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- State energy moratorium ends April 15

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- Oconto Falls updating electric distribution systems

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Battle over state's power grid intensifies

As data centers surge, competition grows over who builds Wisconsin's grid

By Paul Kiefer
WISCONSIN WATCH

This story was produced and originally published by Wisconsin Watch, a non-profit, non-partisan newsroom.

The Midwest's data center boom requires a vast electrical transmission buildout to keep servers online, and transmission developers are clamoring for a share of the action.

An example of that tug-of-war played out last week, when the regional grid operator for much of the Upper Midwest reversed its earlier decision to allow a developer backed by the investment firm Blackstone to build a series of substations in eastern Wisconsin.

Instead, the operator handed the substations to the American Transmission Company (ATC), which owns and operates most transmission lines in eastern and central Wisconsin. The company argues it's better-positioned to complete the project before a new Port Washington data center comes online by early 2028, five years ahead of the transmission project's original deadline.

The about-face is a win for Wisconsin's largest transmission developer after a series of losses in Wisconsin's Assembly, where lawmakers have repeatedly rejected a proposal to give regionally established developers like ATC a monopoly over portions of multistate transmission projects within Wisconsin, leaving the door open for competition.

The new arrangement itself likely won't drive up costs for Wisconsin ratepayers. But ATC will now fold the substations into a larger \$1.3 billion buildout to serve the Port Washington campus — another phase in the ongoing fight over who will pay to supply power for new data centers.

How the Midwest's grid is planned and paid for

The North American grid is an ever-evolving network of transmission lines and substations that carry electricity from generators to customers.

In much of the country, nonprofit "independent system operators" coordinate regional



JOE TIMMERMAN/WISCONSIN WATCH Southern Lakes Newspapers
Construction unfolds at the 350-plus-acre Beaver Dam Commerce Park, the site of a Meta data center, Jan. 20, 2026, in Beaver Dam. A battle has developed over who will construct the latest in Wisconsin's power grid, needed for the data centers going up.

power grids, managing a wholesale electricity market and interstate transmission projects. Wisconsin is within the territory of the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), which spans from the Upper Midwest to Louisiana.

MISO has approved roughly \$32 billion in transmission upgrades for the Upper Midwest since 2022, including new "backbone" power lines capable of carrying a higher voltage than existing lines in the region.

Among the latest round of projects: a series of transmission lines and substations in eastern Wisconsin.

Just months after MISO's board approved the eastern Wisconsin buildout in 2024, Port Washington's city council approved a \$15 billion data center on the city's northern edge. Three new substations outlined in MISO's plans are within easy reach of the campus.

Blackstone-backed developer takes the lead

Four transmission developers bid on the eastern Wisconsin upgrades, including ATC, which submitted a joint bid with Dairyland Power Coop-

erative and the nonprofit WPP Energy, owned by municipal utilities in Wisconsin, Iowa and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

MISO initially awarded the project to Viridon, owned by Blackstone Energy Transition Partners — a private equity fund under the umbrella of Blackstone, the world's largest alternative asset management firm.

Viridon's roughly \$350 million bid was by far the lowest — just over half of MISO's estimate and more than \$100 million below the next-cheapest bid. In its January announcement, MISO acknowledged the budget "may not be achievable" but cited Viridon's promises to limit cost overruns and profits as reasons to pick the company over its competitors.

Who pays for transmission depends on who builds it

When MISO awards a long-range transmission project, the developer spreads costs across customers in multiple states, meaning each customer pays less.

When a developer plans a transmission project within its own territory, that developer's customers bear the costs alone.

Transmission developers

pass costs along to customers through electrical utility bills. We Energies, for instance, estimates that transmission-related costs account for about 10% of customers' bills.

Those fees include a "return on equity" for shareholders: profits generated for each dollar invested. As of 2025, ATC collects a 10.48% return.

Competitive bidding for multistate projects is relatively new. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which oversees regional grid operators like MISO, began requiring competitive bidding for regional projects in 2011, following criticism that monopoly developers were driving up ratepayer costs.

Competition for Midwest projects escalated after MISO's board approved billions of dollars in grid upgrades in 2022. MISO was "ahead of the game in terms of how much regional transmission it was planning" compared to other regional grid operators, said Ari Peskoe, director of the Electricity Law Initiative at Harvard Law School.

Grid expansion draws new competitors and investors

MISO's transmission build-out plans offered utilities a golden opportunity to pick up new, dependable revenue streams. "I would have said generational," Peskoe said, "but then we have the data center rush starting shortly thereafter."

Dozens of utilities, including some of the nation's largest, have since lined up to bid for MISO transmission projects.

Also competing for a share of the buildout: newly formed developers financed by powerful investment firms.

Blackstone sponsored Viridon's launch in 2023, and the new developer soon threw its hat into the ring for Midwest transmission projects. Stonepeak, a smaller private equity firm, entered in 2025, backing startup developer Longview Infrastructure.

Well-established utilities have their own ties to multinational investment firms.

As of December 2025, investment giants BlackRock and the Vanguard Group both owned more than 10% of shares in Wisconsin's four largest investor-owned utility companies: Wisconsin Electric Power Company, Xcel Energy, Alliant Energy and Madison Gas and Electric Company.

State Street, another powerful investment firm, owns more

than 5% of shares in each utility.

The four major utilities collectively own a majority of ATC.

Duluth-based utility ALLETE, also an ATC investor, belongs to the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board. The board's purchase of ALLETE last year gave more than 22 million Canadians a chance to shore up their retirement savings through the Midwest's grid buildout.

A fight over competition

ATC and its peers have criticized competitive bidding from the outset. As MISO set up the new bidding process, Peskoe said, utilities fought the change in federal court and urged state legislatures to pass right-of-first-refusal (ROFR) laws.

ROFR laws give local utilities first dibs on transmission projects within their territory, including those planned by regional grid operators.

In the view of Wisconsin's utilities, ROFR laws ensure that utilities with local experience lead transmission projects, avoiding delays and missteps newcomers might face. "Out-of-state single-project developers lack local connection," an ATC spokesperson wrote in an email to Wisconsin Watch. "We maintain relationships with our regulators that go beyond a single project."

But a coalition of critics, including many Midwestern ratepayer advocacy groups, argue that ROFR laws drive up consumer costs by stifling competition and preserving local monopolies. "We firmly believe that competitive bidding makes sense," said Tom Content, executive director of Wisconsin's Citizens Utility Board.

MISO has favored lower-cost bids thus far, but ATC argues that celebrating the cost savings from competitive bidding is premature. "Evidence of a low bid is not evidence of cost savings," the company spokesperson wrote, because bid prices often do not match final project cost. Substantial overruns are common, even in projects without competitive bidding.

The two sides have battled in state legislatures and courts across the Midwest for more than a decade. Utilities prevailed in Minnesota and Michigan; Iowa's Supreme Court struck down a ROFR law in 2023 after a national developer challenged its constitutionality.

Despite extensive lobbying, ROFR bills have repeatedly failed in Wisconsin's Assembly, including one introduced in 2025 by Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester.

That leaves ATC to compete for the MISO-planned transmission upgrades, including the plans for eastern Wisconsin.

Data center complicates planning

Shortly after MISO began soliciting bids for the project in February 2025, ATC alerted the grid operator to a complication. The Port Washington data center would need to connect to the grid by the end of 2027, and ATC would be responsible for making the plug-in possible with new substations designed to support the campus' vast energy needs.

ATC jointly bid on MISO's eastern Wisconsin grid upgrades in July 2025.

Two months later, the company filed an application with Wisconsin's Public Service Commission (PSC) to build

substations and transmission lines to serve the new data center campus. ATC projected a price tag of at least \$1.3 billion for its broader project, which includes infrastructure not in MISO's reliability-focused plan for eastern Wisconsin.

Both proposals called for three substations — albeit at different scales, on different timelines and for different purposes — in roughly the same locations.

From ATC's perspective, at least one set of substations would need to be built in time for the Port Washington data center's opening day. If MISO awarded its project to ATC, the company could address regional grid reliability concerns and serve the data center in one fell swoop, spreading some costs across the Upper Midwest to ease ratepayer burdens. Even if MISO didn't award the project to ATC, the utility said it would still seek state approval to build the necessary substations.

But others saw the overlap as an attempt to sidestep competition.

"We have concerns that attempts are being made to circumvent competitive bidding," Content said.

MISO soon raised concerns of its own with the Wisconsin PSC. In early January the grid operator argued that ATC was effectively applying to build the "same substations" as those outlined in its own eastern Wisconsin project. Because MISO had not yet selected a winning bidder for its transmission upgrades, it urged regulators to "consider this uncertainty" before allowing ATC to move forward.

After MISO selected its bid, Viridon also raised objections.

"Put simply, if ATC constructs the substations, Viridon cannot, and ATC will have circumvented MISO's planning processes," the developer's attorneys wrote in a motion filed with the PSC. Allowing ATC to build the substations, they added, would prevent costs from being distributed across multiple states, "potentially requiring" Wisconsin customers to pay more.

ATC pushed back, arguing the projects serve different purposes. The project MISO envisioned aims to improve regional grid reliability and did not require a rapid turnaround. ATC attorney Amy Miller wrote in filings with the PSC. The project under consideration by the PSC, on the other hand, was tied to a specific customer with a firm deadline.

ATC emphasized that Viridon is not yet certified as a public utility in Wisconsin — a process that could take a year or more. That timeline, ATC argued, makes it impossible for Viridon to complete the substations in time. "MISO cannot cause Wisconsin customers to go without timely access to power," Miller wrote.

Vantage Data Centers echoed the urgency, telling regulators it had "a considerable amount to lose" if the substations aren't ready by the time the Port Washington campus opens.

MISO changes course — benefiting ATC

Behind the scenes, the timeline began to shift.

Shortly before filing its PSC application last fall, ATC asked MISO to expedite a review of its eastern Wisconsin upgrades in light of the data center's plans.

Two months later, the company filed an application with Wisconsin's Public Service Commission (PSC) to build

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Obituaries

JOHN B. FREUND

John B. "Jack" Freund, of Lake Geneva, passed away peacefully on Saturday, March 14, surrounded by his family.

Jack was born on Aug. 1, 1936, in McHenry County, Illinois, to Ben and Berniece Freund. He was raised in Delavan, attending St. Patrick's parochial elementary and graduating from Delavan High School. He maintained strong roots in Delavan throughout his life.

Jack's faith was a cornerstone in his life. He was a proud member of St. Peter's Catholic Church in East Troy along with his wife, Jack was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Ginny, in 2019. They shared 60 wonderful years of marriage, traveling throughout the United States, and supporting each other in their hobbies.

Jack proudly served his country in the United States Army during the 1950s and was stationed in Bamberg, Germany. He spoke often and with great pride about his time in the service and the experiences he gained while serving



overseas. Following his military service, Jack built a long and successful career in the petroleum industry. His entrepreneurial spirit and strong work ethic led him to own and operate multiple gas stations, as well as a car wash.

He later became the proud owner of the Handi Mart convenience store in Lake Como, where he and Ginny were a familiar and friendly presence in the community.

In retirement, Jack devoted himself to a passion that brought him great joy and respect — collecting antique coin-operated machines. His collection included peanut machines, gumball machines, slot machines, and trade stimulators. He was widely respected in the field. His dedication and expertise earned him induction into the Coin Operated Collectors Association Hall of Fame.

Jack is survived by his sister, Patricia Brahm; his children, Genise (Bob) Kamps, John (Carol) Freund, and Julie (Tim) Schiller; eight grandchildren; and twelve great-grandchildren, all of whom were a source of immense pride and joy in his life.

Jack will be remembered as a loving husband and devoted father as well as for his entrepreneurial drive, his pride in serving his country, and the lasting impact he made on his family, friends, and community.

Delavan Enterprise

• Power grid

(Continued from page 5)

MISO adjusted its schedule in February, setting a new in-service date of Dec. 1, 2027. Viridon submitted a plan to meet that deadline, Jeff Dodd, president of Viridon's Midwestern subsidiary, told Wisconsin Watch.

The grid operator wasn't persuaded.

In a revision released quietly, MISO reassigned the substations to ATC, noting its "uncertainty" that Viridon could clear administrative hurdles in time.

The reassignment is a first for MISO. The grid operator has previously worked with developers to update plans when problems arose, with the exception of a 2023 case in which MISO canceled a project because of Texas' right of first refusal law.

Viridon retains a fraction of MISO's original project: a set of transmission lines and one substation scheduled for completion by 2033.

Under the new arrangement, Midwestern customers

will collectively cover the costs of Viridon's project and about \$40 million of ATC's substation upgrades.

The regional cost sharing of the substations is a small relief for ratepayer advocates. ATC now plans to fold the substations into the larger grid buildout it brought to the PSC last September, which includes transmission lines needed to serve the Port Washington data center. Wisconsin ratepayers alone are set to cover the remainder of the project's more

than \$1 billion budget.

"Now that the dispute over ownership of the substations is resolved," Content wrote in an email to Wisconsin Watch, "our overriding concern is over the costs of the transmission line itself that ATC has proposed. Critical changes are needed to prevent utility customers across Wisconsin as well as customers in Michigan's Upper Peninsula from footing the bill for this project and other data center-feeding power lines that should be paid

for by the tech companies."

The final outcome for the Wisconsin transmission projects still hinges on state regulators. Neither Viridon nor ATC can begin construction on their respective substations or transmission lines without approval from the PSC. The commission is reviewing ATC's application and weighing where the infrastructure will be built.

For now, construction crews are racing to bring the Port Washington data center online by the end of next year. The

PSC will soon decide who pays for the power to run it.

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Cedarburg, News Graphic



Clean Sweep Program is Saturday

Event is an opportunity to safely dispose of hazardous waste items

CEDARBURG — The 2026 Ozaukee County Clean Sweep is from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday at the 1221 Hilltop Drive Cedarburg Highway Facility.

The drive-through event is an opportunity for residents, agricultural producers and businesses to properly dispose of hazardous waste and used tires.

Household and chemical materials accepted include non-latex paints, battery acid, brake fluids, concrete cleaners, drain cleaners, driveway sealers, fertilizers with weed killer, gasoline and other fuels (only if contaminated, oils, pool/spa chemicals with bleaches, thermometers with mercury, transmission fluids, turpentine, weed killers and more.

Agricultural chemical and materials

accepted include acid washed, banned agricultural pesticides, batteries, farm chemical and fertilizers, DDT, insecticides, solvents, veterinary supplies and more.

They will not accept latex paints or latex stains, medications, ammunition, compressed gas cylinders, explosives, infectious or biological wastes or needs, used motor oil or radioactive chemical and devices, such as smoke detectors.

At this time there is no electronic or appliance recycling. For future reference, check the [Cedarburg Light & Water Utility Recycling Program](http://www.cedarburglightandwater.org/recycling-program) at www.cedarburglightandwater.org/recycling-program.

For more details and to learn about any applicable fees, visit www.ozaukeecounty.gov/2577/Clear-Sweep-Program.

Safety Town returns to Cedarburg this summer

CEDARBURG — The Cedarburg Junior Woman's Club and the Cedarburg Police Department will be offering an important safety instruction program for children this summer.

Safety Town is a course for children who will be entering kindergarten (5K) in the fall. This two-week course consists of large and small group discussions, songs, videos, games and activities focusing on many types of safety.

Field trips and a street safety course are also included. Classes meet Monday through Thursday at Westlawn Elementary School, W64N319 Madison Ave., for two weeks beginning June 15 and ending June 25.

Three sessions are offered: 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The cost of the program is \$60.54. Safety Town is only for students entering 5K in the fall of 2026.



Scan the QR code for more information or to register for Safety Town.

Safety Town registrations are non-refundable. Session times cannot be changed after registration.

Non-Cedarburg residents can register beginning Friday on a space-available basis.

All registrations include a Safety Town T-shirt.

Program questions can be directed to safetytown@cedarburgjuniors.org. Spots can be reserved by going to <https://bit.ly/49fsbnY>.

Program volunteers are also needed.

Program sponsors are ATC, Cedarburg Light & Water and Cedarburg-Grafton Rotary Club.



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City council okays staggered terms, urges people to run for city government

Open records fees discussed

BY MICHELLE DREW
EDITOR

The Eagle River City Council approved implementing staggered alderperson terms going forward at its April meeting.

Currently, all five seats are up for reelection at the same time, which could create problems in the event all seats were unelected at the same time, Mayor Deb Brown said. She noted it would be specifically difficult to manage for city staff including Administrator Robin Ginner, Clerk Becky Bolte, Treasurer Cory Hoffman, and police Chief Tyler Salvinski.

"If all five of us were to get unelected, it would be an absolute nightmare for them. It would be the hardest on them because there would be no continuity," Brown said.

The council decided it will hold elections every year, with all four alderpersons and the mayor on the ballot next spring. In order to align the terms going forward, those in the even-numbered districts 2 and 4 (currently held by Jerry Burkett and Dan Dumas) would be on the ballot for a one-year term. Those in odd-numbered districts 1 and 3 which (currently held by Vic Washelesky and Kim Schaffer), as well as the mayor, will be on the 2027 ballot for two-year terms.

After 2027, odd-numbered districts and the mayor would be elected in odd-numbered years going forward, and even-numbered districts in even years. Districts 2 and 4 would have to run again in 2028 for a regular two-year term.

Citizens at the meeting brought up also imposing term limits for the council. Alderpersons and the mayor indicated that finding people to run can be very difficult with existing council members sometimes having to seek out candidates.

"Please, step up and run," Burkett urged. "I've

made this statement no less than five or six times; run, please!"

Burkett said when he originally ran for alderman about 30 years ago, Eagle River was the highest taxed city in the entire state.

"If you're not part of the solution, you are complacent and part of the problem. And I decided that I was going to be part of the solution," Burkett said. "This job carries a great deal of responsibility, and you have to face that responsibility. I've been an alderman for three decades."

He again pleaded for citizens to step up.

"Please! Somebody run against me and have the public decide if I'm still the person for them or somebody else should do this job. Let the people decide," he said.

Brown supported his comment, saying serving on the council is "an indication of what it takes to run a city."

Washelesky asked the council members when the last time someone was opposed in an election before noting he likely wouldn't be running again next year due to not being able to give the job the time it deserves.

"You see people come to the meetings and they get one thing, the park for instance, and you get so many intelligent responses from people and you think, 'why aren't you part of this all the time?'" he said.

"Jerry hit it right on the nose; you've gotta run for these positions. It's interesting, you're involved in your community, I couldn't tell you how much fun this is. Sometimes frustrating. And it's not the amount of time that it's going to ruin your life," Washelesky added.

The council said it will look into term limits at a later date, with Burkett noting they have time because there are nine months before anyone has to file any nomination paperwork.

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Council

FROM PAGE 3

Open records fees

The council decided in March to implement a fee scale in compliance with Department of Justice guidelines for open records requests after a number of time-consuming requests.

Burkett had asked for a breakdown of open records requests which was presented by Clerk Becky Bolte at Tuesday's meeting. Her list included requests from January 2025 through March 2026 and indicated approximately 25 records requests were made by city resident Kathryn Craffey. Also included in the list were requests made to city Administrator Robin Ginner, who noted approximate times it took for her to fulfill those requests.

Craffey spoke at the meeting about the important things that were learned through the open records requests of herself and others, and how important it is to the community, indicating that some of those requests led to the city uploading a corrected budget.

"We've learned through open records requests that copies of the Zoom meetings have to be open records because the city doesn't put them on YouTube or other free sites," Craffey said.

"We learned through a reporter filing a request an alderman helped put a snowmobile trail on FAA-owned property, and we learned that there was no censure of this alderman ever initiated by the mayor or council," Craffey said.

Burkett interjected, "I beg to differ and I think that is defamation of character, and I will be taking action." He then requested a copy of the meeting at Bolte's earliest convenience.

"We learned a lot of information and I feel that if Eagle River was a little more transparent in putting information and meetings online, we wouldn't have to ask, or bother the clerk for information."

Mayor Deb Brown responded with, "I'm not sure what else we can do — I think we're very open. All you have to do is ask and we're happy to answer your questions."

Regarding the availability of recorded Zoom meetings, Bolte specified that it was currently an IT issue with the meetings being posted on the website, but they are looking at how to enhance that.

"They are always available through our link,

and I'm happy to provide it whenever necessary," she said, but agreed when Craffey clarified that would be considered an open records request.

It was noted during the meeting that The Lakeland Times has awarded both Ginner and Bolte with A-ratings for their transparency.

In other business

• During other council business, Mike Sanborn of [Eagle River Light](#) and Water Utility updated the council on his work with a landowner willing to allow sludge spreading on their property once all testing and permitting is completed, and the council also okayed a "half-price" cleaning and televising to be done by Aqualis at a cost of \$15,000. They also approved the sale of a 2002 bucket truck and 2003 digger truck with proceeds to go back to the utility's equipment replacement account.

• Phil Kriesel of MSA Engineering reported that he would be retiring May 8. Brown thanked him for his years of service to the city.

• The Vilas County Fairgrounds will host a small animal swap meet five times throughout the summer months where people can purchase rabbits, ducks, chickens, turkeys and other small animals. Dates of the events will be May 30, June 20, July 18, Aug. 29 and Sept. 12, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Signs will be posted to alert the public.

• Police Chief Tyler Salvinski reported the May 31 retirement/resignation of Adam Ross and updated the council on the hiring process.

• Fire Chief James Randall presented his report, saying the department is receiving far more calls than previous years and is over budget on payroll. "We have been running ragged. It's been rough," Randall said.

The department has sold some equipment to try to fill the coffers.

"We're doing everything possible to try to keep money coming in, but we're hurting," he said.

• They also denied an invoice for damage to a pedestal damaged at 150 E Hospital Road on Feb. 21 that Project Resources Group, representing Charter Spectrum, says was damaged by city plows.

After speaking to his team, Adamovich said, "The timeline to me does not match up. I think they are just looking for someone to pay for this pedestal."

Burkett said they were "vehemently denying this."



Approximately \$1 million in damage caused by fire at Hartford Quad facility

The following information was issued by Hartford Fire & Rescue Chief Tony Burgard.

At approximately 3:18 p.m. on April 5, Hartford Fire & Rescue responded to the report of a fire inside Quad Graphics, located near W. Sumner and Independence Ave. A 911 caller reported that there was a fire inside building #6 next to the presses.

The first arriving incident command vehicle found smoke pushing out of an overhead garage door. A maintenance employee directed fire units to where the fire was located inside of the building. The first arriving engine crew deployed a hose

line into the building to gain access to the fire's location. The next arriving Hartford truck company set up and prepared to ladder the roof of the building, should vertical ventilation be needed. Additional assistance was requested, due to the size of the building and the amount of smoke, through the MABAS system to the Working Still level.

A sprinkler from the fire suppression system had activated and controlled the fire from spreading any further, allowing the fire to be extinguished by the first arriving engine crew. The area was overhauled to ensure no other fire

remained. EMS crews provided rehabilitation efforts to the firefighters as well as staffing an ambulance on scene. No fire or EMS personnel were injured during this incident. The building did not contain any employees at the time of the fire due to the plant being shut down for the Easter holiday.

An active fire investigation is still underway at the time of this release to determine the cause of the fire. Early estimates of total loss are near \$1 million.

Assistance was provided by the Washington County Sheriff's Office with dispatch services and Hartford Police

Department with law enforcement assistance. Mutual Aid assistance was provided by St. Lawrence Fire Company and Slinger Fire Department, and a Lifestar Ambulance which provided an EMS unit at change of quarters to cover Hartford's service area while at the fire. Lifestar Ambulance responded to a separate EMS incident in the Hartford area from the change of quarters assignment, which occurred during the fire. Hartford Electric Utility and Water Utility, along with WE Energies gas, also assured that there were no utility supply concerns.



Waukesha, The Freeman

Quad Graphics in Hartford fire damage estimated at nearly \$1 million

No injuries reported from blaze during Easter shutdown

HARTFORD — Easter Sunday proved to be eventful for first responders in Hartford and beyond as a fire broke out at Quad Graphics.

Units responded to the report of a fire inside Quad Graphics, located near West Sumner Street and Independence Avenue, at about 3:18 p.m. Sunday, according to a news release from Hartford Fire and Rescue.

No fire or EMS personnel were reported injured from the fire. The building did not contain any employees at the time of the fire due to the plant being shut down for the Easter holiday, Hartford Fire and Rescue said.

An active fire investigation was still underway at the time of the release to determine the cause of the blaze. Early estimates of the damages are nearly \$1 million.

The release said a 911 caller reported that there was a fire inside building #6 next to the presses. This was confirmed by the first command vehicle on the scene, where it found smoke pushing out of an overhead garage door.

A maintenance employee directed fire units to where the fire was located inside of the building, and the first engine crew deployed a hose line into the building to gain access to the fire's location, the department said in the release. The next Hartford truck company on the scene set up and prepared a ladder for the roof of the building should



Photo courtesy of Hartford Fire & Rescue

A fire broke out at Quad Graphics in Hartford on Easter, but was contained by the sprinkler system and Hartford Fire & Rescue's fire suppression efforts.

vertical ventilation be needed.

Additional assistance was requested, due to the size of the building and the amount of smoke, through MABAS Division 111 to the Working Still Level, according to the department. Assistance was provided by the Washington County Sheriff's Office with dispatch services and Hartford Police Department with law enforcement services, the release said. Mutual Aid assistance was provided by St. Lawrence Fire Company and Slinger Fire

Department. Lifestar EMS Wisconsin provided an EMS unit at change of quarters to cover Hartford's service area while at the fire. Lifestar Ambulance responded to a separate EMS incident in the Hartford area from the change of quarters assignment, which occurred during the fire. Hartford Electric Utility and Water Utility, along with WE Energies gas, also assured that there were no utility supply concerns, said the release.

A sprinkler from the fire suppression system had activated and controlled the fire from spreading any further, allowing the fire to be extinguished by the first-arriving engine crew, the release said. The area was overhauled to ensure no other fire remained.

EMS crews provided rehabilitation efforts to the firefighters as well as staffing an ambulance on scene, Hartford Fire and Rescue said.



Hartford Express News

Hartford Fire units respond to residential roof fire

Hartford Fire & Rescue responded to a roof fire at a residence on McKinley Avenue on April 14.

According to information from Hartford Fire & Rescue Chief Tony Burgard, at approximately 8:44 p.m. April 14, Hartford Fire & Rescue responded to the report of fire coming from the roof of a house located on McKinley Avenue. The first arriving incident command vehicle arrived during a heavy thunderstorm and found fire pushing out of the eaves and fascia of the roof, and confirmed that all occupants were out of the building. The first arriving engine crew deployed a hose line into the house to gain access to the fire's

location in the attic. The next arriving Hartford truck company set up and laddered the roof of the building and provided vertical ventilation. The following Hartford engine assisted with water supply from the hydrant and provided an additional crew. Additional assistance was requested through the MABAS system at the Working Still level.

According to the news release from Hartford Fire & Rescue, the fire in the attic and underside of the roof was extinguished, and the area was overhauled to ensure no other fire remained. Salvage efforts were taken to protect the belongings of the homeowner from further water damage. EMS crews

provided rehabilitation efforts to the firefighters as well as staffing an ambulance on scene. Smoke was removed from the house using fan-powered ventilation. No citizens or fire or EMS personnel were injured during this incident. An active fire investigation is still underway at the time of this release to determine the cause of the fire. Two other EMS calls occurred in Hartford at the same time as the fire call, with the first being handled by a Hartford ambulance crew, and the second by Lifestar Ambulance.

Assistance was provided by the Washington County Sheriff's Office with dispatch services and Hartford Police

Department with law enforcement assistance. Mutual Aid assistance was provided by St. Lawrence Fire Company and Slinger Fire Department. Jackson Fire Department provided an engine and an ambulance at change of quarters to cover Hartford's service area while at the fire. Hartford Electric Utility and Water Utility, along with WE Energies gas, also assured that there were no utility supply concerns.

In the news release, Burgard noted that Hartford Fire units had been out for several weather-related fire incidents just before this during the severe weather burst that moved through Hartford around 6:20 p.m.



Title: Ads

Author:

Size : 50 Inches Sq Independence,IA Circulation: 2029

Keywords: Independence Light & Power, Telecommunications



April 18: National Lineworker Appreciation Day

Each year, we join communities across the country in honoring the dedicated people who maintain America's power grid. Here at home, crews work every day to keep the lights on and restore service quickly when storms strike. Their skill and commitment help power our community.

THANK A LINEWORKER



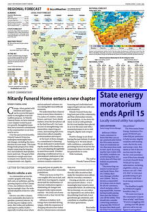
INDEPENDENCE LIGHT & POWER
TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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At Independence Light & Power, we join forces with other local, not-for-profit utilities through WPPi Energy to share resources and lower costs.

SHARED STRENGTH THROUGH @ WPPi ENERGY





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State energy moratorium ends April 15

Locally owned utility has options

GREG HOFFMANN
Senior Energy Services Manager

Jefferson Utilities wants customers to know that they can set up a payment plan before the Wisconsin moratorium on residential service disconnections ends in mid-April. By arranging this type of plan with the utility, residents can avoid having their electricity shut off if they fall behind on payments. their bills.

“Disconnecting customers is a last resort,” said Sarah Hinze, Electric Utilities Business Manager of **Jefferson Utilities**. “But we do have a responsibility to keep costs in check for all our customers, which includes collecting unpaid bills. Anyone having trouble paying their past due balance can call the utility. They should also consider contacting assistance programs like WHEAP because they likely qualify if they’ve encountered

this problem.”
The Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) provides bill pay assistance to help income-eligible residents with heating costs, electricity costs and energy crises. Residents at risk of disconnection may be eligible for crisis assistance even if they have already received a benefit from WHEAP. For more information, including eligibility criteria, customers can call 1-866-432-8947 or visit energyandhousing.wi.gov to connect with their local energy assistance agency.

The deadline to apply for WHEAP’s regular benefits is May 15.

“We want everyone in the community to know there is help,” said Hinze. “If you’re struggling with paying your bill, please give us a call so we can figure it out together.”



Kaukauna, Heart of the Valley Times-Villager

Common Council approves neighborhood and electric vehicle ordinance additions

By Tom Collins Reporter

Kaukauna officials took a step toward creating ordinance language surrounding what the state calls neighborhood and electric vehicles, the evolving range of devices now gaining popularity, especially with younger riders.

The ordinance additions attempt to create a framework for regulating use of the various devices in the city and for potential enforcement of their misuse by riders.

Along with the ordinance additions, the council members stressed the importance of continued education regarding the use of such vehicles. That is expected to include presentations by school resource officers for students, some type of potential parent meetings, clear depictions of the images of the vehicles in question, social media posts and online information.

The city's elected officials also expressed the importance of revisit-

ing the legislation periodically, especially with the rapid evolution of the vehicles in question. As one council member quipped, there eventually may be garbage-fueled hover boards available paying homage to the "Back to the Future" movie series and its world of unusual devices.

Community education efforts likely will also play a part in another matter approved by the council members during their April 8 mid-week session. That effort approved bonding by [Kaukauna Utilities](#) of up to \$20 million for the intensive upgrades to the city's water system.

Alderspersons Kelli Antoine and Pennie Thiele each underlined the importance of information and education regarding the planned upgrades for the city's water system. Thiele emphasized the potential benefits for all residents through water that will not be so harsh on appliances such as refrigerators, washers and water softeners.

Antoine emphasized some type of ongoing information regarding the water system upgrade.

The common council meeting probably seemed akin to television news programs like "Nightline" or "The 11th Hour" with its late start at 8:32 p.m. The late council session followed the board and committee sessions that were displaced by the April 7 elections.

Council members took an uncommon step as they decided to override a recommendation from the joint review board regarding the proper date to file official paperwork involving the official closing of TID No. 6. By state law, that tax incremental district is due to close after 20 years.

The elected officials weighed the joint review committee's decision to approve the TID closing paperwork using the April 8 meeting date with an earlier recommendation by former city Finance Director Will Van Rossum to wait until after the April 15 tax filing date to file the required

closure papers. Van Rossum underlined the further tax advantages for the city and all parties involved with the later filing date.

The required closure paperwork needs to be filed by May 3. The council delayed consideration of the matter during its April 8 session until they could get some in-meeting research and advice from City Attorney Tim Greenwood. Once they learned they could override the joint review board's recommendation and file the paperwork later in the month they took no action at this time. The approval and filing date is expected to be approved at the April 21 common council session.

The busy common council session also saw the official 2025 police department report presented by Police Chief Jamie Graff. He emphasized the city department's efforts toward building community relationships through their varied efforts.

See Ordinance, page 6



State energy moratorium ends April 15

Apr 9, 2026

Lake Mills Light & Water wants customers to know that they can set up a payment plan before the Wisconsin moratorium on residential service disconnections ends in mid-April. By arranging this type of plan with the utility, residents can avoid the possibility of having their electricity shut off if they are behind on their bills.

“Disconnecting customers is a last resort,” said Lucas Caine, Utility Manager of Lake Mills Light & Water. “But we do have a responsibility to keep costs in check for all our customers, which includes collecting unpaid bills. Anyone who’s having trouble paying their past due balance can call the utility. They should also consider contacting assistance programs like WHEAP because they likely qualify if they’ve encountered this problem.”

The Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) provides bill pay assistance to help income-eligible residents with heating costs, electricity costs and energy crises. Residents at risk of disconnection may be eligible for crisis assistance even if they have already received a benefit from WHEAP. For more information, including eligibility criteria, customers can call 1-866-432-8947 or visit energyandhousing.wi.gov to connect with their local energy assistance agency.

The deadline to apply for WHEAP’s regular benefits is May 15.

In the event the utility must limit service, staff will issue a final disconnection notice. To learn more about payment options, call Lake Mills Light & Water at (920) 648-2344 between Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

“We want everyone in the community to know there is help,” said Caine. “If you’re struggling with paying your bill, please give us a call so we can figure it out together.”



Apr 16 2026 Page A19 Clip resized 77%

State energy moratorium ends April 15

Locally owned utility has options available to help customers avoid disconnection

GREG HOFFMANN
Sr. Energy Services Manager

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Outgoing City of Lodi mayor honored after six years of service

Apr 10, 2026



As decorations and stray documents have been cleared from the City of Lodi Mayor's Office, in anticipation of the arrival of the newly-elected Tom Marx, staff and council members did not let Ann Groves Lloyd sneak out without a moment of public recognition.

Members of the city staff and the Lodi Common Council got together on April 9, before the Committee of the Whole meeting, for snacks, cake, and words of thanks and farewell for

the outgoing mayor. Council President Rich Stevenson took to microphone, usually for presentations and public input, to announce a more formal acknowledgment.

Stevenson told Groves Lloyd that he had been putting the task off, with enough changes happening as it was, as he presented a certificate of appreciation. The document recognized her contributions to the city as mayor, from 2020 to 2026, a member of the common council from 2015 to 2020, and on the city utilities commission in 2012 to 2018.

“Oh, sweet Jesus,” said Groves Lloyd, reminded the full extent of her record of service.

“Your commitment to public service, unwavering integrity, and tireless efforts to improve the city of Lodi have left a lasting impact on our community,” Stevenson read. “Through your vision and passion, you have guided our city with compassion and strength, fostering growth, unity and progress...”

“Ann and I came to an understanding early on,” said Stevenson, going on to explain their work together more personally, “that we can fight and argue behind closed doors...”

“Yep,” Groves Lloyd agreed.

“...and come out of the office with a unified direction...you like my ideas or I like your ideas, we would compromise, and we ended up staying friends,” said Stevenson, with Groves Lloyd adding that the two had at times been “at loggerheads,” but were able to work through those challenges with respect for their shared mission, and each other personally.

Groves Lloyd explained how their working relationship had grown from their vastly different skill sets, including when she began and, for instance, knew relatively little about street projects.

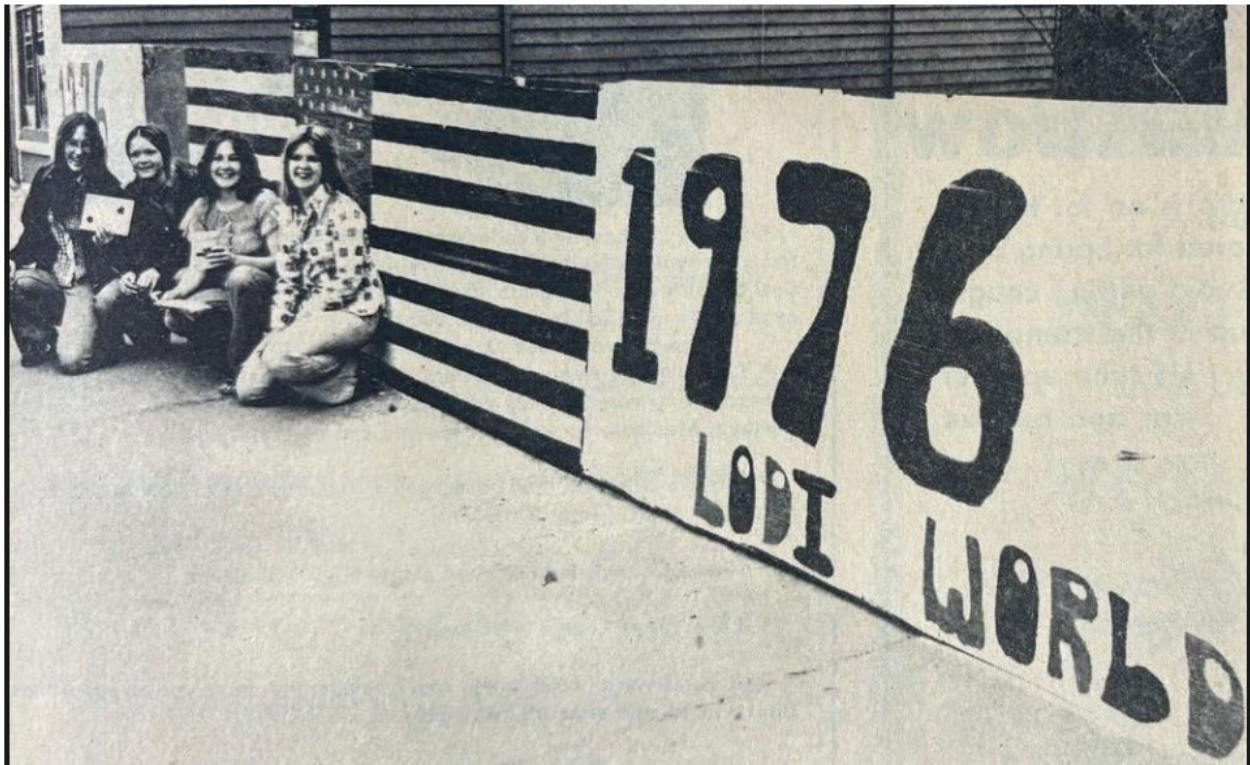
“To have you by my side--and you have never said ‘no’ when I’ve called you about something,” said Groves Lloyd. “But I wish everyone could experience, this is exactly what democracy is supposed to be...”

“It absolutely is,” Stevenson seconded.”

“It has been an absolute joy working with everyone, and staff, you have all been amazing...this has been six years I will never forget--it has been such an honor.”

This day in Lodi history

Apr 24, 2026



15 years ago...

A Lodi project-based learning charter school for elementary students was one step closer to reality. The Lodi School Board gave the thumbs up at its April 11 board meeting to The Ouisconsin School of Collaboration charter school that was expected to serve 80 students in grades 3-5 starting in August 2012. Board members said the initiative would be a plus to the district providing students with new options to learn, progressive training for staff and updated technology and equipment. “It really is a win-win for the district to be part of this, said school board member Sheila Landsverk.

New LED lighting in a Main Street park could be a sign of things to come. In March Lodi Utilities and Lodi Public Works, working with WPPI Energy, replaced six lantern-style fixtures in Spring Creek Park with new light-emitting diode (LED) light fixtures. WPPI Energy service representative Jim Schieble said the replacement was part of a demonstration project to show the public the effectiveness of LED lighting. Schieble said the old metal halide bulbs used 250 Watts while the new LED lighting would use just 49 Watts and would save about 6,300 kilowatt-hour, or about \$500 annually.

25 years ago...

Two important issues were going to be decided on soon and the Lodi School District was wanting to gather input from community members. The first issue was whether Lodi should introduce a program to use the Columbia County Canine Unit in the schools...If approved, the canine unit would visit LHS unannounced for random checks, mostly of students' lockers. The canines would also potentially check vehicles parked in the school lot. The second issue was a little less controversial, but the Board of Education wanted advice from the community regarding setting the school calendar.

35 years ago...

The Lodi School District needed to address and improve coordination of curriculum. Lodi School Board members and staff, the Monday night, concurred with that assessment by outside audit teams reviewing district curriculum, but disagreed on just what route should be taken...Audit team recommendations included that the district reduce science class sizes to match available laboratory spaces and add a staff position to teach ninth-grade science and improve student/teacher ratios. The additional staff person would also teach high school math, under a district administrative proposal. An audit team report noted, for example, that rooms built to serve 20 to 22 students were serving 25 to 30 students.

Governor Tommy Thompson's proposed school aid formula changes and cost controls would mean vacation time for many of the summer school enrichment classes typically offered by the Lodi School District. School board members that Monday night approved an administrative recommendation to offer only kindergarten readiness, study skills, language arts and math special help classes, special education, early childhood, driver education, and swimming...Eliminated from the summer schedule were science, computers, keyboarding/typing, creative drama, gymnastics, instrumental music, agriculture, conversational foreign language and physical education.

Lodi Mayor Don Schultz appointed Phil Baebler to fill his second ward aldermanic seat that remained vacant after the April 2 election. The appointment was unanimously approved by the common council.

The Department of Natural Resources was proposing to create a new fishery area named Lodi Spring Creek. The property was located just north of the City of Lodi. The department owned small amounts of land on the stream, mainly for fisher access. The department was proposing to purchase a little more than 200 acres with two miles of stream. Other smaller areas were proposed for additional fee title or easement. Total cost of the project was estimated at \$115,000.

50 years ago...

A tamed down version of a prairie fire burned across the top of the hill behind the Elementary School that Monday. The fire was set by a group of volunteers in an attempt to help preserve the prairie remnant that existed on the hilltop. The site was part of the 8 acre school land that was to be used as a nature area. It was a tiny part of the estimated 2,000 acres of prairie that was left of more than 2.5 million acres of prairie that existed in at least 30 Wisconsin counties less than two centuries earlier.

Lodi received the designation as a Bicentennial Community from the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration. The designation meant that the local planning for the event conformed with the standards set for communities' observances of the Bicentennial. The planning had to contain a recognition of something from the past, include a festival and contain something for the future. Among the events planned for the observance were a Fourth of July celebration, an ecumenical church service in the park and a demonstration of arts and crafts. The Jaycees sponsored the Fourth of July celebration, which would include a parade.

75 years ago...

Acclaimed by ministers, priests, rabbis and people of every faith for its non-sectarian presentation of its vital story of brotherly love, the new \$2,500,00 two-hour Hallmark production, "The Prince of Peace" in cinecolor, was coming to Turner's Lodi Theater for an engagement on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, May 1, 2, and 3. The new film was the story of the Life of Jesus. It drove home the most powerful lesson on Earth.

Ernie Smith was elected president of the Lodi Athletic Club at the spring meeting of the club the previous Friday. He succeeded Harvey Dolson as head of the organization which had taken over the sponsorship of amateur baseball in Lodi. The club had decided to place its franchise in the Home Talent League on an inactive status that year and campaign independently. That move was necessary because of the limited number of players who would not be available until the high school, the university and colleges were out for the summer.



Title: Maquoketa inks loan with business affected by fire

Author:

Size : 17 Inches Sq Maquoketa,IA Circulation: 3879

Keywords: Maquoketa Municipal Electric Utility



Maquoketa inks loan with business affected by fire

The city of Maquoketa agreed to give a pet food producer \$100,000 forgivable loan.

The Maquoketa City Council April 6 signed a forgivable loan agreement with Midwest Legacy Beef, LLC, which lost its property and equipment in a fire March 1 in LaMotte. The company manufactures and tubes raw, ground pet food.

Seeking to remain competitive and get back up and running, the company decided to set up shop at 1702 E. Maple St. in Maquoketa, the former Blue-9 Pet Products facility.

The property is valued at about \$966,000. Construction improve-

ments made to the site are estimated at about \$550,000, putting property values at least at \$1.5 million, according to Maquoketa City Manager Josh Boldt.

Under the terms of the agreement, the city will give Midwest Legacy Beef \$100,000 from its capital fund. The loan would be repaid from the increase in property taxes expected due to property investments the company made on the 1702 E. Maple St. property (tax increment financing). Payback would probably take about 10 years, Boldt said.

Per the agreement, the company must maintain 15 full-time employees at

the Maquoketa site and continue to do businesses throughout the duration of the agreement. If not, Midwest Beef would be considered in default of the loan.

Other entities assisting the company with the expansion finances are Maquoketa Municipal Electric Utility, MIDAS, and the Timber City Development Board.

Boldt said Midwest Legacy Beef does plan to return some business operations to LaMotte for insurance reasons.

Reporting by Kelly Gerlach, Maquoketa Sentinel-Press.

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ENVIRONMENT

Electronics recycling to be on May 7

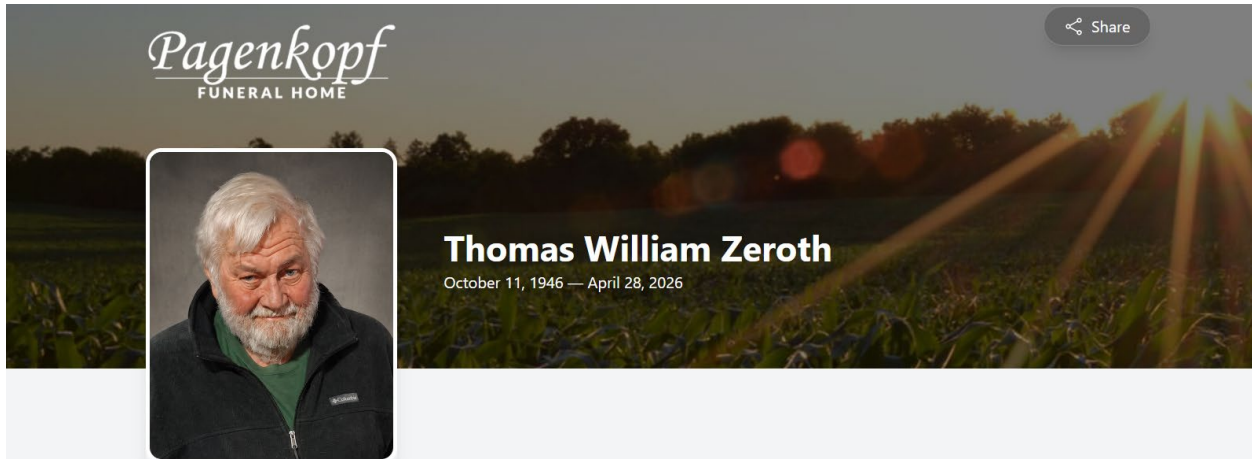
The annual electronics recycling event coordinated by **New Holstein Utilities** (NHU) is scheduled for Thursday, May 7 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the NHU garage, 1819 Park Ave.

Many items can be brought in for free. Those are ballasts, blenders, cables and cable boxes, CD/DVD players, cell phones, charger cords, coffee makers, computers, dehumidifiers, dishwashers, freezers, full-size refrigerators, LED monitors and TVs, microwaves, mini-refrigerators, modems, printers, room air conditioners, string lights and vacuums.

Other items can be brought in but there will be a small charge for them. Those include incandescent, fluorescent and LED bulbs (\$1 for four feet and under, \$2 for over four feet); batteries, \$1 per pound; CRT monitors and tube TVs, \$10 each; and plasma, projection and console TVs, \$20 each.

Payment is due at the time of drop-off. Cash or checks (made payable to Redemption Recycling LLC) will be accepted.

If someone has a large number of items or is unable to attend this event, please contact the vendor directly at (262) 349-6495 for drop-off or pick-up availability.



Thomas William Zeroth

Thomas William Zeroth passed away peacefully at home on 4/28/2026. Thomas was born 10/11/1946 to George Zeroth and Virginia Woelfel (formally Zeroth).

Thomas is survived by his wife of 56 years, Faye Zeroth (nee Heuser), his children: Daniel (Nicole) Zeroth and Kristiana (Robert) Williams, and his beloved grandchildren: Jameson, Audriana, Anniston and Jocelyn. He is further survived by his siblings: Charlotte (Dave) Wallace, John “Jack” (Debbie) Woelfel, Paul Zeroth, David Zeroth and Larry Zeroth.

He is preceded in death by his parents George Zeroth and Virginia Woelfel (nee Wilson), stepfather James Woelfel, father and mother in law B. John & Nora Heuser, little brother Daniel Zeroth and beloved K-9 service dog Rock.

Thomas was a 1964 graduate of Oconomowoc Highschool. He served his country in the Air Force 1964-1968 as an Air Policeman and K-9 handler including 1 tour in Vietnam. He married the love of his life in 1969, and quickly established a career with **Oconomowoc Utilities**. He began as a lineman and retired as general foreman in 2001. He enjoyed his long retirement filled with many hobbies, and never really slowed down. After retirement, he was able to fully commit to the farm, Big Oak Herefords, and enjoyed all aspects of raising beef cattle. He was an avid gardener, always sharing his harvest with friends and family. He honed in on his woodworking skills and built many beautiful pieces of furniture. He also spent countless hours working on classic cars, tractors and skid loaders. He spent his final years soaking up the joys of being a grandfather.

In lieu of flowers, donations to [Project K-9 Hero](#) in Thomas' name are welcome.

A service will take place on May 17th, 2026 at Pagenkopf Funeral Home 2228 N. Silver Maple Lane, Oconomowoc, WI 53066 visitation from 1pm-3pm, followed by a service.

To send flowers to the family in memory of Thomas William Zeroth, please visit our [flower store](#).



Oconto Falls updating electric distribution systems

10 April 2026

\$6.4M substation project behind rate hike in 2025

By: Kevin Murphy, Correspondent

Oconto Falls Municipal Utilities will replace its outdated electric distribution system with modern facilities that have three times its present capacity.

“It’s aging and is ready to be replaced,” Beth Rank, interim manager, said April 9.

The Public Service Commission approved the project the same day.

Utilities have been replacing their old 4 kilovolt distribution systems with 12.4 kV systems to keep up with increased customer demand for electricity as they adopt advanced technology dependent on reliable electrical power.

OFMU’s existing electrical distribution system is old enough that Rank couldn’t immediately say how long it’s been in service. It’s referred to as a “legacy” system in documents submitted to the PSC.

The changeover to a higher capacity began with building two new substations beginning in 2024 to replace two older substations, rated for 4.6 kV service, and were approaching the end of their useful life.

The new substation went into service at the end of 2025, according to Forster Electric Engineering, the city’s electrical consulting firm.

The \$6.4 million substation project was a main driver behind the 22.5% rate increase the PSC authorized last fall and OFMU implemented in December, Rank said.

“That was the biggest project we’ve had, before that there weren’t many projects,” she said.

Forster’s report to the PSC stated that the upgrade project could require a 7% increase in revenue or about an \$8 increase in monthly residential electric bills currently at \$78.

However, Rank said the 12.4 kV upgrade won’t require a rate increase as the new transformers have been acquired and most of the labor will be done in-house.

The entire OFMU distribution system will be upgraded to 12.4 kV mainly by changing out the dozens of old transformers with ones that have the higher capacity. Power lines to each address won't be changed.

The process could interrupt power for one or two hours, according to Forster.

Work is scheduled to begin this summer, and the utility will call each customer and inform them when their power will be interrupted.

The changeover is expected to take about three years to complete, according to Forster.

The utility buys power from WPPI, which is distributed over WE Energy transmission lines. American Transmission Co.'s 138 kV line will be OFMU's new electrical connection and should be more reliable, Rank said.

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Oconto Falls updating outdated electric systems

\$6.4M substation project behind rate hike in 2025

By **KEVIN MURPHY**
Correspondent

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Plymouth Utilities Wins National Safety Award

Apr 21, 2026



City of Plymouth

Plymouth Utilities has received a national safety award. Plymouth was one of only 240 public utilities to earn the American Public Power Association's Safety Award of Excellence.

Utilities Manager Tim Blakeslee says the award shows how hard the organization works to make sure everyone gets home safely. Public Utilities from across the US were placed in categories according to their number of worker hours and safe operations last year.

All entrants were based on their incident-free records, along with overall safety programs and safety culture.



Local High School Student Receives Preston Municipal Electric Utility/WPPI Energy Scholarship

Preston Municipal Electric Utility recently awarded Keyara Zeimet the Preston Municipal Electric Utility/WPPI Energy scholarship.

This year, **Preston Municipal Electric Utility** awarded one \$1,000 scholarship to a high school senior who plans to attend a two-year technical college or a four-year university.

“We believe that providing educational opportunities for promising local students is a sound investment in our community,” said Mayor Tyler Sieverding. “We congratulate Keyara on her accomplishments and extend our best wishes for a successful future.”

Keyara Zeimet will attend Iowa State University in the fall.

Preston Municipal Electric Utility’s Public Power Scholarship is designed to promote awareness of Preston’s locally owned, not-for-profit utility.

To be eligible for the **Preston Municipal Electric Utility** Public Power Scholarship, students or their parents or guardians must be customers of **Preston Municipal Electric Utility**.

LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT
CONTINUED ON PAGE 4
LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Title: Local High School Student Receives Preston Municipal Electric Utility/WPPI Energy Scholarship

Author:

Size : 49 Inches Sq Preston,IA Circulation: 890

Keywords: Preston Municipal Electric Utility





'Oh, the weather outside is frightful'

were expected to win. Runners were on base, but the home run hitter was struggling to make contact, and Merri-Heirs sneaked by to win by one.

"He said, 'Coach, I don't

During a tournament at Ellsworth there was a downpour of rain. He took the team to the laundromat between games and had them all wear garbage bags so their clothes could dry.

to run a farm, but you still found time to go with the kids and play ball... Seems like when you've got something like that, you figure out a way to make time."



This oak tree in a town of Hartland cow pasture had bare ground around it on March 16, thanks to blizzard winds that came through the area along with heavy snow. Photo by Sarah Nigbor



This pile of snow plowed from a parking lot near the Spring Valley Laundrette is almost as high as the stop sign on March 16. Pierce County residents saw anywhere from 12-18 inches March 14-15, according to the National Weather Service. Photo by Sarah Nigbor



On March 13, before the snow began, blustery winds caused issues across the county. In River Falls, a tree on power lines at Maple and Grove streets caused a power outage as River Falls Municipal Utilities repaired downed power lines. Photo courtesy of City of River Falls



Snow removal was in full swing Monday, March 16 at the Craig and Beth Ingli farm in the town of El Paso after the March blizzard. Photo courtesy of Beth Ingli

Green machine: Stoughton earns Top 10 Green Power Ranking

Apr 16, 2026

Stoughton Utilities is marking Earth Day 2026 by highlighting two milestones that put the community on the national map for clean energy: Stoughton ranked sixth in the nation for 2024 green power participation rate and ninth for green pricing sales rate, according to the U.S. Department of Energy's National Laboratory of the Rockies, and local solar connections exceeded 200 projects in 2025.

According to a company news release, as Stoughton's locally owned, not-for-profit electric utility, Stoughton Utilities works with customers and the City of Stoughton to expand renewable energy options, improve energy efficiency, and support conservation - helping residents and businesses lower their environmental impact while keeping service reliable and affordable.

Stoughton Utilities has supported customers interested in adding solar to their homes and businesses for over a decade. In 2008, the utility installed a 6.8-kilowatt photovoltaic system on its administration building - an early local investment in modern solar technology.

Today, the city and surrounding townships served by Stoughton Utilities include more than 208 customer-sited solar projects interconnected with the distribution system, a total that exceeded 200 projects in 2025 and has more than doubled over the last five years.

Customers can view the locations of these projects by visiting stoughtonutilities.com/solar.

Choose Renewable

For customers who cannot install solar panels where they live or work, Stoughton Utilities' Choose Renewable program - launched in 2003 - offers a simple way to support clean energy. Participants can add a few dollars to their monthly bill to ensure some or all of their electricity use comes from renewable resources such as wind, solar and biogas. One 300

kilowatt-hour block costs \$2 per month; most households can offset all of their monthly usage with two to three blocks.

To lead by example, Stoughton Utilities and the City of Stoughton each purchase enough Choose Renewable blocks to ensure that 100% of the electricity used for their operations is from renewable sources.

Stoughton has consistently ranked among the top 10 communities nationwide for green power program participation and sales, driven by local adoption of Choose Renewable. Most recently, Stoughton ranked sixth in the nation for its green power participation rate (6%) and ninth for its green pricing sales rate (5.5%), according to NLR. The rankings, measured as of December 2024, were released on February 3, 2026.

Stoughton Utilities is also working to increase renewable energy use through its wholesale power supply. WPPI Energy's membership has reduced carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 45% since 2005. In 2024, nearly 25% of the power purchased by WPPI Energy on behalf of member communities came from renewable sources including wind, solar and biogas.

Beyond renewable generation, Stoughton Utilities promotes practical steps the community can take to save energy and water. The utility regularly connects residents with programs such as Wisconsin's Focus on Energy, which offers incentives for qualifying energy-efficiency upgrades, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense program, which encourages water conservation. With Earth Day approaching, customers are encouraged to explore these options and identify upgrades that can reduce both utility bills and environmental impact.

Stoughton Utilities also offers customer incentives to help make efficiency upgrades more affordable, including incentives for ENERGY STAR® appliances, EV chargers, smart thermostats, and home energy assessments. Learn more, view current eligibility requirements, and find application details at stoughtonutilities.com/incentives.

Owens elected Sun Prairie City Council president

Drengler elected vice president

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Sun Prairie District 1 Alder Rex Owens was elected by his fellow council members to become the city council's president on Tuesday, April 21.

Owens has served as an alder since first being appointed in 2025 to serve the rest of Steve Stocker's term after he was elected mayor.

He was reelected earlier this month through the April 7 election to serve his first full, two-year term which ends in 2028.

Owens was nominated for the presidency that evening by District 4 Alder Emily Comstock. When explaining why he thought he would be a good fit, Owens cited his own initiative during Sunshine Place's recent ask for funding from the city.

"I was the alder who insisted that we have public listening session on that, which is a brand new approach for this council to take," Owens said. "Once the meetings for District 1 got scheduled, all the other districts followed and every district had a session. That's my style of leadership, to always include the public in major decisions."

Meanwhile, Mike Jacobs of District 3 and Bill Baker of District 2 nominated themselves for the role.



Owens



Drengler

In Jacobs appeal to his fellow alders, he drew from his tenure on the council and those who had urged him to put his name in the hat.

"My style of leadership is to be called to be a leader. I didn't necessarily want to do this... But, I was asked by a number of staff people. I've been asked over the

years a number of times to be the council president and I just haven't had the interest," Jacobs said. "I just think this is the most challenging time the city has faced and I think that we need someone who has experience to understand those challenges that we face."

Baker named his own personal initiative to be involved in solving problems since first joining the council in 2025.

"Over the past 12 months I haven't waited for direction. I've stepped in where I saw problems and worked to move things forward," Baker said. "But, I also want to be clear about something else, I don't do this alone. The best outcomes come when we bring the right people to the table, ask better questions and work together towards solutions. That's how I lead."

The council went through several rounds of secret voting before a majority decision was reached. Then Council President Maureen Crombie asked the candidates to expand on their qualifications and want for the role after each round.

The first four rounds each

resulted in four votes for Owens, three for Jacobs and one for Baker.

At the end of the fourth round, Jacobs chose to withdraw himself from the race.

"I will show leadership here by withdrawing my name," he said.

Following Jacobs' withdrawal, Owens was elected to the role via a 6-1 vote, with one ballot being empty.

COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT

Following that decision, alders then selected their vice president: District 1 Alder Casey Drengler. The role of vice president is to serve in the president's stead when their absence occurs.

Drengler was nominated by District 2 Alder Santiago Rosas, while competitor Emily Comstock of District 4 was nominated by Alder Owens.

The vote resulted in two ties before Comstock also chose to remove herself from the race and ceded the position to Drengler.

COMMITTEE AND COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS

As a part of that evening's organizational business, the following committee and commission appointments were made.

- Drengler, Sustainability Committee
- Rosas, Plan Commission
- Jacobs, Sun Prairie Utilities Commission
- Crombie, Housing Committee



Early morning storms hit Southern Wisconsin, blow roof off church, snap power poles

Second batch of storms likely for late Tuesday afternoon and evening

Apr 14, 2026

Thunderstorms swept through Southern and Central Wisconsin starting just after midnight on April 14, resulting in some tornado warnings and localized damage, with a more powerful series of storms expected to hit the area in the late afternoon through evening.

Northeast of Sun Prairie on County Road V in East Bristol, a large part of the roof of St. Joseph Catholic Church blew off, with metal, insulation, wood, and shingles strewn about the surrounding yards and fields. A large pine tree was uprooted at the farm across the street.

About 10 miles southeast of there, in Waterloo and the Town of Portland, eight power poles were snapped off on East Clarkson Road, said [Waterloo Utilities](#) Superintendent Barry Sorenson.

“We had a three-phase line go down on Edison (Street),” he added. “A pine tree fell on it.”

Waterloo Utilities crews were aided by Lake Mills and Jefferson in restoring power, he said.

In DeForest, several streets were closed to traffic on April 14 due to toppled power lines. The Village reported on its Facebook page that Sunset, Cora, Nora, North Towne from Jefferson to Gray Road, and South Cleveland at Jefferson were all closed, and asked people to avoid those areas for their safety and to allow crews to work on cleanup and repairs.

Power was disrupted throughout the area, causing the DeForest Area High School to cancel classes. Crews were also out clearing trees that were downed in the storm.

In the Monona Grove School District, Granite Ridge and Glacial Drumlin schools were also closed.

Other school districts in the area canceled after-school or evening events due to the threat of a new round of severe weather later in the day, including the Cambridge, DeForest, Sun Prairie, and Waunakee school districts, among others.

Many evening government meetings were also canceled for that night across the area.

Between 12:30 and 2:30 a.m. on April 14, “a line of strong thunderstorms tracked across southern Wisconsin,” said Marcia Cronce, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service office in Milwaukee/Sullivan. Reports have come in of sporadic damage, including in Dodge County, she said.

“We have reports of widespread tree and power line damage through much of Dodge County,” she said. “It was not everywhere, but enough places, hit or miss.”

Dodge County Emergency Management reported some structural damage on the south side of Beaver Dam, where part of a roof attached to a garage and home had blown off, Cronce said. About two or three miles south of there, a barn had its north wall blown in and the door on opposite side blown out, she added.

“In a few instances, we did put out tornado warnings,” Cronce said, because tornadoes could develop along the leading edge of the thunderstorms. However, as of 2 p.m they had not confirmed any tornadoes in the area from the early morning storms.

“We do not have any confirmation of tornadoes versus straight-line wind damage because the Weather Service has not conducted any formal surveys to determine that at this time,” she said.

The National Weather Service postponed surveys for today because of the high-end severe storms that were expected for Tuesday afternoon and evening, she said.

While some people may automatically think it was a tornado when they see damage, Cronce noted that a lower-level tornado has 65-85 mph winds while “any severe thunderstorm warning we issue is for 60 mph winds or greater.”

“Wind damage is wind damage,” she said. “It does not have to necessarily be from a tornado.”

An even greater chance for severe weather is forecast for the late afternoon and evening hours on Tuesday, April 14, with the southern portion of the state — south of a Sheboygan to Oshkosh to La Crosse line — under an “enhanced” risk, which is listed as three out of five on the Weather Service’s prediction scale.

“The weather this evening is favorable to these very strong thunderstorms, supercell thunderstorms,” said Cronic. “They can produce large hail, damaging winds and tornadoes. They mean business.”

“First thing is to stay weather aware,” she said, such as having a TV or radio on.

“Have a way to receive weather warnings. If you are in a warning area and you receive a tornado warning, go to your basement immediately. Go to your safe area, don’t wait.”

“Be ready to take action. These aren’t the types of storms that you want to mess around with.”

Cronic added that the National Weather Service will likely do their damage assessments in the coming days.

For those who want to report damage, she said timely reports via social media are very helpful. Include specific location information and the date and time, she said.

Waupun Utilities celebrates lineworkers

WAUPUN — Waupun Utilities is celebrating its local lineworkers today as part of National Lineworker Day, which is marked annually throughout the country to honor the hard work of utility employees who spend each day maintaining and repairing their local electric grid.

“The work our line crew does for our community is essential,” said Steve Brooks, general manager of Waupun Utilities. “People trust them to keep the lights on in homes and businesses every day.”

Lineworkers are often the first at the scene of an emergency, working quickly



Waupun Utilities electric team members, from left, Chris Jahn, journeyman lineman/meter technician; Owen Vande Kolk, electric operations superintendent; Steve Brooks, general manager; Chad Flegner, electric line foreman; Carson Schramm, journeyman lineman; and Ross Hackbarth, journeyman lineman; recognized in celebration of National Lineworker Appreciation Day today.

WAUPUN UTILITIES

to eliminate the risk of electrocution for emergency responders and for those in need of help. In a catastrophic event, they are always in the background making conditions safer.

Lineworkers are prepared

for outages at any time, whether caused by a squirrel chewing through wires in the early morning hours or a car accident in the middle of the night.

“Everyone can count on our line crew to be there

first thing, no matter what they’re going to face when they respond,” said Brooks. “That kind of dedication to reliability and service is why we have this day to express our appreciation for everything they do.”