

JANUARY 2024 | VOL. 11

OUR GREAT COMMUNITY

Quarterly newsletter of Washington County, Wisconsin
DISCOVER. CONNECT. PROSPER.



COUNTY EXECUTIVE
JOSH SCHOEMANN



Building Community Through Social Capital

Following the loneliness and isolation so many experienced during the COVID pandemic, never have we more needed the love, care and connectivity of community, whether it's civic groups, churches or athletic leagues. Older adults and people with disabilities are uniquely susceptible, putting them at risk for significant health problems. However, suicide and substance abuse rates amongst young people demonstrate that this is an issue we should all be concerned for.

'Social networks' used to mean the couples group that bowled together, or the volunteer fire department that was a home away from home, or the local Lions club that was a brotherhood and made the community better through its work. Today, social media has co-opted that term and ironically can contribute to a disconnect among people.

Unfortunately, fewer and fewer people and businesses are investing the time and resources necessary to build the personal and social resiliency that is so important to a strong community, and even more important in times of both individual and shared adversity. It is up to us to restore these ties that bind for our community, our neighbors and our own well-being.

County government can not solve these challenges, but we are working hard to create the environment and set the example for how to help combat social isolation. A wonderful example this past year involved the Washington County Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) creating a program for older adults to learn smartphone technology. ADRC Director Tammy Anderson won the Interfaith Caregivers Judy Phillips Influencers in Aging Award in 2023, along with students and faculty from Kewaskum High School, for their work in implementing 'Lessons in Technology Classes' with older adults in Washington County. The older adult participants learned to download apps, create notes, lists, emails and texts, and use FaceTime from the students.

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For information on the ADRC Technology classes for older adults, contact Tammy at 262-335-4494

Many of the skills allow the older adults to keep in better touch with friends and family. The class met once a week for six weeks, and three sessions were held over the year. It was heartwarming to see the older adults form friendships with others taking the course, and the students learn from the adults about old phone systems' party lines and rotary dials.

It is the love of your neighbor and for your neighbor that strengthens each of us and all of us. It's up to you.

Tips on Building Connections

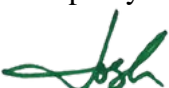
How's Your Neighbor?

Is there someone in your family or community who may be lonely and isolated? There are simple ways to help. It starts with reaching out.

Stop by, call, schedule a video chat.
Invite them to an event or over for coffee.

Reach out. Stay in touch!




Josh Schoemann
County Executive

Tips shared by the Washington County Aging & Disability Resource Center from the Wisconsin Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness



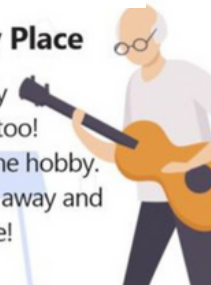
Volunteer!

Do you have time to share? You can make a big difference in your community by volunteering. You'll be amazed at what you get in return when you volunteer.



Make Your Hobby Your Happy Place

What do you love to do? There are likely others in your area that love to do that too! Connect with people who enjoy the same hobby. You'll have something in common right away and it's a great way to grow your social circle!



Church Membership

Churches build a sense of belonging and connections among members through religious services, social activities, opportunities for volunteering and charitable pursuits. Commit yourself to love and serve others!



Getting around is a game-changer

Driving isn't just about getting to where you're going. Reliable transportation — riding with others or offering others a ride — helps everyone stay connected. Don't let a lack of transportation hold you back!
Reach out for a ride! Offer a ride!



Significant Permit Fee Reductions



For several decades, local governments have created and increased permit costs to fund their annual budgets. County Executive Josh Schoemann initiated a review aimed at shifting the focus from the county budget to the people, thereby lowering the overall regulatory cost of home construction and platting, and to mitigate the impact on the price of housing. This review resulted in significant fee reductions in the 2024-2025 Budget approved by the County Board last month.

Lessons learned from the Next Generation Housing (NGH) initiative as the county worked with local municipalities highlighted the need to change some of the zoning regulations and fees to lower the cost of the homes. The objective is to enhance personal property rights and provide housing opportunities that will allow working individuals and families to remain in Washington County and build equity through home ownership.

“Reducing the cost of development leaves more money in the pockets of homeowners and businesses and furthers the mission of creating an environment for our citizens to enjoy our authentic quality of life,” Schoemann said.

Most Land Resources fees will be reduced by an average of 50%, with some eliminated altogether. The county fees affected are primarily in subdivision and stormwater infrastructure review, permits located in the County – regulated shoreland, floodplain and wetland, non-metallic mining, and septic system installations.

The new fees will be posted on our website and can be found by visiting link below to Land Resources/ Permits & Applications:

https://www.washcowisco.gov/departments/natural_resources

Upcoming Elections



- Spring Primary (if needed):
February 20, 2024
- Presidential Preference Primary +
Spring Election: April 2, 2024

Fire/EMS Task Force

County Executive Schoemann and County Board Chair Jeff Schleif continue to meet monthly with local chief elected officials on issues the group has identified as areas the county and municipalities can work together on to potentially avoid duplication of services. Funding and staffing for Fire/EMS services are a major issue facing the entire nation.

The group determined that a Fire/EMS Task Force be formed to address options for the volunteer and part-time Fire Departments in Washington County. The way these services have historically been delivered is no longer sustainable.

The County Board approved funding to contract with a consultant to provide options from communities nationwide and review how these services could be more efficiently configured in Washington County.

The proposed makeup of the Task Force is to include: Chief Elected Officials, members from the Washington County Fire Chiefs, Fire Training, and EMS Training associations, and citizens.

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Campaign

The Washington Ozaukee Public Health Department (WOPHD) is raising awareness about childhood lead poisoning. There is no safe level of lead identified for young children. Lead exposure in children can lead to developmental delays and learning and behavioral difficulties.

Screening programs are the best way to identify children who are at risk for lead poisoning. Blood lead testing is provided by a primary care provider or health screener around 1 year and 2 years of age, or at least once between the ages of 2 and 6. Children with elevated lead levels should receive regular health monitoring and follow-up testing.

All sources of exposure should be controlled or eliminated. Sources of lead exposure could be contaminated paint, soil, consumer products and water.

The Washington Ozaukee Public Health Department suggests several actions to keep children safe from potential lead exposure.

- **Play safely:** Keep children away from chipping paint, wash hands, toys and pacifiers frequently and dispose of recalled toys.
- **Live safely:** Use bottled water or a filter if you have lead in your water. Eating foods that are high in calcium, iron, and vitamin C can help children absorb less lead. If you are exposed to lead in your workplace, remove contaminated clothing and shoes before leaving work.
- **Renovate safely:** For homes with an identified lead issue, use contractors certified by the EPA. Clean your home using a vacuum with a HEPA filter, clean floors, walls, furniture, and windowsills to remove lead dust.

Visit the following resources for more information.

[Lead Safe Wisconsin](#), Wisconsin Department of Health Services

[Lead Testing for Homeowners](#), Wisconsin State Occupational Health Laboratory

[Water Testing Kit](#), Wisconsin State Occupational Health Laboratory

Checking for sources of lead

PAINT: In general, the older your home or childcare facility, the more likely it has lead-based paint. Many homes, including private, federally-assisted, federally-owned housing, and childcare facilities built before 1978 have lead-based paint. In 1978, the federal government banned consumer uses of lead-containing paint.

PLUMBING: Contact a plumbing professional to determine whether your home's plumbing may contain lead. Lead service laterals likely in home built prior to 1951. In Wisconsin, a 1984 law banned lead solder, but nationally the laws were not implemented until 1988. Some drinking water fixtures were manufactured with lead until 1996.

DRINKING WATER: Testing is the only way to know whether lead may be present in your drinking water.

Contact a certified laboratory for a test kit and sampling instructions or hire a plumbing professional to assist you.

Contact WOPHD for more information:

<https://www.washozwi.gov/>



Lead exposure can cause serious health problems for your child.

A simple blood test can determine if your child has been affected.

Learn more at [GetTestedForLead.com](https://www.gettestedforlead.com)



WASHINGTON OZAUKEE
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Washington County Parks Have So Much to Offer!



Washington County
Land Resources Division
2024 Tree Program

Native Trees & Shrubs
(Bare Root Stock)
Rain Barrels, Bat Houses,
Compost Bins,
Prairie Seed Mixtures
At Low Cost!

Pay Online!
WASHCOPARKS.COM

Order Deadline
March 1, 2024

Visit the website:
www.washcowisco.gov
Tree & Prairie Seed Program
or Call (262) 335-4810

Since 1993, the Washington County Land Resources Division has encouraged local planting of native woodland and prairie species. Our Native Tree & Prairie Seed Program provides for a variety of native species at a reasonable cost.

Don't miss the "Program Extras" - Bluebird houses, soil test kits, tree tubes, bat houses, and more!

For more information and to purchase, visit:

https://www.washcoparks.com/parks/passes/tree_prairie_sales/tree_prairie_seed_sale/



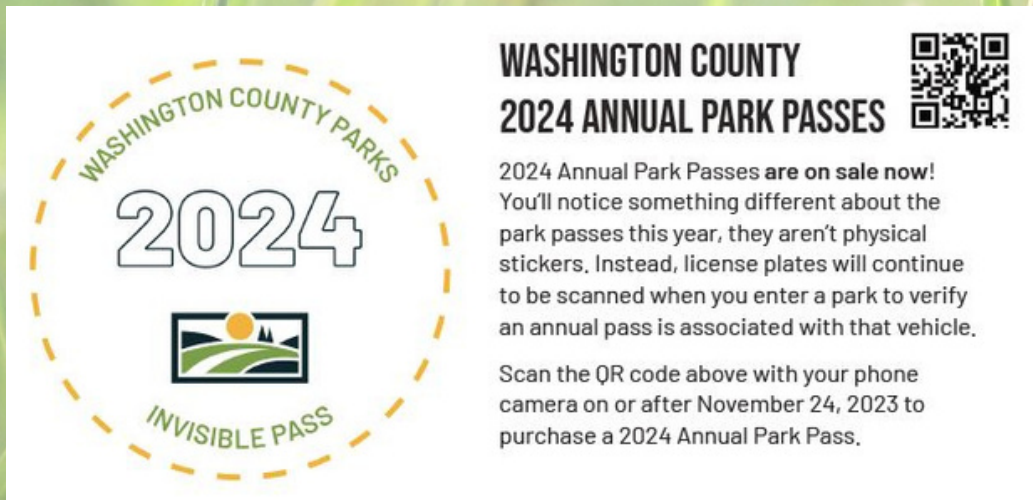
Photo Credit: Amanda Jen Photography

Photo Credit: Liz Seonbuchner Photography

**NOW BOOKING 2025 DATES
AT WASHINGTON COUNTY VENUES!**

Photo Credit: Photos by Sam Ann

Scan the QR code above for more information.



WASHINGTON COUNTY PARKS

2024

INVISIBLE PASS

**WASHINGTON COUNTY
2024 ANNUAL PARK PASSES**

2024 Annual Park Passes **are on sale now!** You'll notice something different about the park passes this year, they aren't physical stickers. Instead, license plates will continue to be scanned when you enter a park to verify an annual pass is associated with that vehicle.

Scan the QR code above with your phone camera on or after November 24, 2023 to purchase a 2024 Annual Park Pass.

We Are Here to Help

Your county government is here to serve you. We provide a number of services and conveniences for the community, including:

Marriage Licenses and Passports

Did you know that you can now obtain a marriage license in Washington County regardless of where you live or where your marriage ceremony will take place? Apply and then make sure to visit the “I Do” wall to celebrate the momentous occasion.

You can also apply for your passport in the Washington County Clerk’s Office. They are able to assist with taking your passport photo and accept your passport application. County Clerk Ashley Reichert and her team are available to assist with marriage licenses and passports. Appointments are available online or by calling 262-335-4301.

Veterans’ Benefits

Those who have served, as well as their eligible family members, deserve top-notch assistance in obtaining State and Federal benefits. Our Veterans Service Officer Kurt Rusch stands ready to advise, advocate and assist through these complicated processes.

Contact Kurt or a member of his team by calling 262-335-4457. Or visit the website to make an appointment.(NOTE: The Veterans Services Office recently moved to the Public Agency Center, 333 E. Washington St., Suite 3100.)

Vital Records and Land Records

At one time or another, we all need vital records. When you could use some help locating Birth, Death, Marriage or Divorce records, Register of Deeds Sharon Martin and her staff stand ready to help.

The office also houses all recorded real estate documents and historic plat books. Through a partnership between Washington County and the Washington County Historical Society, the plat books were scanned and cataloged, and are available to search and view. Visit the Register of Deed’s website or call 262-335-4320.

Visit our county website: washcowisco.gov

Please note: the offices of County Clerk, Register of Deeds, and County Treasurer are open Monday through Thursday, from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and are closed on Fridays.

Real Property

The Washington County Real Property team is responsible for the county’s real property listings and assessments. They supply parcel-based land information to both land information professionals and to the public.

Led by Real Property Lister Brian Braithwaite, the office provides downloadable parcel maps, historic maps, highway registry books, property surveys and Interactive Mapping Applications. It is also the one-stop-shop for common assessment questions, property assessments and Sheriff sales. Stop by the Real Property Office for more information, visit their website, or call 262-335-4370.

Treasurer

County Treasurer Scott Henke is the tax collector for the County and is responsible for receiving all revenues and depositing the money. He oversees the collection of real estate taxes from the 20 municipalities in the County.

His office welcomes inquiries about ownership information, tax information, assessment districts, parcel splits and parcel history. The Treasurer’s Office is available for tax payments, or any inquiry relating to taxation. Call 262-335-4324, or visit their website.

Parks

We are proud of our stellar Washington County parks. It’s hard to imagine that any other county has parks and trails with this kind of beauty, variety, and accessibility.

The Parks Office handles all park passes and reservations. It’s a busy place given the popularity of the parks and trails; the award-winning golf course; and our cabin rentals and event venues!

Please direct your requests and/or questions via online at the Parks & Trails website: www.washcowisco.gov/parks, or call 262-335-4445.

The parks team is happy to help to ensure everyone has a chance to experience our parks.

Washington County Shared Ride Taxi Update



Washington County showed its commitment to the Shared Ride Taxi program for elderly and disabled residents in 2024 with the adoption of a minimal fare increase while preserving the same level of service and hours of operation, as well as applying for grants for new ADA vehicles.

The Shared Ride Taxi Service provides public shared-ride services throughout Washington County, into Ozaukee County, and into the northern portion of Menomonee Falls.

Specialized service is also available for disabled and elderly individuals who require door-to-door assistance. The service was created to primarily help the elderly and disabled populations. With rising costs and ridership trends affected by a pandemic, a modification to our current system was necessary. The previous fare increase for this valuable service was in 2012.

Approximately 75% of the Shared Ride Taxi ridership qualifies as elderly and/or disabled, so Transit management drafted a fare increase that would affect this population the least while maintaining the same hours and level of service.

A Public Information meeting with an open Q&A was held in October, with a presentation provided by Transit. Later that month, a Public Hearing was hosted at the Washington County Government Center, where the Public Works Committee approved the new fares, which went into effect January 1, 2024. In November, the committee approved the state grant application that includes several new ADA vehicles at no cost to the county.

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Listening Sessions with County Executive Josh Schoemann

Friday, January 19, 2024

8AM - Hartford City Hall
109 N. Main St., Hartford

**9:30AM - Village of Jackson
Municipal Complex**
N168 W19851 Main St.
Jackson

11AM - West Bend Public Library
630 Poplar St., West Bend

Saturday, January 20, 2024

9AM - Sawmill Inn
1729 Wolf Rd., Richfield

11AM - Newburg Municipal Building
620 W. Main St.
Newburg

1:30PM - Kewaskum Municipal Building
204 1st St., Kewaskum



Please join County Executive Josh Schoemann to voice your concerns, ask questions, or just listen!

Questions or need for special accommodations? Call 262-306-2200





HERBERT J. TENNIES GOVERNMENT
CENTER 432 EAST WASHINGTON STREET
WEST BEND, WI 53095

Due to campaign finance law, Wis. Stat. 11.1205, there will not be a printed issue of the January 2024 newsletter. This edition will be available on the county website.



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