



**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2026**

A. Call to Order

Chairman Farrey called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Members Present: 14 – Tom Egan, Steven Binder, Howard Miller, Jim Wise, Karen Powers, Tom Swan, Morris Cox, Donald Nussbaum, Chuck Farrey, Larry Lautenschlager (left at 9:40 am), Ralph Harrison, Frank Frassetto (via TEAMS), Douglas Nelson (arrived at 8:52 am) and Thomas Snider.

Absent: 2 – Maribeth Gabert and John Hinz

Also Present at the Meeting:

Cassie Smith-Gregor, Chief Deputy Clerk

Koby Schellenger, Assistant to the County Executive

Mary Anne Mueller, Corporation Counsel

Jennifer Ruetten, Information Technology (IT) Director

Kathy Hutter, Solid Waste Department Director

Eric Rasmussen, Emergency Management Director

Lori Palmeri, State Representative, 54th Assembly District

Dean Kaufert, State Representative, 53rd Assembly District (arrived at 9:01 am)

County Board Supervisor Conley Hanson, District 26

County Board Supervisor Kate Hancock-Cooke, District 7

B. Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

D. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Supervisor Cox, seconded by Supervisor Harrison, to approve the minutes of the October 20, 2025, meeting. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

E. Committee Chair's Report

There was no committee chair's report.

F. Update from State Legislators

State Representative Lori Palmeri - Assembly District 54

Ms. Palmeri commented and updated the committee on the following items:

- WisconsinEye — Currently unavailable; rules have prevented recording in committees. Negotiations are underway; coverage may resume as early as next week.*
- Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program — Significant amendments reduce land acquisition ability. Effectively defunds the program, leaving minimal dollars for very specific uses. This passed the Assembly, but the Senate's status is uncertain.*
- Per- and polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) — PFAS legislation moving forward with bipartisan support.*
- Constitutional Amendments — Two passed second reading in the Legislature related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and Government Hiring.*

Ms. Palmeri stated that there are roughly six weeks left for bills to pass and be signed.

Representative Palmeri then took questions from the committee members. Chairman Farrey thanked Ms. Palmeri for attending and the committee appreciated her updates and thoughts.

G. Update from Federal Legislators

There were no federal representatives present.

H. Communications Shared by Committee Members

I. Updates from the County Executive

Koby Schellenger, Assistant to the County Executive, commented and updated the committee on the following items:

- *PFAS — Winnebago County engaged in litigation against PFAS manufacturers at the airport. Mr. Schellenger acknowledged the importance of having that partnership and shared responsibility that everyone was speaking about for that.*
- *Housing Challenges — Anticipated federal funding changes will cut housing vouchers. The County is working with housing partners to mitigate the impact. They are actively working on developing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a revolving loan fund to support housing initiatives.*
- *Human Services Program Changes (2027) — Adjusting the Human Service Program Delivery. There will be increased in-person checks for programs like BadgerCare and Foodshare. There will also be an increased need for community outreach and accessibility to ensure residents comply with new requirements. The Federal government is reducing its obligations, shifting costs to states and counties. The state still needs to determine a cost-share formula, but counties will face budget pressure. The County will need to become more dynamic and proactive in connecting residents to programs.*
- *Cold Weather Response — The County collaborates with nonprofits (Day by Day, Salvation Army), libraries, and law enforcement for emergency shelter and transportation to keep people safe. Regulatory barriers prevent temporary use of unused Park View Health Center rooms. The Expo Center could serve as a large-scale emergency shelter if needed.*

Mr. Schellenger then took questions from the committee members.

Chairman Farrey mentioned that State Representative Dean Kaufert just arrived. Mr. Farrey acknowledged that the committee had already moved on from agenda item, Update from State Legislators.

Chairman Farrey asked the committee for their approval to go back to that item and hear Mr. Kaufert's update.

State Representative Dean Kaufert - Assembly District 53

Mr. Kaufert commented and updated the committee on the following items:

- *Legislative Sessions — Busy period ahead. Expect rapid movement on bills and announcements.*
- *Bipartisan Success — Budget passed with some bipartisan support.*
- *Recent Bills Passed — No tax on tips, No tax on overtime*
- *Fiscal Outlook — \$2.3 billion surplus projected by the nonpartisan Fiscal Bureau for the end of the biennium, which is in addition to the rainy day fund.*
- *Property Tax Relief — Governor and legislative leaders are working on a plan, and an announcement is expected next week.*
- *Childcare funding — The previous budget provided temporary support; a long-term solution is still needed.*
- *School aid formula — No new general aid in the last budget; special education funding increased but is still insufficient.*
- *Proposal to bring back WisconsinEye with a \$10M endowment fund for sustainable funding.*

Representative Kaufert then took questions from the committee members.

J. Discussion

1. Use Restrictions on State and Local Government Electronic Devices AB415 / SB 400

Jennifer Ruetten, Information Technology (IT) Director, provided some details on the AB 415 / SB 400 Bill — Use Restrictions on State and Local Government Electronic Devices.

- *These bills restrict the use of software on government-owned devices if controlled by a foreign adversary and apply to all government entities covering: installed software, web-based applications and social media platforms.*
- *This would be an unfunded mandate. Counties would have to absorb costs for compliance (software replacement, IT upgrades).*
- *Possible implementation date of January 31, 2027. The 2026 County budget has already been set and passed, so there is no money in this budget to achieve this change. If the County put the money in the 2027 budget, that would leave 31 days to comply, which is not feasible for RFPs, procurement, and deployment.*
- *Operational Impact. Every device runs on multiple layers of software and firmware—many manufactured abroad. Potential ripple effect on hardware supply chains. IT departments flagged significant challenges for state and local governments.*
- *Originated from concerns like TikTok and foreign influence. This is a legitimate security issue, but implementation is overly broad and underfunded.*
- *Risks for Local Governments.*
 - *Compliance risk: Without clear definitions, counties could unknowingly violate the law.*
 - *Financial strain: Replacement costs for software/hardware could be substantial.*
 - *Service disruption: If core platforms (Microsoft, Google) are banned, operations could be severely impacted.*

Discussion amongst committee members.

Jennifer Ruetten, IT Director, and State Representatives Lori Palmeri and Dean Kaufert took questions from the committee.

K. Business Items

1. Support of Battery Stewardship Bill AB 713 / SB 702

Kathy Hutter, Solid Waste Department Director, provided some background on this item.

Motion by Supervisor Nelson, seconded by Tom Snider, to approve the resolution and forward to the County Board. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

2. Supporting Disaster Assistance Legislation AB 580 / AB 581 / SB 557 / SB 558

Eric Rasmussen, Emergency Management Director, provided some background on this item.

Motion by Supervisor Wise, seconded by Tom Snider, to approve the resolution and forward to the County Board. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

3. Forest County Resolution 60-2025: Resolution Urging Legislative Action to Address County Funding Challenges Under Wisconsin's Tax Levy Freeze

Motion by Supervisor Cox, seconded by Supervisor Wise, to deny the resolution. CARRIED BY VOICE VOTE.

L. Items for Next Agenda

Suggestions from committee members for items to be addressed on a future agenda

1. *Resolutions from other counties that were referred to the Legislative Committee from the County Board.*

M. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will take place on Monday, March 23, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. at the James P. Coughlin Center, Meeting Rooms A & B.

N. Adjourn

Motion by Supervisor Binder, seconded by Tom Snider, to adjourn. MOTION CARRIED. The meeting adjourned at 9:56 a.m.

Submitted by:

Cassie J. Smith-Gregor

Winnebago County Chief Deputy Clerk

The video portion of this meeting is available on the County website:

<https://winnebago.cowi.portal.civicclerk.com>