

January Member Clips

ATC

- Judge allows power lines to proceed, but sees ‘legitimate concerns’ of landowners
- Semi crash closes northbound lanes
- Electric line proposal runs into resistance
- Data center power line foes gird for PSC battle
- Power line competition bill is stalled
- Data center transmission line alternatives submitted in applications to the PSC

Independence

- Understanding industrial batteries

Kaukauna

- Kaukauna prepares for possibility of requests for data centers
- CSM approved for new middle school
- Kaukauna looking for ways to regulate potential data centers in the city
- New Kaukauna law could allow data centers, but projects would require city approval

Maquoketa

- Tree trimming for safe and reliable power

New Glarus

- Electric utilities reconnection policy Ok'd

New Holstein

- NHU gives to causes

Stoughton

- Potential Property Purchase

Sturgeon Bay

- City plans \$1.8 M in roadway improvements for 2026

Two Rivers

- Assembly approves tax credits for new nuclear energy facilities



Jan 02 2026 Page 001 Clip resized 96%

Judge allows power lines to proceed, but sees 'legitimate concerns' of landowners

by Tomas Ward
Review Correspondent

SHEBOYGAN – A county judge has awarded the American Transmission Company (ATC) immediate possession of property rights to move its Plymouth Reliability Project forward, and resistant landowners face condemnation hearings as the new year rings in.

Judge Angela Sutkiewicz read an eight-minute decision to people assembled in her Circuit 2 room in the Sheboygan County Courthouse on Tuesday December 23. Several dozen people were gathered, including 15 named plaintiffs seeking to delay or avoid the construction of high capacity power lines that they say will negatively affect their homes and farms.

“ATC is correct that the issues raised by the landowners were heard and rejected by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC), and by Judge [Natasha] Torry on judicial review,” Judge Sutkiewicz said. “The PSC still decided to issue a certificate of public convenience and necessity [CPCN].”

The matter she ruled on had to do with whether ATC needed to provide a relocation plan to compensate landowners if their

See **POWER LINES/2**

Judge: 'no legal basis' to reject public interest argument about power lines route

POWER LINES from 1

properties were to become 'uneconomic remnants' due to value loss following development.

"This court was concerned that ATC was not doing a cost benefit analysis regarding the cost of buying properties from the landowners if they were successful in their request to buy entire properties," she said.

The judge said that a previous Wisconsin Supreme Court case in favor of ATC was "directly on point." Plaintiffs here had argued that the company should be mandated to acquire their entire properties and provide relocation benefits. "While the landowners had a reasonable argument regarding displacement, the court did not agree with the request for a temporary injunction," Judge Sutkiewicz said.

Of the Lyndon plaintiffs, the

judge said that "landowners in this case appear to have legitimate concerns, and some may prevail, regarding the uneconomic remnant claim. However the PSC has reviewed the project and concluded that it is in the public interest. Judge Torry has [also] concluded that there is no legal basis for rejecting the PSC's findings."

"While landowners may have legitimate concerns about values, enjoyment, and potential uses of their properties, the easements required for the project do not require the landowners to move," she said.

Sixteen families had refused to sign easement agreements with ATC, which is legally compelled to provide fair compensation. Those resisters will now go before condemnation commissions made up of select attorneys appointed to determine what fair compensation

actually means. The hearings are scheduled to begin in the first full week of the year at the Kris Hughes Memorial Town Hall.

Judge Sutkiewicz also said that it appears that the PSC considered alternate routes proposed by intervenors and rejected them, and that "the PSC actually made findings of fact that the project would not have undo adverse impacts on environmental values including ecological balance and public health and welfare."

Lawyers from Eminent Domain Services, LLC represented claimants. The loss was emotional as well as practical for members of the Neighbors for Neighbors coalition. JoAnne Friedman, who chairs the town board of Lyndon, was among those present opposing the project. "We are still in shock," she said.

INTERSTATE 39/30 | ALTERNATE ROUTES ADVISED

Semi crash closes northbound lanes

Power line hit near Highway N on-ramp; backups expected to last into weekend

JEFF RICHGELS
jrichgels@madison.com

A semi crashed into a large power pole while entering northbound Interstate 39/90 south of Madison early Friday morning, blocking two northbound lanes and causing backups that were expected to continue into the weekend, authorities reported.

The crash happened about 2:35 a.m. on the I-39/90 northbound entrance ramp from Highway N (exit 147) in the town of Pleasant Springs, Lt. Jason Kudrna of the Cottage Grove Volunteer Fire Department said in a statement.

Emergency responders found



COTTAGE GROVE FIRE DEPARTMENT

A semi crashed into a 350 kV transmission line power pole while entering Interstate 39/90 south of Madison early Friday morning, causing it to fall over and land on the semi cab, trapping the driver inside.

that a semi hauling food products lost control and struck a 350 kV transmission line power pole, causing it to fall over and land on the semi cab, trapping the driver inside.

Due to the position of the

downed high-capacity transmission lines, crews first contacted [American Transmission Company](#) to ensure that power was shut off to the lines to eliminate any chance of first responders or the driver getting shocked.

Crews then extricated the driver from the cab, and he was taken by ambulance to a local hospital. The Wisconsin State Patrol said the driver's injuries were not considered life-threatening.

With the two right lanes of northbound I-39/90 closed in the area, traffic was backed up for 3 miles, the state Department of Transportation reported Friday afternoon. The on-ramp from Highway N to the northbound interstate was also closed.

The closures are expected to last into the weekend, and alternate routes should be considered, the State Patrol said.

The recommended alternate route for northbound traffic is to take the Highway 51/73 exit 160 (near Edgerton) to Highway 73 north to Highway 12/18 west back to I-39/90 north at Madison.

Southbound I-39/90 traffic was not affected.



Jan 04
2026
Page A11
Clip resized 33%



Heidi Prodoehl looks at the garden in her backyard on Aug. 21 in West Bend. The garden could be gutted if an [American Transmission Company](#) project route goes through the Prodoehls' property. ALEX GARNER / USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

Electric line proposal runs into resistance

Massive project would power Port Washington data center

Claudia Levens and Alex Garner
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

Heidi and Michael Prodoehl felt lucky to find their forever home in rural West Bend.

Out their dining room window, they can see a thick line of trees, an open field and a small wooden playground in their backyard. In the Prodoehls' 13 years living there, they have had two children, started a garden and planted about 300 trees on the property, as well as around the surrounding prairie. Their children ride bikes along a dirt path in the woods, where an old maple towers above them. They marvel at passing turkey and deer. Mike said they spend almost all their days off outside.

Since moving there, they've found a quiet, natural escape from the Milwaukee suburbs. But they are sick with worry it could all be lost if a proposed power line cuts through their land.

"It's like losing a limb," Mike said. "They're just cutting off a whole part of what we had."

The proposed power line is part an \$1.6 billion American Transmission Co. project spanning several Wisconsin counties to provide power for a sprawling, \$15 billion artificial intelligence data center campus for tech companies Vantage, Oracle and OpenAI in nearby Port Washington.

[ATC's](#) proposal filings do not explicitly identify the data center, but say the power lines are needed "to reliably serve a load interconnection request by We Energies to serve a new large load addition in the Port Washington area."



A sign next to Erica and Kenneth Liss' driveway in Saukville opposes the proposed [American Transmission Company](#) project.

The Waukesha-based power line company's plans include building around 100 miles of high-voltage lines, upgrading existing ones and constructing up to five new substations across Ozaukee, Washington, Fond du Lac, Calumet, Sheboygan and Manitowoc counties, according to [ATC's](#) proposal, which includes thousands of pages the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reviewed.

[ATC](#) is a subsidiary of the WEC Energy Group, the parent company of We Energies. The proposal was submitted in September 2025 to Wisconsin's Public Service Commission, a state agency that oversees utility companies and approves new projects.

[ATC's](#) application proposes two op-

tions for the power line routes.

The company's preferred route (through the Prodoehl family's land) would be 11 miles shorter, run near fewer homes and be less expensive, costing \$1.4 billion, which is appealing to those with concerns that ratepayers will foot the bill for these power lines.

The alternative route would be longer and costlier at \$1.6 billion, but it would run by fewer farms, build more upon existing lines and disrupt fewer natural spaces; it's garnered endorsements from local elected officials and, most recently, the data center's development company, Vantage.

See **POWER LINE**, Page 12A

Power line

Continued from Page 11A

Power lines are tied to data center

Since the data center project was announced in January 2025, word about the power line proposal has spread. In February, some homeowners and business- owners along the proposed routes told the Journal Sentinel they'd received letters from ATC, and many expressed concerns that the lines would slice through their communities and disrupt their natural spaces.

Over the last several months, many of these residents have collectively submitted over 500 complaints to ATC, detailing their concerns about the potential impact on homes, businesses, farmland, the environment and recognized cultural or historical sites, as well as frustrations about bearing the burden of infrastructure intended to support a few private companies.

Many have also directed concerns toward the companies behind the data center campus project driving energy demand for the new lines, as well as the local officials paving the way to approve it. They've joined the growing group of residents voicing opposition to the data center project at local city meetings.

Meanwhile, the data center project's supporters, including many southeast Wisconsin business leaders and trade groups, emphasize the data center companies' promises that the project will create jobs, improve the region's grid for all users, add over \$2.7 billion to the area's gross domestic product and position Wisconsin at the forefront of technological revolution that cannot be stopped.

Without the new power lines, the grid would not be able to support the new data center, according to ATC's application.

'Substantial' needs of data center

If fully built out, the data center campus could be one of the largest in the country with committed capacity from a utility. But even the first phase of development, with its four data center buildings and around 1.3 gigawatts, will require a significant amount of new energy infrastructure.

The amount of energy needed to power the center is "substantial and [the proposed energy load addition] would be one of the largest in Wisconsin," ATC's application says.

Without the proposed 138- and 345-kilowatt power lines and substations, the flurry of new energy projects for the data center campus would overwhelm parts of Wisconsin's grid, according to the application.

Project spans six counties

The price tags of both the \$1.4 billion preferred and a \$1.6 billion alternative routes include the costs of building at least four new substations, totaling between 94 and 104 acres:

- A 40-acre Decker Substation in Port Washington
• An 18-acre Sheboygan River Substation in the Town of Osceola
• A 16-acre Mullet River Junction Substation in the Town of Lima
• A 20-acre Cedar Creek Junction Substation in the Town of Jackson
• A 10-acre Adell Substation in the Town of Sherman (if the alternative route is chosen)

The routes span farmland, pastureland, grasslands and wetlands, as well as residential, commercial, industrial and public areas across six counties: Calumet, Fond du Lac, Ozaukee, Manitowish, Sheboygan and Washington.

The preferred route runs alongside roughly 110 animal farms, including nearly 50 dairy farms. The alternate route runs alongside roughly 80 animal farms, including nearly 40 dairy farms, according to the proposal.

The preferred route would run within at least 300 feet of 128 homes and two apartment buildings. The alternate route would run by 226 homes and 16 apartment buildings within that same distance.

The preferred route would run by roughly 1,391 acres of wetlands. The alternate route would run by about 886 acres of wetlands.

The preferred route would cross over portions of the Fox River State Trail, Nichols Creek Wildlife Area, Stony Creek River corridor, Sheboygan County Waterfowl Production Area and Gough Lake north of Cedarburg Bog. The alternate route would cross portions of Brillion Wildlife Area, Kettle Moraine State Forest, Mullet Creek Wildlife Area, Quade Park and Cedarburg Bog Natural Area.

The two routes would also cross through areas of archaeological, historical and ecological significance, including indigenous burial mounds, though most of the information in the application about these sites is redacted in the



Erica Lis walks her Saukville property in August and points out areas where a proposed route for an American Transmission Company line could cut east to west through swaths of wooded areas. ALEX GARNER / USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

"It is unconscionable that any of us in the proposed study zone would have to bear the burden of the transmission lines when all potential benefit will accrue solely to the city of Port Washington. ... The entire data center project is for a multibillion dollar company. It is not a public project in any way, shape or form."

Ann and Kim Pembles, Port Washington residents, in feedback statement

public-facing filings. Asked about the redactions, ATC said they largely covered locations of rare species, known burial sites or archaeological artifacts, which is kept confidential to prevent tampering.

Some costs could eventually fall on all customers

Executive Director of the utilities watchdog Citizens Utility Board Tom Content said ATC's proposal is the biggest project he's ever heard of just to plug one customer into Wisconsin's grid.

Citizens Utility Board has been advocating to protect regular energy customers from the massive scale of costs for new power plants and power lines in the PSC pipeline to support data centers.

When the Journal Sentinel asked ATC how the power lines would be financed, the company indicated that an unspecified portion of the costs could be spread across all electricity customers in the state over time.

ATC does not bill large energy and infrastructure beneficiaries like data center developer Vantage. Instead, ATC said it bills local distribution company customers, like We Energies and other utilities, as is established under a federal tariff that regulates transmission companies.

We Energies and other local distributors then pass those costs on to their own customers, ATC said.

In March 2025, We Energies proposed a new electric rate for data center companies, where those companies would cover 75% of the costs for nearly \$6 billion in new power plants serving data centers.

That proposal also includes a "transmission service charge," which would allow We Energies to pass some costs to data center companies, but the application is murky about how much data centers would actually pay.

This is a big question mark for energy consumer advocates. Content said "We're very concerned about the transmission cost piece of this."

Property and environmental impacts are among top concerns

Included in ATC's application documents are hundreds of pages of survey responses and emails from residents along the proposed route, expressing concerns about either parts of the routes or the entire project.

A total of 511 people sent feedback to ATC during late August and early September 2025, according to a Journal Sentinel analysis. The survey responses do not include around 509 people who signed three separate petitions opposing the power lines, which were also submitted to ATC.

85% said they had concerns about the project's potential impact to their property, including their business and home values.

74% had concerns about potential impacts to the environment, natural resources and wildlife.

24% expressed concerns about health and safety, especially regarding

stray voltage or the impact of electromagnetic fields on humans or cattle. 20% expressed concern about the impact on important cultural and historical sites.

16% expressed explicit opposition to the data center campus in Port Washington driving demand for the proposed power lines.

13% were concerned about the proposed lines' intrusion onto farming and agricultural land.

10% were concerned about the potential impact on the grid's reliability or their energy costs.

Asked about the top concerns in the analysis, ATC said the company's public engagement efforts, including six open house sessions and four informational mailings, helped inform its proposal. The company also said, moving forward, it would respond to additional feedback on its application as needed.

In its application, ATC said its proposal would cut stray voltage before a substation 1 mile away from was removed in 2007. Electromagnetic fields arise from the flow of electricity through the power line and decrease as you move farther from the line, according to ATC.

Dairy farmers express concerns over stray voltage

Jason Vorpahl is the co-owner and CEO of Rockland Dairy, which owns 5,000 acres of farmland in Random Lake and Saukville. The two farms have 3,600 dairy cows and produce 300,000 pounds of milk each day.

In a letter to ATC, Vorpahl said cows at the farm struggled with electrical curbing and stray voltage before a substation 1 mile away from was removed in 2007. Electromagnetic fields arise from the flow of electricity through the power line and decrease as you move farther from the line, according to ATC.

"Prior to 2007, our cows did not perform well," Vorpahl said. "They did not drink water well, did not eat well, did not milk well, had thin sores on their feet, did not breed and get pregnant well and had many metabolic issues."

He said those issues disappeared when the substation was removed. Those improvements are now threatened by the proposed lines being too close to the dairy farms, especially the one in Saukville, he said.

"If that power line goes through, we will be done milking cows there," Vorpahl said.

Dozens of other dairy farmers who sent feedback to ATC also said they've noticed health and performance issues with their cows near substations or power lines.

Venture Dairy Cooperative, a Wisconsin dairy farmers advocacy group, also sent a letter to ATC saying the group was "gravely concerned" the project would pose a "serious risk to the viability of our farms."

Natural and cultural areas - and unfairness

Tom Stopl, executive director of Restoring Lands, a nature preservation land trust, said the routes could "negatively and irreversibly" affect some of the trust's 7,500 acres of protected land, including 30 community nature preserves and conservation easement holdings.

The preferred route especially would cut directly through lands intentionally protected for the public's benefit - protections paid for with millions of dollars in philanthropy and public investment, Stopl said.

In an interview with the Journal Sentinel, Cheryl Nenn, who works for the environmental advocacy nonprofit Milwaukee Riverkeeper, said the group is concerned about transmission line construction cutting through vegetation near streams and creeks, such as Cedar Creek, the Milwaukee River and the Sheboygan River.

Cooler temperatures found in the north branch of the Milwaukee River watershed are critical for trout spawn-

ing and trout populations are of great concern, Nenn said. Clearing trees for lines would likely raise temperatures in those already warming waterways.

"Losing shade is not going to help that situation," Nenn said.

Several respondents said they moved into their homes to get away from existing or new power lines near previous homes, including Saukville resident Suzanne Szucs, who left her home in the City of Milwaukee three years ago to escape power lines.

"I only want to see nature and trees outside my windows," Szucs wrote in her feedback statement. "I want to enjoy the property we purchased alongside the neighboring properties that brought us out here in the first place - unmarred."

Others said it's unfair that people in municipalities far from the data center in Port Washington will have to face the scale of infrastructure costs.

Port Washington residents Ann and Kim Pembles wrote in their feedback statement, "It is unconscionable that any of us in the proposed study zone would have to bear the burden of the transmission lines when all potential benefit will accrue solely to the city of Port Washington."

"The entire data center project is for a multibillion dollar company. It is not a public project in any way, shape or form," the Pemples said.

Many respondents formed their own groups to oppose the power lines, including the Responsible Energy Alliance, consisting of residents from Saukville, Trenton, Fredonia and Farmington. Two different factions of the alliance, Advocates for Responsible Power and the Protect Fredonia Coalition, have already filed notices of intervention to the PSC.

Separately, the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty publicly threatened legal action against any potential users of eminent domain for the project on behalf of local landowners and artists Tom and Mary Uttech. The proposed routes would run through the family's scenic property in Saukville, which is protected by a conservation easement and inspires many of Tom's nationally renowned paintings.

Local officials have also weighed in

The Saukville and Fredonia town boards separately passed resolutions opposing the proposed routes through their communities on Aug. 27 and Sept. 10, respectively.

Washington County's Board of Supervisors also unanimously passed a resolution opposing new power line infrastructure proposed in the county. County Executive Josh Schoemann sent a letter to ATC expressing significant concerns about the proposed routes after the county held several public listening sessions.

"Prior to 2007, our cows did not perform well," Vorpahl said. "They did not drink water well, did not eat well, did not milk well, had thin sores on their feet, did not breed and get pregnant well and had many metabolic issues."

"The preferred route impacts some of the most pristine and rural areas of our county and I do not want that area to be impacted," Neitzke said in a letter to the PSC.

A spokesperson for State Sen. Jodi Habisch Sinyk, who represents the town of Ozaukee County, told the Journal Sentinel that she also plans to advocate for the alternative route during the PSC's public comment period. State Rep. Rob Brooks, who represents parts of Ozaukee and Washington counties, also signaled support for the alternative route.

At the City of Port Washington's Dec. 16 common council meeting, a representative of the data center developer Vantage voiced support the alternative route.

A public comment period

ATC expects the Public Service Commission to issue a decision on whether to approve the application and which route to choose during the spring of 2026. If approved, construction would begin May 2026 for completion by December 2027, shortly before the first phase of the data center is set to go online.

A public comment period will take place during which people can weigh in on the project during public hearings. Those dates have not been announced, but ATC has suggested the week of Week of April 13, 2026.

In addition to the Public Service Commission's approval, the transmission line company will need numerous permits and approvals from local, state and federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, according to the application.

Jan 04

2026

Page A12

Clip resized 22%

From A11



Jan 08 2026 Page B01 Clip resized 54%

Data center power line foes gird for PSC battle

■ *Towns, city, groups, Vantage to fight ATC's proposed route to data center, ask PSC to require existing corridor be used*

By KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
Ozaukee Press staff

Area residents, organizations and municipalities are gearing up to fight American Transmission Co. over the routes it has recommended using to bring electricity to the Vantage Data Centers' Lighthouse Campus in Port Washington.

The Town of Saukville, Restoring Lands — the former Ozaukee Washington Land Trust — and the Responsible Energy Alliance — a coalition of Saukville, Trenton, Fredonia and Farmington residents — are among those opposing ATC's recommendation that the electrical lines be routed through either the Town of Fredonia or Town of Saukville.

“ This is protected land forever, and that means forever — not until someone wants to put up 180-foot-tall transmission lines across it. ”

Tom Stolp
Restoring Lands executive director

Instead, they say, the lines should be placed along the route of existing power lines.

They are being joined in their fight by the Port Washington Common Council, Mayor Ted Neitzke and even Vantage.

“We're working closely with ATC on it,” Tracye Herrington, Vantage's vice president of new site development in North America, told the Port Common Council Tuesday. “Our hope is the commission selects this alternate route after seeing all the parties intervening.”

Those parties, she said, include Vantage, which plans to apply to formally intervene in the case, which gives it the right to give testimony before the PSC as it considers which route the power lines will follow.

The groups are gearing up now because ATC's application for the power lines was submitted on Nov. 14 and deemed complete by the Public Service Commission on Dec. 15, a move that ATC spokesman Scott Reigstad said starts the 180-day review period.

ATC initially submitted an application to the PSC on Sept. 30, but it was deemed incomplete on Oct. 28, requiring a resubmission.

See **Power lines** on page 4B

Power lines: *Fight promises to be expensive*

FROM PAGE 1B

The company has recommended two routes for the lines — the so-called preferred route, which would traverse the Town of Saukville, and the preferred alternative route, which would go through the Town of Fredonia.

It doesn't recommend the so-called alternate route, which would largely follow existing power lines.

Restoring Lands Executive Director Tom Stolp said his group is preparing for a fight to ensure the lands it has restored and is protecting remain in their natural state.

"The route ATC is advancing would go through less residential areas but more natural areas," he said. "We're looking as a community at the PSC to be thoughtful and not rush this decision."

Restoring Lands has filed to intervene in the case, Stolp said, and is working with an attorney as it continues its mission to protect these precious resources.

"This makes us party to the case," he said. "It's a very costly, robust process. But this is protected land forever, and that means forever — not until someone wants to put up 180-foot-tall transmission lines across it."

He noted that each of the transmission towers is taller than the Statue of Liberty "from toe to torch," adding that a line of these towers goes against everything Restoring Lands stands for.

Stolp said the cost difference between the recommended routes and the existing one is about \$200 million.

Restoring Lands is funding its efforts through its maintenance reserves, Stolp said, adding the organization believes the cost may be "north of six figures."

That money, he said, will go to such things as attorney fees and expert testimony.

"We'd much prefer to be spending the money on building trails, restoring habitat for wildlife and on new acquisitions," Stolp said. "But we can't be talking about new acquisitions if we can't maintain the integrity

of the lands we have."

Town of Saukville Chairman Kevin Kimmes said he will be filing for intervenor status in the coming week, noting ATC's recommended routes are contrary to the town's long-term plans.

"I understand the power lines have to go somewhere," he said, but the preferred route would go along areas where the dairy farms the town is encouraging are located.

In fact, he said, the town's long-term plan calls for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations or CAFOs, to be part of the community.

"We have a comprehensive plan. ATC is throwing that to the wind," Kimmes said. "It has been well-documented these large power lines can have extreme effects on dairy farms.

"If they were to pick an alignment that doesn't affect our CAFOs, I would be more quiet about it. But this is a clear-cut thing in my mind."

Patti Plough of the Responsible Energy Alliance concurred, noting she and her husband own property near the

existing route and wouldn't object to that pathway being used.

"They have a pre-existing corridor they could use. There's no reason to go through and destroy people's property, mesic forests, the Kinnamon swamp," she said. "There are so many people who own their property here, who retired to this beautiful paradise, and now someone's going to plow through it with 200-foot power lines.

"I'm fighting this because it's just wrong on every level. It's not right. Why would you even think this is OK?"

There are so many reasons to oppose ATC's proposed routes, she said — the disruption of natural areas, habitat, historical communities and Native American sites and the impact on people's lives, as well as the fact it will lower property values.

"For some people, this is just devastating what it would do to them," Plough said.

The fight, she said, has "taken over our lives."

Right now, she said, the Responsible Energy Alliance is researching environmen-

tal impacts on both the preferred and preferred contingent routes, since its attorney believes the PSC will look for input on that issue when it takes public comments. It is also working to line up legislators and the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, or MISO, the electric grid operator for the central United States to weigh in.

In addition, it's encouraging municipalities along the routes to seek intervenor status, she said.

And, Plough said, the group is also working to raise the needed funds to pay for its fight.

"We're all chipping in to pay for this," she said. "Hopefully we'll have the victory soon."

The fact Vantage is weighing in on the side of so many groups is heartening, Plough said.

"This is a significant step," she said

But Stolp warned that even with the company's help, things may not go the way they want.

"It is up to ATC and the PSC," he said. "It's still a live grenade."

County Board: *Several races on ballot*

FROM PAGE 2B

are running against each other to replace Richart.

Another will require a primary as Mike Basso and James Krane are running against 24th District incumbent Jeffrey Hansher in Mequon.

In Wolf's 11th District, Dionne Holloway and Kevin Kennedy want to fill that seat. Wolf, the County Board's vice chairman, has endorsed Kennedy.

Incumbent Connie Kincaide is opposed by Amy Elleson-Baster in the 16th District in Cedarburg, Tom Stark is running against incumbent Justin Strom in the 21st District in Mequon and Jennifer Mackinnon and Dan Eastman are running against one an-

other to replace Ross

In other races, Marcia Nosko is running to replace Jobs, former Saukville Village trustee Scott Fischer is seeking to replace Clark and Todd Ambis is running to replace Taylor and Monis Khan is running to replace Ariba Khan.

The longest tenured of the outgoing group of supervisors is Richart, who was first elected to the County Board in April 2000.

In 2022, Richart filed a notice of non-candidacy, but when no one filed to replace him, he ran as a write-in candidate and won 99-to-74 against another write-in candidate.

In hopes of generating more interest this time around, Richart resigned from

the board on Dec. 3 to give County Board Chairman Lee Schlenvogt and the rest of the board the chance to appoint someone to fill his seat.

As of Tuesday, Jan. 6, Schlenvogt had not announced a replacement.

County Administrator Jason Dzwiniel said the matter isn't likely to come up until February, if at all.

He was scheduled to present a commendation to Richart at Wednesday's County Board meeting.

With Richart leaving, that leaves Port Washington Supr. Rick Nelson as the longest-serving member of the County Board. Nelson and Richart were sworn in on the same day in 2000.



Jan
11
2026
Page
A001
Clip
resized
104%

LEGISLATURE

Power line competition bill is stalled

MITCHELL SCHMIDT
mschmidt@madison.com

A controversial bill aimed at regulating who can build massive power lines in Wisconsin appears destined to die in committee this legislative session — much like the fate of previous versions of the heavily-lobbied measure in recent years.

The so-called “right of first refusal” proposal — an obscure but far-reaching measure that seeks to block out-of-state companies from building long-distance power line projects in Wisconsin — was by far the most-lobbied bill during the 2023-24 legislative session.

Please see **BILL**, Page A2

Bill

From A1

But despite repeated attempts to pass the legislation, amend it and completely redraft it, the effort has sat in a legislative committee since February.

Republican leaders say that's likely where the bill will remain until lawmakers wrap up the legislative season later this spring.

"I don't think there's a path to getting that done this session," Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu, one of the bill's co-authors, told the Wisconsin State Journal.

The bill's likely failure is not for a lack of effort, as lawmakers have introduced versions of the proposal in the last three legislative sessions. Last session, the bill topped the list in total lobbying hours dedicated to a single proposal.

In an effort to get the measure across the finish line, Assembly Republicans in April introduced a new proposal that ditched the acronym associated with the old bill (ROFR, for right of first refusal) and replaced it with WERA, which stands for Wisconsin Energy Reform Act.

"The whole idea is to say that we want to have Wisconsin transmission companies get the first opportunity to build, because it's cheaper and more efficient," Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, said.

But the measure ultimately "didn't seem to get enough traction," Vos conceded.

The retooled proposal added measures aimed at protecting farmland and promoting nuclear energy. But it still would give utilities that own transmission lines in Wisconsin the exclusive right to build any transmission project approved by the Midwest grid operator, known as MISO. Proponents said the bill would ensure that in-state companies win those massive projects and pass the savings on to Wisconsin ratepayers on their utility bills.

Opponents were unfazed, with Rep. Lindee Brill, R-Sheboygan Falls, writing in a social media post at the time, "WERA still not buying it."



Transmission towers that are part of the Cardinal-Hickory Creek project are shown along the southern shoulder of Stagecoach Road in the village of Cross Plains.

JOHN HART,
STATE JOURNAL

Both GOP leaders attributed the bill's failure to a massive pressure campaign from groups opposed to the change.

"I think the opponents of the bill did a good job trying to make the bill more confusing than it actually is," LeMahieu, R-Oostburg, said. "I think it's a very simple issue frankly, and I think it's something that we should get done. But unfortunately the opponents did a very effective job."

The primary argument against the proposal was that competition helps ensure the best, lowest bid is accepted, and a right of first refusal law would do nothing to address the possibility of cost overruns.

Those opposed include Americans for Prosperity, Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, Citizens Utility Board, Wisconsin Industrial Energy Group and Clean Wisconsin.

Groups backing the bill include [American Transmission Company](#) — which is owned by a group of distribution utilities including Alliant and Madison Gas and Electric and owns most of Wisconsin's transmission network — and Xcel Energy and Dairyland Power Cooperative, which operate most of the transmission lines in the western part of the state.

Nearly 5,800 lobbying hours were dedicated to two right-of-first-refusal bills before the Legislature last session, the most of any measure, according to data provided by the Wisconsin Ethics Commission.

Jerry Ponio, legislative director with Americans for Prosperity-Wisconsin, said in a statement the bill was "one of the most aggressively lobbied bills in Madison because monopoly utilities knew they couldn't compete in a fair market."

"Instead of lowering costs, they tried to use

government to block competition and force families to pay more," he said.

Proposed legislation overtaken by events

With an estimated \$1.8 billion worth of transmission projects coming to the region, lawmakers like LeMahieu said last spring that time was of the essence.

MISO received multiple bids on the two Wisconsin-based projects late last year, with American Transmission Company submitting proposals for each project. If a right of first refusal law would have been in place, the massive projects would have been assigned to transmission companies already operating in Wisconsin, like [ATC](#).

On Tuesday, the agency announced that Transource, a partnership organization between Ohio-based American Electric Power and Kansas City-based Evergy, and Viridon Midcontinent LLC, owned by New York-based Blackstone Energy Transition Partners, had been awarded the two projects.

Jeremiah Doner, MISO director of cost allocation and competitive transmission, said in a statement that Viridon stood out for its "strong cost containment measures, lowest projected revenue requirement, and executed agreements ensuring timely project delivery," while Transource "demonstrated unmatched 765 kV capabilities, a robust design that reduces right-of-way impacts, and a clear plan for construction and operations."

Ellen Nowak, former PSC commissioner and current vice president of regulatory and government affairs for [ATC](#), said, she has concerns, specifically with regard to Viridon's proposal, over the company's ability to build the project at the estimated

price detailed in their proposal.

Meanwhile, Todd Stuart, executive director of the Wisconsin Industrial Energy Group, said MISO's decision proves "competition works."

"It makes you sharpen your pencils," he said. "The selection report speaks for itself. The winning bids had superior cost containment measures to ensure the lowest cost to ratepayers. The winning bids also had the lowest return on equity."

Ponio said the bids MISO received "prove ROFR was never about reliability — it was about protecting monopoly profits."

Stuart said the bill's failure is good news for ratepayers in Wisconsin. The state's electricity rates are among the highest in the Midwest, and many ratepayers just saw their bills increase, he said.

"If you care about affordability, then we should be pushing for additional tools to address 'stranded assets' or removing barriers to 'behind the meter' on-site generation," Stuart said. "The very last thing we should be talking about is getting rid of competitive bidding with transmission right of first refusal legislation."

The federal government does not directly control the grid but sets ground rules for entities such as MISO, a nonprofit established in 2001 to operate electricity markets and oversee regional planning in 15 states and one Canadian province.

If the measure ever became law, it would not change the state Public Service Commission's role in permitting individual projects, such as the controversial Cardinal-Hickory Creek line between Dubuque, Iowa, and Middleton. But it would prohibit MISO from awarding contracts to outside developers.

Despite MISO's latest announcement, Nowak said there will be more largescale projects down the road — meaning the right of first refusal debate in Wisconsin is far from over.

"It is the right policy for the state of Wisconsin," Nowak said. "It's the right policy for ratepayers and for landowners, so we will always advocate for ROFR."



Data center transmission line alternatives submitted in application to the PSC

Ozaukee County Board added to list of those favoring alternate route

By Lisa Curtis
lcurtis@conlynet.com
262-305-8934

PORT WASHINGTON — Hearings will begin this month on a utility company's request to build and operate the transmission lines needed to power the massive data plant coming to Port Washington.

The American Transmission Co. has completed its Ozaukee County Distribution Interconnection Project application to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission, seeking approval to build between 96 to 123 miles of transmission lines and up to five new substations to support the interconnection of a new "large system load in Port Washington," according to the PSC. The Vantage Data Center will be occupied by OpenAI and Oracle and be called Lighthouse.

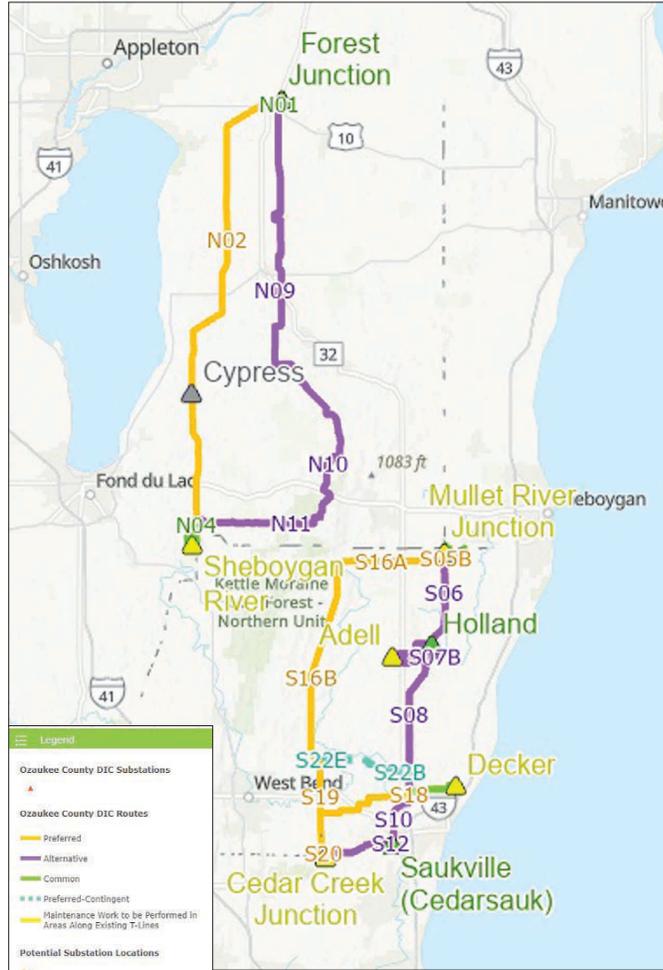
The size of this proposed load addition is substantial and would be one of the largest in Wisconsin, according to the application. It would overwhelm the existing transmission facilities in the Port Washington area and will require additional kilovolt (kV) of transmission sources to reliably serve this load.

Clean Wisconsin has said that the 3.9 gigawatts (GW) of electric power needed to power the Port Washington and Mount Pleasant data centers is enough to power 4.3 million Wisconsin homes, well over the current 2.8 million housing units in the entire state.

If approved, and dependent on the route chosen, work on the transmission lines would take place in Ozaukee, Sheboygan, Washington, Calumet, Manitowoc and Fond du Lac counties. The infrastructure would be constructed, owned and operated by ATC.

The PSC has up to December to decide whether to approve, modify or deny the project.

We Energies' parent company, WEC Energy Group, owns more than half of ATC. We Energies said in its application that its distribution system is not capable of supporting the new load addition. ATC therefore studied two



Source: American Transmission Co.

transmission alternatives that will add significant load serving capacity to the customer's facilities.

Two routes proposed
Two routes — a preferred and an alternative — have been shared and have prompted a near consensus among many government leaders against ATC's preferred route. As of last week, the Ozaukee County Board was among them.

The board approved a resolution that supports

ATC's alternate transmission route, which the board says uses existing transmission corridors and rights-of-way.

"This approach minimizes impacts to farmland, environmentally sensitive areas, rural landscapes and local landowners, and aligns with the county's Comprehensive Plan and Farmland Preservation Plan," according to the agenda memo by Ozaukee County Administrator Jason Dzwiniel.

The resolution urges the Wisconsin PSC to give

Full report available

A link to the Ozaukee County Distribution Interconnection Project application can be found at <https://bit.ly/3LE5HV9>.

strong consideration to the alternate route and formally opposes ATC's preferred and preferred contingent routes. It also authorizes county staff and legal counsel to comment and

See PSC, PAGE 6A

Jan 13

2026

Page A01

Clip resized 39%

Cedarburg, News Graphic

PSC

From Page 1A

intervene in the PSC proceeding and directs distribution of the resolution to relevant state agencies and stakeholders.

The Washington County Board approved a similar advisory resolution last month in support of the alternate route.

Two geographic scopes

The project is divided into two geographic parts: the north scope and south scope.

North scope: Both the proposed and the alternative routes include one new 345kV transmission line that originates at the Forest Junction substation in Calumet County and travels south to the proposed Sheboygan River Substation in Fond du Lac County, according to the application.

The preferred route is 38.8 miles long and moves southwest, traveling west of Chilton and Mount Calvary to the substation in the small town of Osceola, near Campbellsport. The alternative route is 52.7 miles long and moves straight south of the originating substation until around Kiel, where it veers southeast of Elkhart Lake and Glenbeulah, where it travels straight west to the substation.

South scope: Both the proposed and alternative routes would include a 345kV transmission line that would connect the proposed Mullet River Junction Substation, run south connecting to several intermediary substations, before terminating at the proposed



Image courtesy of the city of Port Washington

The Port Washington data center will be located west of Interstate 43, east of the Ozaukee Interurban Trail, north of Highland Lane and south of Dixie Road.

Cedar Creek Junction in the town of Jackson. Both routes would include a common route that consists of two new 345kV transmission lines running parallel east to west to connect to the proposed intermediary Decker Substation in Port Washington. The alternative route also would include building two new 138kV transmission circuits to connect to the proposed intermediary Adell Substation in Sherman Center and the existing Holland Substation, according to the application.

The preferred route is 51.5 miles long, while the alternate is 48.8 miles long. In Ozaukee County, the preferred route would impact the towns of Port Washington and Saukville, while the alternative route would impact the towns of Cedarburg, Fredonia, Port Washington and Saukville as well as the villages of Fredonia and Saukville, according to the application.

Why many prefer the alternative route

Many favor the alternative route because it uses substantially more existing electric transmission corridors and associated rights-of-way.

According to the Ozaukee County Board's advisory resolution, the use of existing transmission corridors reduces impacts to productive farmland, environmentally sensitive resources and established rural landscapes, while also limiting disruption to landowners and local communities.

The alternative plan is also more consistent with the county's adopted long-range plans.

The board also, however, said it supports the data center as a significant economic development opportunity that can provide job creation, capital investment, technological advancement and long-term economic competitiveness in the region and the state.

ATC said in its application that the preferred routing option was determined to be less impactful to residences within right of ways, was

located in proximity to fewer residences overall, had a lower potential impact to wetlands, avoided proximity to historic structures, required fewer road crossings, fewer turn angles, was the shortest overall route, and minimizes impacts to herbaceous wetlands and perennial streams.

The proposed project cost for construction and placing into service is estimated to be between approxi-

mately \$1.36 billion and \$1.64 billion, depending on route selection.

A utility must receive PSC approval before constructing or acquiring an energy generation or transmission facility to power their customers. The PSC will begin with environmental hearings, but there will be additional opportunities for the public to public comment during the review process.

MEMORIES YOUR LIVE ENTERTAINMENT DESTINATION
A Whole Yachta Love January 24, 2026
Paul Sucherman and the Dog House Band February 7, 2026
Cover \$20 per person
Evening Performances: Doors Open at 5:45 pm Food Available for Purchase 5:45 - 7:30 pm Band & Dancing Begins at 7:00 - 10:00 pm



Title: Und e industrial batteries
 Author: BY AILIS MCCARDLE REPORTER
 Size : 100 Inches Sq Independence,IA Circulation: 2029
 Keywords: Independence Light & Power, Telecommunications

Understanding industrial batteries

BY AILIS MCCARDLE
 REPORTER

Buchanan County residents gathered at Heartland Acres Events Center on a windy, chilly Tuesday evening to learn more about industrial batteries after controversy around tentative plans for an industrial battery energy storage system (BESS) to come to Buchanan County took off online.

Hosted by the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach office, the informational session featured energy scientists and engineers from Iowa State, policy analysts from the Center for Rural

Seaberg of the Iowa State University Community and Economic Development team, operated out of the Extension Office, was originally designed for planning and zoning officials and elected representatives at the county level across the state. Seaberg said high public interest led to this particular info session being held for the public's benefit.

Seaberg clarified during the presentation the informational session had no ties to the proposed BESS project, which would be developed by the Massachusetts-based New Leaf Energy Inc should it move forward, and speakers there could not answer specific questions about the proposed project.

Buchanan County currently has a moratorium on applications for an industrial battery project. Passed unanimously by the Buchanan County Board of Supervisors on Dec. 22, the moratorium is intended to allow planning and zoning officials to research and develop a robust ordinance regarding projects of this kind.

The moratorium will be in effect until the end of 2026 or until Planning and Zoning Commission produces an ordinance everyone is satisfied with, whichever comes

See **BATTERIES**, page A13

AILIS MCCARDLE PHOTO

Tod Bowman of the Center for Rural Affairs goes over different kinds of ordinances regarding battery storage systems at an informational session hosted by the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach office at Heartland Acres in Independence on Tuesday, Jan. 27.

BATTERIES from A1
 Affairs and the Iowa Environmental Council, and a land use and energy planner from Minnesota based non-profit The Great Plains Institute.

According to Buchanan County outreach director Kara Vance, the Buchanan County office merely helped get ISU's Extension office connected with Heartland Acres to host, and gave all credit to them for organizing the event.

The meeting, led by community development specialist Luke

Title: Und e industrial batteries

Author: BY AILIS MCCARDLE REPORTER

Size : 100 Inches Sq Independence,IA Circulation: 2029

Keywords: Independence Light & Power, Telecommunications

first.

The push for industrial batteries

Dr. Anne Kimber, the director at the Electric Research Power Center at Iowa State University, explained a little about why industrial battery storage has come into play and how complex Iowa's energy grid is.

"Iowa is especially complicated, I think," she said. "There are several utility types in Iowa. And depending on which utility serves you, your rates will be different, your control over that utility's decisions are going to be different."

According to Kimber, Iowa's electricity comes from a hodge-podge of providers, from municipal public utilities like **Independence Light and Power**, to rural

electricity co-ops like the East Central Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative, to private energy companies like MidAmerican or Alliant Energy. To further complicate matters, municipal utilities and local co-ops can be beholden to larger power supply agencies or larger joint action agencies they're a part of.

"Depending on how these kind of Russian dolls nest within each other, municipal or the rural electric cooperative may or may not have a lot of control over what it builds or develops locally," Kimber said. "It might be totally governed by a much higher upstream entity."

Kimber then illustrated via a series of maps showing overlapping coverage areas across the entire state of Iowa, with a huge variance of municipal public utilities, rural

co-ops, and private sector generators, providers, and distributors creating a complex patchwork over the state.

"So Iowa is a field of seams," Kimber said. "But we also have two different grid operators ... And they operate different markets for energy prices. The real time price of energy in Iowa changes every five minutes. That's the actual reality of it."

It's Iowa's variable energy prices and decentralized provider system that makes it fertile ground for those in the battery storage system business.

"We've got pricing ranging from \$300 a megawatt hour, which is a lot, down to -\$10 a megawatt hour. So if you're thinking about batteries, batteries can help soften some of these impacts," Kimber explained. "Batteries can store energy when prices are very low, and then release that energy when those prices are very high. The more we see problems like this, the more incentives there may be to develop batteries to even out the operation of the power system."

Industrial battery safety

Nicholas David, an engineer and researcher with Iowa State University Electric Power Research Center, said he's been focused on community resilience since the derecho of 2020. "My particular expertise is building circuit boards, software, controlling motor drives, and working with solar, wind, batteries, and other things that interact with the grid," David said.

He and his colleagues work with the Department of Homeland Security and the Department

Title: Und e industrial batteries

Author: BY AILIS MCCARDLE REPORTER

Size : 100 Inches Sq Independence,IA Circulation: 2029

Keywords: Independence Light & Power, Telecommunications

of Emergency Management to help make plans to provide safe power during emergency situations. "Those two groups are really poised to provide those emergency services to both use and provide power during emergency situations. So there's particular interest in the potential for a battery as a source of fuel in those conditions," David said.

A big part of his job is understanding the role batteries can play in an power emergency, and balancing that with their regulations and safety. "And then we often wonder, what kind of risks are associated with these (batteries)? And what kind of mitigations can we put in place, and what type of things to do we need to be prepared for?" David said.

He said that the largest risk with battery storage is fire, and then potential soil and groundwater contamination if water is used to distinguish a fire.

Upasana Roy, a land use and energy planner with the Great Plains Institute, explained a little about thermal runaway in a battery fire. "Thermal runaway is a condition that leads to localized fire within the battery unit ... When there's localized fire, a thermal runaway situation can happen. Planning for all of these energy storage systems requires structured risk management and emergency response planning... But combustion of such storage systems is a very, very rare case."

She said often battery storage systems have to comply with local ordinances as well as national code standards to ensure proper

mitigation is done to prevent issues with putting potential fires out. This includes setback limits from combustible vegetation, running water, roads, and buildings or dwellings. Ordinances can also require containment systems be set up, to prevent water used from putting out potential fires from seeping into the ground. "Runoff concerns and containment, exposure, and control are usually prioritized over direct water based extinguishment," Roy said.

Roy said local governmental bodies can help reduce risk if a battery plant is a good choice for a community needing more stable energy access and prices or planning for emergency power outages.

"Local jurisdictions can enhance safety by requiring compliance ... requiring detailed safety plans and reports during the project approval stage, and involving local emergency response officials in fire and emergency response planning," Roy said.



Title: Und e industrial batteries

Author: BY AILIS MCCARDLE REPORTER

Size : 100 Inches Sq Independence,IA Circulation: 2029

Keywords: Independence Light & Power, Telecommunications



Kaukauna, Heart of the Valley Times-Villager

Kaukauna prepares for possibility of requests for data centers

By Tom Collins Reporter

With an emphasis on as much control as possible along with protection for city residents, Kaukauna governmental officials began the process of preparing city ordinances for any potential requests for data centers in the city. The process began during the Jan. 5 legislative committee with consideration of the procedures to be taken by the city should a request occur.

At this stage, the emphasis is on the "if," since there is no entity making such a request at this time.

As explained by Assistant City Planner Adrienne Nelson, the city proposes something of multiple step process to handle possible requests to build some type of data center in Kaukauna.

That process includes a basic requirement such a facility would need to be located within the city's industrial park area. The city also would likely have requirements for such a facility that fall under the special exception regulations in city ordinances. One additional requirement likely would be the monitoring and approval of both potential water and electrical use by **Kaukauna Utilities**.

That informational process along with recommendations by the city's plan commission would be passed on to the common council for final approval of the potential facility.

As explained during the meeting, the data center approvals would also carry something of a "back to square one" provision if a data center sought to make changes from the initial approvals.

That would mean going back to the Kaukauna Plan Commission for re-approval of conditions and possibly going through the **Kaukauna Utilities** review process again. Those results also would likely mean reporting to the common council for another approval or denial step.

Nelson offered some examples of potential conditions in their information to the legislative committee that ranged from facility parking to the important water and electrical usage. Other examples of city requirements for potential data centers offered by Nelson included

annual facility inspections and regulations concerning parking for any facility.

Alderman John Moore asked City Attorney Tim Greenwood to offer his professional perspective on the proactive steps the city is attempting.

Greenwood underlined the importance of the measures helping the city putting some controls over the potential data center requests. He noted the special exception process as an important part of the process suggesting if the business does not agree to the requirements, the city has the right not to grant its approval.

Alderman Kelli Antoine noted the data centers are "a hot topic" and emphasized the importance of trying to have the best interests and protections for residents in mind.

The role of **Kaukauna Utilities** in monitoring and reviewing potential facility needs is seen as an important step since much of the controversies surrounding data centers in other state and national communities center on water and electrical uses and the strain on those utilities.

The committee also reviewed a request from a business in the Town of Vandenberg to combine four lots into two with expansion of a storage facility in mind.

Nelson explained the potential facility is just west of the city and is technically an extra-territorial certified survey map. She said the facility is close enough to the city to be considered for review in that process. Nelson also said the current CSM approval clears up the process for any potential future annexation. It means a new CSM would not be needed should such an annexation ever occur.

The committee also approved a preliminary resolution regarding a number of street paving projects in the city this year.

Several of those projects were explained during the earlier public works session. City Engineer and Public Works Director John Neumeier called out some of the projects in addition to his memo to the board members.

He noted a sidewalk installation along Seventh Street that he was surprised was not done earlier by

the city. A short stretch of Brill Street will see some concrete street paving.

In that case, Neumeier explained the city did not originally replace some of the sewer and water infrastructure during an earlier paving, then saw some infrastructure problems underground and had to break up the concrete street. In this case, the city and both water and sewer utilities will cover the cost of that portion and no residents will be assessed.

Still another area called out by Neumeier was along Thilmany Road, where the street will see some new concrete paving along with a modified intersection. Neumeier said the intersection is especially important with steady mill truck traffic along with a natural gas line in that vicinity.

Another area noted by Neumeier is near the northwest side Kwik Trip where new residences quickly filled a development area meaning concrete paving is needed.

The Brill block of paving was questioned. Neumeier agreed it will be narrow with less curbing. He also said what is considered a nearby ravine means less can be done on that side of the street.

There also was a question about Bel Air Court. Neumeier said that area will not receive sidewalks or concrete paving at this time but likely will see those improvements at some future date to be determined.

The other areas to see concrete paving in 2026 include portions of Eden and Sullivan avenues, Hendricks Avenue from Tenth to Ninth Street and Florence and Washington streets on the city's north side.

The public works members also

heard a report about the now 35-year-old pool vessel structure. According to the report there is some spalling of the concrete. That means some flaking or peeling of the surface that may lead to water losses unless the spalling is repaired.

Overall, what is called the "pool vessel" is in very good shape for its age but needs something of a helpful makeover in order to continue keeping it in positive shape.

The plan is to use a special paint coating that cures, even when the pool is filled with water once it is applied.

The coating project is planned for some point when the weather stays at 60 degrees or higher for several days. With some optimism, that period was predicted to be as early as March. The pool work and initial

curing takes about two weeks overall. The early process means the work will be completed well before the opening of a new swimming season.

The public works body also reviewed and approved the process of seeking bids for a revised entrance at the 1000 Islands Nature Center. The revised entrance is planned to offer better ADA accessibility, such as doors that push in rather than open out. The work also will level a sill area and help those using strollers and wheelchairs. The work also will include some concrete to level the entrance sill area.

The bids are expected to be let soon and the work done as part of a busy 2026 in the city.

The pair of board and committee meetings that began the year were adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Kaukauna EYE CARE

NEW Year, NEW You, and NEW Benefits?
Let us help you get the eyewear you need to see better!

- Comprehensive Eye Exams
- Contact Lens Fittings
- Pediatric Eye Care
- Diabetic Eye Care
- Foreign-Body Removal
- Detection and Treatment of Ocular Diseases
- FRAMES and LENSES
- CONTACT LENSES
- Laser-Surgery Management

ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS! Call 920-766-2481 to schedule your Appointment! HSA/FSA accepted!

1 Bank Avenue, Studio B.
Kaukauna, WI 54130
P: 920-766-2481

eye med | Davis Vision. | Superior Vision.

NVA | United Healthcare | spectera vsp.

ENROLL PRESCHOOL - 8TH

Image of children in a classroom setting.

CSM approved for new middle school

By **Brian Roebke**
Editor

The new middle school in Kaukauna cleared another hurdle when the City of Kaukauna Plan Commission approved the Certified Survey Map for the school site last week.

In the meeting held in the council chambers on Thursday, Jan. 8, the commission approved combining five parcels into three parcels

Associate Planner Adrienne Nelson reported the layout includes land dedication for a roadway connection to Highway 55, which is consistent with previous planning efforts for the future extension of Speedway Lane through the property.

Since submission of the preliminary CSM back in September, language was added to require an updated traffic impact study prior

to the development of any vacant lots. Additionally, utility easements have been added to the final document as requested.

Conditions of the approval are:

- That a temporary easement for a public access or turnaround at the intersection of Speedway Lane and the new middle school road is added to the CSM.
- That final approval of utility easements is received from city staff and **Kaukauna Utilities**.
- That the necessary easement on parcel number 030064500, which will allow for a road connection between the middle school and high school, and water main, is recorded with Outagamie County.

The commission also made several changes to a motion approved at the previous meeting relating to site plan.



Kaukauna looking for ways to regulate potential data centers in the city

By [Taylor Ziebell](#)

Published: Jan. 15, 2026 at 6:17 PM CST

KAUKAUNA, Wis. (WBAY) - AI data centers possibly coming to Wisconsin have been a hot topic that many smaller communities are not a fan of.

On Thursday, Kaukauna Mayor Tony Penterman told Action 2 News that the city's plan commission is updating an ordinance to allow data centers but with "special exceptions".

"This will strengthen our grip on a potential data center locating in the city of Kaukauna," says Mayor Penterman.

Mayor Penterman says the city is looking to add another layer to the data center review process.

Even though the city has not been approached as a potential site for a data center, he feels this is the right move.

"We'll amend the ordinance to have data centers in our zoning code by special exception. And that special exception would require a public hearing where the public can come in then and voice their concerns for or against a possible location of a data center," says Mayor Penterman.

This language will also allow the city to vet the potential data center coming in and impose restrictions on it, including their water and electric usage requiring approval by [Kaukauna Utilities](#).

But looking at the other side of data centers, the executive director of the Wisconsin Data Center Coalition, Tricia Braun, says our state is a great fit for these data centers.

“Actually, I think that Wisconsin is poised to lead a lot of things. But as this is the infrastructure of the future, and if you look back historically at Wisconsin’s industries, they tend to be leaders in almost everything they do. Everything we make, everything we manufacture,” says Braun.

Braun says they bring opportunity to our communities.

“With OpenAI located here, you also have the brains and the infrastructure for the brains to really create and do things better. Whether it’s making things better or it’s creating solutions to global problems, that can be centered here in Wisconsin. I think that’s an incredibly exciting opportunity for this state,” says Braun.

Mayor Penterman says most residents he’s spoken with are not for data centers, but Braun claims the centers are being misrepresented.

“We’ve now kind of had to help people understand that these are not like big, evil devils in your communities. They’re really good for our communities,” says Braun.

The Kaukauna Common Council will meet to amend the ordinance on Tuesday night at 7 p.m.

New Kaukauna law could allow data centers, but projects would require city approval

by [David Go](#), FOX11News

Tue, January 20, 2026 at 9:28 PM

KAUKAUNA (WLUK) -- The city of Kaukauna amended its laws on data centers Tuesday, though no active projects are being pursued right now.

The Kaukauna Common Council approved an amendment to city ordinance to allow for data centers in the city's industrial zoning areas, but with some restrictions.

Essentially, a data center needs special approval now, whereas without this amendment, any developer could buy existing industrial property and convert it to a data center without the city's prior approval.

Ordinance allows data centers with additional checks

- Any new data center would require common council approval
- Data centers allowed in industrial zoned areas (if approved)
- No off-site parking allowed for day-to-day operation
- Yearly inspection to ensure compliance
- Electrical usage, water usage must not exceed a certain amount without prior recommendation from Kaukauna Utilities and approval from the Common Council
- Additions, new buildings and changes in use must be approved by Common Council
- [The Alliance for the Great Lakes](#) reported last summer that there were 43 data centers in Wisconsin, including multiple in Northeast Wisconsin. Residents of the village of Greenleaf successfully pressured a business [into abandoning its plan](#) for a data center earlier this month.

- In Racine, Microsoft's data center expansion has been met with significant backlash.



Title: Ads

Author:

Size : 49 Inches Sq Maquoketa,IA Circulation: 3879

Keywords: Maquoketa Municipal Electric Utility



Tree Trimming for Safe and Reliable Power

To keep our neighborhoods and community safe, **Maquoketa Municipal Electric Utility** crews will be trimming trees and clearing other vegetation from electric facilities including overhead lines and underground equipment. This is critical to the reliability of the electric system and safety of our customers and employees.

TREE TRIMMING WILL TAKE PLACE FROM JANUARY THROUGH APRIL.

- Utility crews will start in Zone 2 and 3
- Additional Zones will be trimmed if time permits
- Visit mmeu.org for Zone maps and updates
- Crews will return to pickup any branches left at the curb

If you have a tree that is near power lines and would like it removed, give us a call for inspection.

CALL US AT 563-652-6891 DURING BUSINESS HOURS WITH ANY QUESTIONS.



mmeu.org • (563) 652-6891

At **Maquoketa Municipal Electric Utility**, we join forces with other local, not-for-profit utilities through WPPI Energy to share resources and lower costs.

SHARED STRENGTH THROUGH @WPPI ENERGY



New Glarus, Post Messenger Recorder

Electric utilities reconnection policy OK'd

Tree removal and pruning bid, event permits approved by village board

By CHRIS MERTES
Post Messenger Recorder

Acting on a safety concern, the New Glarus Village Board approved a new **New Glarus Utilities** Electrical Service Reconnection Policy as part of its Wednesday, Jan. 21 agenda.

The new policy, which is expected to be effective on April 15, only allows for reconnection of disconnected electrical services due to nonpayment during normal business hours once payment is received.

Village Administrator Kelsey Jenson wrote in a report to the board that currently, if electric customers are disconnected due to nonpayment, **New Glarus Utilities** reconnects customers at any time once their bill has been paid.

"Many times, this in-

volves employees coming in after hours to reconnect the customer, which results in overtime wages and additional costs," Jenson wrote.

The new policy limits reconnections to normal business hours only — a practice that is commonly used among area municipalities with municipally-owned electrical utilities — including Brodhead and Waunakee.

According to the new policy: A customer in the process of being disconnected for nonpayment is given multiple opportunities for making payments of their utility bills. In addition, customers are provided information about the utility office hours.

"This is a costly process and is unfair to the remaining utility customers," Jen-

son wrote in her report.

In situations where a customer is disconnected for nonpayment, the following policy will be followed:

- Non-office employees are not allowed to accept payments.
- The utility will not reconnect a customer who is disconnected for nonpayment until payment is received at the village office on the following business day.
- The utility will follow all applicable rules promulgated by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, including offering deferred payment arrangements where applicable.
- The utility will immediately reconnect any customer where a licensed physician has identified in writing that a life-threatening medical condition exists.
- The utility office manager and electric foreman shall have the ability to make exceptions to the policy for qualifying reasons as deemed necessary.

The policy update will be communicated to utility customers on the Village of New Glarus website, Facebook page, and will be included in the next round of mailed utility bills.

The new policy officially

goes into effect after April 15, 2026, once the state moratorium on utility disconnections is over.

Tree pruning/removal bid authorized

Acting on a staff recommendation, the board approved the 2026 Tree Removal and Pruning Bid for \$22,000 submitted by Whitney Tree Service. The Tree Board reviewed the bids at its Jan. 7, 2026 meeting and recommended awarding the bid to Whitney contingent on decreasing the bid down to \$22,000 as budgeted with a reduction of scope. Jenson said Whitney has agreed to the reduction of scope and price to \$22,000.

Breault Jr. promoted to Water Operator

Following a closed session, the village board approved Resolution 26-01 promoting Richard Breault Jr. to a full-time Water Operator position effective March 16 or earlier if a replacement Public Works worker is hired.

According to the resolution, Breault Jr. will be paid \$30.00 per hour, with a \$2/hour increase once Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certification is complete (the village requested

completion of that certification within five years of the transfer date, but extension of that deadline may be approved at the discretion of the Public Works Director and Village Administrator). Breault Jr.'s current benefit and paid time off package will transfer with the appointment.

Kalberwurst, Sportsman's Raffle licenses approved

The board approved Temporary Class "B" permits and "Class B" retailer's licenses for the New Glarus Fire Department to host its annual Kalberwurst Dinner (March 21) and Sportsman's Raffle Banquet (Feb. 7).

The permits and licenses allow NGFD to host the events at the New Glarus Fire Station, 218 4th Ave., and serve fermented malt beverages until 11:59 p.m. at both events, although typically they end much earlier than that.

Village board does beam signing at New Glarus Library

Village board members participated in a beam signing at the New Glarus Public Library, which remains under construction, as part of a tour of the library.

Library Director Amy Trumble thanked the board for touring and said the project is continuing on time and under budget.

Municipal parking restrictions OK'd

Acting on a staff recommendation that included input from Police Chief Sturdevant, the board approved Ordinance 26-01 to Amend Section 288-20(C) of the Municipal Code of the Village of New Glarus Parking Regulations to allow village-contracted Emergency Personnel, including Fire and EMS, to park in the municipal lot behind Village Hall 24 hours a day.

The request occurred because Belleville Area EMS personnel are parking in the lot now because they are working to serve the New Glarus EMS from the New Glarus Fire Station. Jenson said the new ordinance adds EMS with the clarifying term "village-contracted" emergency personnel.

Also, as a reminder, the ordinance states that there is no parking in Downtown New Glarus from 2-6 a.m.

ADVERTISE!

For all your advertising needs, contact:

Lisa Kueter-Anderson
adsales12@newspubinc.com
608-225-3738

Post Messenger Recorder
Buyer's Guide
Driftless Explorer

READ LOCAL
SUBSCRIBE 608-767-3655



FBI. Fair entrant earns state pageant honor

Kiel, Tri-County News

DONATIONS



NHU gives to causes

New Holstein Utilities (NHU) recently showed the spirit of community giving by making donations to a number of local causes. NHU Superintendent Marc Stephanie said, "Supporting these groups is important to making our community an even better place. It's important to us to spread some cheer and give back to the residents and businesses we serve each day." Financial donations were made to the Salvation Army, St. Vincent DePaul in New Holstein and Kiel, First Responders, Community Chest and Teaming for a Brighter Tomorrow, local organizations that work to make the community a better place. The donations were made possible through funding provided by the utility's wholesale power supplier, WPPI Energy. "We're proud to be a member of WPPI Energy and this is one of the reasons," Stephanie said. "It's through that shared strength we can be sure our community is successful!"





Jan
22

2026

Page
A01

Clip
resized
129%

Stoughton Courier Hub



City of Stoughton

City honors Bill Brue for 46 years of EMT service

**Retired Jan. 1 with
nearly 100,000 hours of
on-call time**

BY SCOTT DE LARUELLE

Managing editor

State Senator Melissa Ratcliff and Representative Randy Udell were on hand at the Tuesday, Jan. 13 Stoughton

City Council meeting to read a resolution honoring Bill Brue, who retired Jan. 1 after 46 years of service with Stoughton Area EMS.

It was a packed house at city hall - unusual for a regular council meeting - full of friends, family and co-workers, who gave Brue a standing ovation following the reading of the resolution.

“It is an individual honor, what you’ve given me, but it is such a group effort ... and it’s such an honor to be a part of that group,” he said. “A lot of call hours, a lot of missed family events, never something that you can plan for - you can say, ‘well I’m on call,’ but you never know. I really encourage the city to

Turn to **Brue**/Page 2

Brue: Started in August 1979, has responded to 19,300-plus calls

Continued from page 1

support the EMS in the future, it's a challenge right now, and the state legislature to also support our EMS, especially for the volunteer services, because if they're a paid service, they can survive, but the volunteer service is really a challenge."

Brue started in August of 1979, and since then responded to over 19,300 emergency calls and put in more than 95,000 hours of on-call time. He also taught CPR to more than 3,000 community members and inspired many youth in the school district to work in EMS, some who now serve with Stoughton.

"The City of Stoughton recognizes and thanks Bill Brue for his dedication to the community," read the resolution in part. "The sacrifices can never be fully repaid, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts, wishing you the best in your retirement."

In a 2019 interview with the Hub, Brue said he became familiar with EMT work as a teenager. First, it was his neighbor crashing a motorcycle near his farm, where Brue

waited "probably 25 minutes" for a police squad car to show up – "the only help that did arrive" in the days before ambulances.

Then a few years later, at college, a friend of his choked and ended up dying when the CPR administered came too late. That inspired him to learn CPR, which he eventually began teaching along with first aid. A school nurse he worked with soon suggested joining Stoughton Area EMS, and he began spending time responding to calls. Since then, he said, he's had about a half-dozen opportunities to bring people back who are suffering cardiac arrest.

"You get some real good feelings when you can help somebody that is in such dire need," he said.

Potential property purchase

The council approved borrowing \$1.3 million from the state trust fund in anticipation of purchase of land on Williams Drive.

In November, the council approved a \$1.25 million

offer for purchase for 27.8 acres of the Moe family farm off of Williams Drive, adjacent to the city's industrial park. The acreage was later reduced to 25 due to the presence of trees on the property.

The city's interest in the land, which is across from the Emmi Roth facility in the business park, came up during last year's budget process. The council has approved funding to look at a long-term new combined facility for city police, fire and EMS, and that location is a potential site, as well as a potential location for a new [Stoughton Utilities](#) site or part of an expanded business park.

City attorney Rick Manthe said the final two items left to be resolved are a pending soil sample and a survey of the property. The closing date is on or before Feb. 3.

The city also approved a farm lease of the land with Nathan Moe Enterprises, which will allow the family to continue farming for \$5,000 annually until the city is ready to develop the property.



Photo submitted

Retired long-time Stoughton EMT Bill Brue and family at his retirement party earlier this year.



STURGEON BAY

City Plans \$1.8M in Roadway Improvements for 2026

by KEVIN BONESKE
kevin@ppulse.com

The City of Sturgeon Bay is planning capital roadway improvement projects for this year with an estimated total cost of \$1,810,130.

The Common Council met on Jan. 6 as the Board of Public Works and authorized the preparation of bid documents for 17 roadway projects after hearing a presentation about them from Senior Engineering Technician Brian Spetz. The work would cover around 2.76 miles of city streets.

Spetz said the city's 2026 budget includes \$1,783,000 for the projects, and if bids come in favorably, all planned improvements could be completed this year. He noted that favorable bids last year allowed the city to add the repaving of the Egg Harbor Road and 14th Avenue intersection. If the bids aren't higher than expected, modifications to the roadway plan may be needed to remain within budget.

Among the larger projects, Huron Street will be reconstructed between 5th and 7th avenues. The project includes replacement of sanitary sewer and water mains, curb and gutter, roadway gravel base and pavement, along with sidewalk replacement from 6th to 7th avenues to connect with the existing sidewalk south along 6th Avenue.

"It's about half the size of the Delaware Street [project] that we did last year," he said. "The city portion is estimated at \$166,000, and **Sturgeon Bay Utilities** [share is] \$315,000, so a total of \$481,000."

Improvements on Utah Street between 12th and 15th avenues will vary by section. The western two-thirds of that roadway will be reconstructed, including storm sewer reconfiguration, replacement of curb and gutter and road gravel base, manhole and water valve adjustments and pavement replacement. The eastern one-third will involve pavement milling, spot curb and gutter replacement, manhole and water

valve adjustments and repaving. The city's estimated cost for that Utah Street project is \$344,000.

The city also expects to receive a Local Road Improvement Project grant of around \$27,000 to help fund work on South Lansing Avenue between Green Bay Road and Hwy 42/57. That \$140,000 project includes milling and repaving, relocation of the east curb line and installation of a new 6-foot-wide sidewalk connecting to Willow Drive.

Spetz said a safety railing will be installed along the southern portion of the new sidewalk, adjacent to a steep side slope, to allow pedestrians to access Sawyer School

from the paved trail on Green Bay Road.

As the city seeks to acquire right-of-way to extend South 18th Avenue to connect with Memorial Drive, plans also call for pulverizing and paving 875 feet of 18th Avenue north of Memorial Drive.

In addition, the council approved a storm sewer utility drainage improvement project in the Woodruff Place area, estimated at \$171,888, and authorized proceeding with the city's annual crack fill and micro fill/chip seal program, budgeted at \$200,000. Including these items, the total fiscal impact is estimated at \$2,182,018.

Spetz noted the road improvement projects are separate from planned improvements along South Duluth Avenue (County S). That project includes a new urban design with curb and gutter, sidewalks, bike lanes and repaving for that section of Duluth Avenue from south of Hwy 42/57 to the Justice Center.

The city was previously awarded a federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) grant administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to fund 80% of the design and construction costs for the South Duluth Avenue project, with the city and county splitting the remaining 20%.



Senior Engineering Technician Brian Spetz speaks Jan. 6 before the Sturgeon Bay Common Council, which met as the Board of Public Works to consider road improvement projects for this year. KEVIN BONESKE

Jan 23

2026

Page A05

Clip resized 54%

Assembly approves tax credits for new nuclear energy facilities

KIMBERLY WETHAL
kwethal@madison.com

MADISON — Companies that build nuclear energy facilities in Wisconsin would receive state tax breaks starting in 2030 under legislation adopted Thursday by Republicans in the state Assembly, who described the plants as a “high priority” for the state’s energy portfolio.

The bill, AB 472, authored by Rep. Shae Sortwell, R-Two Rivers, would provide tax credits to any nuclear energy projects for up to a decade, with \$10,000 available for each megawatt produced. That amount would gradually decrease each year.

The bill would also authorize the state’s Public Service Commission to approve electricity tariffs for certain large customers who use more than 75 megawatts of electricity to prevent costs from being pushed onto smaller ratepayers.

The bill, which passed with bipartisan support, now heads to the Senate, where its companion bill is sitting in committee.

In a statement Wednesday, Americans for Prosperity-Wisconsin, a conservative think tank, encouraged representatives to vote against the bill, saying it misuses the state’s pro-nuclear stance as a handout to utilities that shifts “financial risk” to ratepayers over investors.

“Wisconsin ratepayers are being hammered by rising energy costs, largely due to subsidizing failed green energy projects by the Evers administration,” AFP-Wisconsin Legislative Director Jerry Ponio said in the statement.

“Simply put, the bill allows



LEE NEWS ARCHIVES

The Point Beach nuclear reactor along the Lake Michigan shoreline near Two Rivers is Wisconsin’s only operating nuclear power plant, producing about 14% of the state’s electricity.

utilities to recover construction and planning costs from ratepayers before projects are complete, operational, or proven to be economical, effectively insulating investors while shifting the risk onto families and businesses.”

Sortwell said lawmakers had

attempted to work “in good faith” with groups like AFP on the legislation but said they changed their demands.

“AFP lobbied aggressively against what they thought were energy monopolies earlier this

session. Yet now they oppose

energy source diversity,” Sortwell said in the statement. “However, with their organization being primarily funded by those with a large stake in fossil fuels, their opposition makes more sense.”

Democrats echoed concerns that ratepayers could be on the

“Wisconsin ratepayers are being hammered by rising energy costs, largely due to subsidizing failed green energy projects by the Evers administration.”

Jerry Ponio, legislative director for Americans for Prosperity-Wisconsin

hook for utility projects before they start to produce any energy for them.

Wisconsin’s only nuclear energy plant, the Point Beach nuclear plant located in Sortwell’s district between Two Rivers and Kewaunee, had its license renewed through 2050 late last year by federal officials.

Point Beach sits on about 1,200 acres along Lake Michigan and generates enough electricity to power nearly 1 million homes, or about 14% of Wisconsin’s total electricity.

Wisconsin lawmakers have sought to bolster the state’s nuclear energy portfolio in recent years. Earlier this year, Democratic Gov. Tony Evers signed into law a measure ordering a \$2 million study to determine the best location for a possible nuclear fusion power plant in the state — although such technology is years away from being realized, if ever.

Evers also signed a bill creating a Nuclear Power Summit Board tasked with organizing, promoting and hosting a Wisconsin nuclear power summit in Madison in 2028.