as a town or village employee while also serving as an elected official?

A. An elected official may be hired by their municipal board to do *part-time* hourly work outside of their regular elected official duties. See Wis. Stats. §§ 60.37(4) and 61.327. The total hourly wages paid for the extra work may not exceed $15,000 per year. If a voting board member is the one being hired as a part-time employee, that board member must recuse themselves from the vote to avoid an ethical conflict under § 19.59. In towns, the town electors must vote, at either an annual or special town elector meeting, to set the amount of the hourly wage to be paid for the work. The electors could vote to give the town board the power to set these wages for non-board member elected officials (such as an elected clerk or treasurer), but hourly wages for voting town board members working as part-time employees must be set by the town electors. See § 60.10(2)(L). In villages, the village board sets the amount of the hourly wage.

Q. What amount of poll worker wages are exempt from tax withholdings?

A. Election worker wages are exempt from social security and Medicare tax withholdings (FICA) for wages paid **up to $2,500 in 2026**. See https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p15.pdf. Additionally, election worker wages are not subject to either Wisconsin or federal income tax withholdings. However, employers must file a Form W-2 for election workers who receive payments of $600 or more in a year, even if no taxes were withheld. See https://www.revenue.wi.gov/Pages/FAQS/pcs-with.aspx. The IRS website has examples showing how to properly calculate and report election worker wages.

Q. Are towns and villages required to provide paid sick days to their employees?

A. There is no state statute requiring municipalities to provide a minimum amount of sick leave, with or without pay, to employees. Therefore, most towns and villages are not bound to provide paid sick days unless they have promised to do so in an employment handbook or agreement. However, towns and villages with 50 or more full-time equivalent employees, as defined in state and federal law, may be subject to Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requirements under Wis. Stat. § 103.10 and 29 U.S. Code ch. 28. For more information about FMLA, see https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/er/civilrights/fmla/.

Q. Can an elected official refuse or waive their elected official compensation?

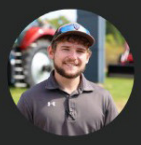
A. Under Wis. Stat. § 66.0505(3), an elective officer may send written notice to the municipal clerk and treasurer of their intent to refuse the position's salary. The initial notice must be sent no later than the day the officer takes the oath of office after being elected and before they perform any official duties. To stay in effect, a new refusal notice must be sent annually, at least 30 days prior to start of the next taxable year.



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In Towns

By: Alison Lebwohl, Alison Lebwohl Consulting

FOUR TOWNS, ONE COMMUNITY

Exploring Shared Services in Vilas County

Earlier this year, leaders of four towns in Vilas County began formally exploring hiring joint town administrators. If both initiatives advance, there would be one town administrator serving Boulder Junction and Manitowish Waters and one serving Presque Isle and Winchester.

"When our four towns got together to discuss sharing services, administration was our final topic," says Manitowish Waters Town Chair John Hanson. "It was also our most important."



Cathy Weber (Presque Isle supervisor), John Hanson (Manitowish Waters chair), Al Eschenbauch (Presque Isle chair), Alison S. Lebwohl (owner & principal consultant, Alison Lebwohl Consulting), Melissa Kono (UW Extension/ WTA Clerk Specialist), Lori Thomas (Presque Isle clerk), AnneMarie Wenten (Manitowish Waters deputy clerk) and Thomas G. Wilson (consultant & former attorney/administrator/clerk-treasurer, Town of Westport, Dane Co.)

The decision to formally explore hiring joint town administrators was the result of a structured series of conversations among the four towns in late 2025 and early 2026. These conversations were professionally facilitated and included supervisors, clerks and treasurers.

During these conversations, town leaders noted that rising non-statutory duties have led to increasingly heavy workloads for chairs, clerks and treasurers – and that a town administrator could offer needed assistance. An administrator could also help improve continuity in services; improve communications with supervisors, committees and residents; and assist with coordinating joint service projects. Sharing an administrator across towns could also reduce the cost per town, enhance knowledge sharing, and help attract and retain strong candidates. "It's a steep learning curve when you hire a new clerk," says Presque Isle Town Chair Allen Eschenbauch. "Reducing turnover in that position benefits everyone."

The conversations among the four towns focused on public safety, public works, and administration. The work was funded by an Innovation Planning Grant from the Wisconsin Dept. of Revenue and built upon the successful January 2025 launch of a shared EMS district.

"I'm excited to see towns in Wisconsin exploring shared services," says Wisconsin Towns Association Executive Director Mike Koles. "Wisconsin town leaders have always been

committed to controlling costs and improving services for their residents. Exploring shared services is one more example of that commitment."

The towns used their grant funding to hire Wisconsin-based Alison Lebwohl Consulting.

"Our role as consultants was to facilitate effective conversations so town leaders could share their experiences, generate possibilities, and make decisions about next steps," says Alison Lebwohl, who led the project.

The three-person consulting team also included former Town Administrator/ Attorney/ Clerk-Treasurer Thomas Wilson and WTA Clerk Specialist Professor Melissa Kono. Having Wilson and Kono on the team ensured that town leaders had real-time access to town administrative expertise throughout the project.

"It was important to all of us that town leaders were making the decisions," says Lebwohl. "The town chairs oversaw the project and chose the topics. And the consultants facilitated the conversations and wrote the final report. But the supervisors, clerks and treasurers were in the driver's seat. They made decisions and set direction on behalf of their residents."

As the project wrapped up, town chairs and consultants sat down together to identify lessons learned through this process.

Lesson #1: There are many ways to get there

Exploring shared services can start small: by inviting your counterpart from the next town for coffee. You can hire consultants to gather information, or to facilitate conversations, or to do both – or you can do it all in-house.

Lesson #2: Change needs everyone

Involve town stakeholders early – those affecting decisions and those affected by them. Structure feedback and conversations so you hear from everyone participating. Share information with residents throughout.

Lesson #3: Tap the expertise around you

Reach out to town employees about their departments. Reach out to residents to learn about their experiences and to tap their professional expertise. WTA's website offers town contacts, sample agreements, training, and access to experts. You don't have to hire a full-time employee for a one-time need. Consultants offer expertise in recruiting, law, engineering, accounting, facilitation, and more.

Reach out to other towns to share experiences. Wisconsin towns are sharing services with towns, villages, cities and counties. This includes fire, EMS, administration, law enforcement, sewer, contracts, equipment, transfer stations, and more.

Lesson #4: Start here

Consider sharing contracts for accountants and truck purchases, standardizing procedures and ordinances, or creating agreements to share people and equipment during an emergency. Begin by scheduling regular conversations with your counterparts from the neighboring towns.

As the in-person sessions among Boulder Junction, Manitowish Waters, Presque Isle and Winchester closed, town leaders emphasized the value of ongoing conversations among them.

"We may be four towns," said Winchester Town Supervisor Robert Silvis, "but we're one community."

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SUPPORT FOR THE WORK AHEAD

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- Strategic planning and priority setting
- High-stakes conversations and decisions
- Stakeholder groups and resident feedback sessions

> "I am very impressed with how this process was able to bring the towns together… Thank you for sharing with us and congratulations to you all for such an excellent job."
>
> Town Leader, Vilas County | Anonymous project evaluation

READ ABOUT A PROJECT I LED IN THIS ISSUE

Four Towns, One Community: Exploring Shared Services in Vilas County

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WisDOT: MyWisconsin ID Login Process Changes

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is reaching out to share some important information regarding updated login processes impacting multiple WisDOT online applications. As of October 2026, some key WisDOT online applications have transitioned to using a MyWisconsin ID login. This update is being made in order to maintain security for these key applications, following a directive from the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA).

Users of the following applications should be aware of the change to the login process:

- TAPWeb: The web portal for hosting application and project information related to the Transportation Assistance Program (TAP).
- ARIPWeb: The web portal for hosting application and project information related to the Agricultural Roads Improvement Program (ARIP).
- LRIPWeb: The web portal for hosting application and project information related to the Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP).
- TAS**:** The web portal for hosting funding information related to General Transportation Aids (GTA), Connecting Highway Aids (CHA), and other aids programs

If you have not yet transitioned to MyWisconsin ID, previous login information that municipal stakeholders have used for these sites is no longer active. If you have a MyWisconsin ID, you do not need to do anything at this time.

To create a MyWisconsin ID, please follow these instructions:

Go to https://apps.wisconsin.gov and follow the prompts.

- A step-by-step guide is available on the MyWisconsin ID Registration page: https://det.wi.gov/Pages/MyWisconsin_ID_Self_Registration.aspx.
- **Please Note**: You must complete all steps in the registration process in one sitting. This includes email verification, password creation, and enrollment in multi-factor authentication (MFA). Accounts that are not completely set up are automatically deleted.

For questions regarding your MyWisconsinID, please visit the MyWisconsin ID Account Service Desk at this link for online self-service options and guidance: https://det.wi.gov/Pages/MyWisconsin_ID.aspx or call (608) 471-6667 for 24/7/365 support.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation MyWisconsin ID site also has some helpful resources: https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/mywiid.aspx.

REACHING OUT



By **Becky Roberts**
Outreach & Engagement Specialist

Communication Changes: Streamlining and Modernizing How We Advertise County Unit Meetings

I recently sat down with WTA staff Heather Zimmerman, Kelly Richards and Casey Gast. This team is amazing! They help to keep us organized, manage daily operations, and communicate with members. Behind the scenes, they are busy managing staff calendars, directing hotline requests, handling logistics for convention, workshops, meetings and other gatherings, and balancing the books.

The majority of our communications also pass through this team. If you have ever called our office, received an email blast, visited our website, watched a recording, opened a letter from WTA, or sat down with our magazine, they were involved. We are proud of the many touchpoints we maintain with our members, but we are also keenly aware of the time, effort and cost required to make this happen.

One of our strategic plan goals is to make better use of staff and financial resources. Simultaneously, we would like to make it easier for county units and legislators to regularly attend county unit meetings. This article will describe upcoming changes we plan to make to communications to accomplish each of these goals.

Q. First, what is the county unit meeting?

The county unit is the backbone of our organization. It provides the very localized structure that empowers us to carry out our mission to provide legal information, education and legislative advocacy in all corners of the state. WTA has 71 county units. Most units represent member towns and villages within a given county. We also have one unit representing three counties (Racine, Kenosha, Walworth) and two units representing one county (Marathon has a western and eastern unit). Each county unit is encouraged to meet at least four times per year. However, this number varies. Some units meet as few as two times per year, while others meet as frequently as eleven. In an average year, we hold roughly 300 county unit meetings.

Q. How are county unit meetings <u>currently</u> advertised?

Throughout the year, WTA staff are constantly managing and updating a master list of county unit meeting dates. County unit leaders are asked to provide the date, time, location and agenda for each county unit meeting at least three weeks in advance of the meeting. Once received, staff update the calendar on the WTA website and begin preparing physical mailings. A mailed letter is currently sent to local officials within member towns and villages for every county unit meeting held. County unit officers, district directors, and legislators also receive mailed letters. Finally, we send an email reminder 3-5 days in advance of each meeting.

Q. Why are we making changes?

As postage costs have skyrocketed, so too has the WTA postage budget – it now stands at $112,000. Increasing costs have been accompanied by a decline in postal service reliability. It is not unheard of for a letter to take two to three weeks to travel from Shawano to the outer reaches of the state, sometimes arriving after the county unit meeting has occurred. The new county unit communication system will save money and ensure you actually know when county unit meetings are taking place.

Many county units have begun scheduling meetings 1-2 years in advance and attribute increased attendance in part, to local officials and legislators being able to plan ahead. Having an agreed upon series of meeting dates and times allows WTA staff, directors, county unit leaders, local officials and legislators to plan their schedules and avoid conflicts.

Q. How will WTA communicate meeting dates in 2027?

WTA will use four primary methods to communicate meeting dates:

1. Annual list of meeting dates – physically mailed in late 2026 or early 2027 and posted online
2. Monthly magazine – physically mailed with list of upcoming county unit meeting dates
3. Website calendar – updated monthly with meeting date, time, location and agenda
4. Email blast – agenda and reminder sent 2 weeks and 3-5 days in advance of each meeting

Q. Who will receive these communications?

The annual list of meeting dates will be physically mailed to all member town and village officials and legislators. The WTA magazine is also physically mailed to all WTA members (unless you have opted for the email version). If you are reading a print copy of this article you are on our mailing list!

Regular email blasts prior to each meeting will be sent to all town and village officials that have provided email addresses. Town and village officials include clerks, treasurers, town boards and village boards. County unit leaders, district directors and legislators are also copied on these emails.

The WTA website and calendar are updated regularly and visible to anyone visiting the site. A new landing page for county unit meetings can be found here: https://www.wisctowns.com/events-calendar/county-unit-meetings/

Checklist for County Unit Leaders

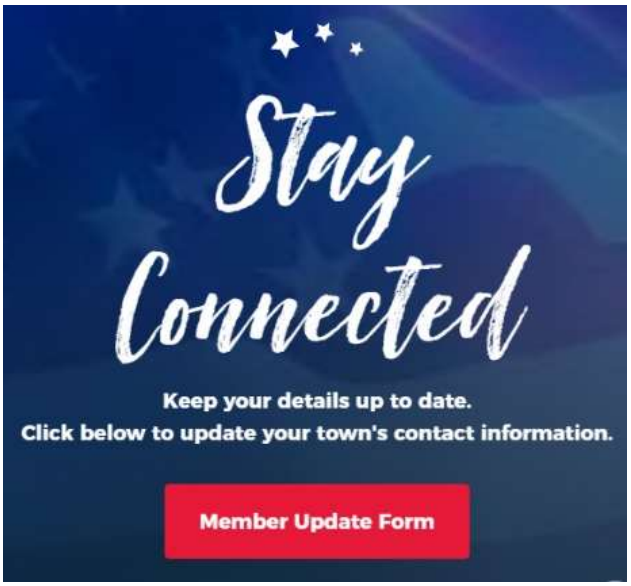
- ✓ Communicate annual meeting dates by November 15, 2026.
- ✓ Provide date, time, location and agenda at least 3 weeks in advance of each meeting.
- ✓ Send to wtowns@wisctowns.com

Checklist for Towns and Villages

- ✓ Use ‘Member Update Form’ on WTA website to submit updated contact info.
- ✓ Look for annual meeting dates mailed in late 2026 or early 2027.
- ✓ Watch for upcoming meeting dates in monthly magazine.
- ✓ Look at email and website for detailed agenda.
- ✓ Reach out if you do not receive updates.

Q. How do we update our contact information?

Effective communication relies on having updated contact information. If you are aware of a town or village member that is not receiving print or email communications, please reach out. Sometimes this is due to not having updated contact information. Other times, people have blocked or unsubscribed from our email messages. Please use the 'Member Update Form' on the WTA homepage to submit new or updated names, addresses and emails for all town and village officials. This form can also be found on the top right side of our contact page: https://www.wisctowns.com/about-us/contact/



Q. What are we asking of county unit leaders?

County unit leaders are asked to schedule meeting dates at least one year in advance. Please report 2027 county unit dates to wtowns@wisctowns.com by November 15, 2026. County unit leaders should also follow up at least 3 weeks in advance of each meeting to confirm the date, time and location of each meeting and submit a detailed agenda. A list of additional instructions will be sent to county unit leaders to guide them through this process.

Communication At a Glance

Method	Frequency	Who receives?
Website	New! - Annual list of meeting dates by county unit will be posted on WTA website. Calendar will continue to be updated monthly with meeting date, time, location, and agenda.	Visible to anyone visiting WTA website
Magazine	New! - Monthly magazine will list upcoming county unit meeting dates.	WTA members and subscribers
Mail	New! - Annual list of meeting dates will be sent once per year by mail. Individual meeting notices previously mailed will now be distributed electronically.	Town and village officials, county unit leaders, district directors, legislators
Email	New! - Email with date, time, location and agenda will be sent 2 weeks prior to each county unit meeting. Second email reminder will be sent 3-5 days prior.	Town and village officials, county unit leaders, district directors, legislators

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- November -

- Barron 11-16-26
- Bayfield 11-30-26
- Door 11-12-26
- Green 11-18-26
- Juneau 11-17-26
- Kewaunee 11-16-26
- La Crosse 11-19-26
- Monroe 11-19-26
- Pepin/Pierce 11-12-26
- Portage 11-16-26
- Rock 11-19-26
- Sauk 11-19-26
- Taylor 11-19-26
- Trempealeau 11-17-26
- Vilas 11-14-26
- Washington 11-30-26
- Waupaca 11-12-26

Dates are subject to change. Check your email for details from WTA.

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Holiday Hours

The WTA office will be closed Thursday, November 26th and Friday, November 27th for the Thanksgiving holiday.

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Evaluate current asphalt surface conditions and provide a cost-effective maintenance plan that will improve the longevity of your town roads.



ROADWORK BID LETTING

Provide guidance throughout the bid letting process; from development of documents to comparison of bids received. Ensure that all specifications are met and that each contractor is submitting uniform information, making cost comparison effortless.



PASER RATINGS

Provide and submit PASER ratings to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to provide a credible analysis of road conditions, as required by the WisDOT every two years. These ratings are important in extending the life of roads, by impacting road maintenance methods.



INVENTORY AND MAPPING

Inventory, mapping and condition report of roads, culverts and signage. Having an accurate record of current conditions lets you plan for the future by prioritizing your needs.



DO YOU...

- ❑ Know the conditions of all your roads?
- ❑ Know how many culverts you have and where they are located?
- ❑ Know if any of your town's culverts are at risk of failing?
- ❑ Have a complete inventory and assessment of all your road signs?

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