

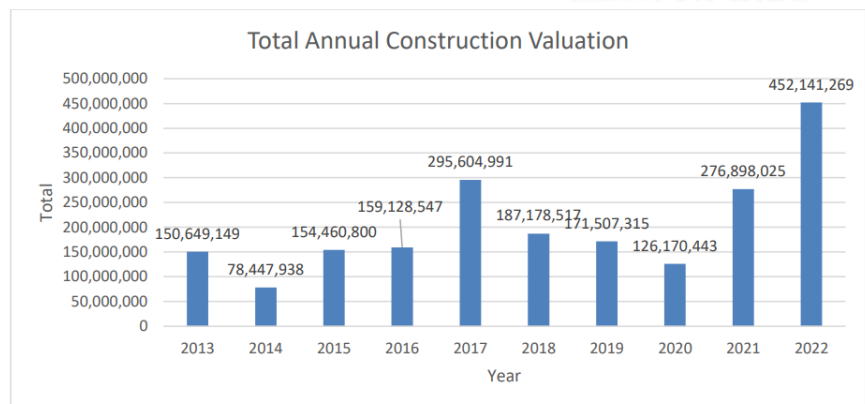
**In This Update:**

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- **Council Calendar**
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**From the Manager**

**Annual Reports:** Our Community Development Department recently published their annual Development Map and Report, along with the annual Housing Affordability Analysis Community Development Department City Planning. The reports show record growth, as described in the recent [Leader Telegram editorial](#). Read the reports here:

- <https://www.eauclairewi.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/41312/638114653172841432>
- <https://www.eauclairewi.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/41230/638114655921182333>



**Marijuana Policy Question and Answer:** Several Council Members and local advocates recently asked about what tools the City has to encourage the State to decriminalize/legalize marijuana, given the recent non-binding referendum for legalization of marijuana use and sales. (see: [JOINT DECISION: E.C. County Voters Back Non-Binding Referendum... \(volumeone.org\)](#)) They asked, in particular, can the City decriminalize/legalize marijuana locally?

A key note to start with is an explanation of decriminalization vs legalization. A quick overview is below....

- **Decriminalization:** Drug and possession are decriminalized, meaning criminal charges are not applied. Decriminalization can replace criminal charges and criminal penalties, such as incarceration or loss of certain rights. Instead, civil penalties, such as fines or referrals to education or treatment programs are imposed. Criminal charges are also included in permanent

criminal records. Criminal records can affect future employment, renting ability, the ability to travel outside the country, and anything else that requires criminal record disclosure or a background check.

- Legalization: Legislation removes all penalties for possession and personal use of drug. Regulations usually accompany legalization. Criminal charges are still present if production, sale, or consumption occur outside of these regulations. Legalization itself does not solve all problems associated with drug use and potential adverse impacts of the drug, but does allow for state or local government to impose ordinances and regulations to prevent/manage them.

Here's some initial feedback from our Police, Health, and Law Departments in response to the question of what Eau Claire can or should do locally.

Federal and State governments can create crimes, and local government can't undo those crimes. Local government can, however, levy or impose fines. Twenty years ago, the City decided to create a fine for marijuana possession in order to divert individuals from a criminal offense to a less formal administrative offense. This was for people who possessed 25 grams of marijuana, which is still quite a bit – it's just less than an ounce and about \$400 worth. If someone were found with possession of up to 25 grams, they were charged a \$400 fine, plus \$150 charge for State Court costs. However, in 2018, the Council reduced this fine was reduced to \$1, so now individuals must just pay the \$150 in State court costs plus the \$1 local fine. (See [Eau Claire Sets \\$1 Fine For Marijuana Possession | Wisconsin Public Radio \(wpr.org\)](#))

The Council can take the ordinance off the book that levies the local fine, but then the Police Department would still have an obligation to enforce the State law. Our Police Officers take an oath to enforce the laws created by State and Federal lawmakers, and they cannot pick and choose which laws to enforce. By making the fine \$1 and taking it out of criminal court, the action taken in 2018 meets some of the goals that have been expressed by community partners to decriminalize. If this ordinance were removed, the consequence of possession of marijuana would revert back to State law and a criminal charge.

Public Health best practice supports decriminalization as an equity issue [A Public Health Approach to Regulating Commercially Legalized Cannabis \(apha.org\)](#). Legalization is a complex equity and health/safety issue that would need to occur in the context of implementing evidence-based public health policy/practices to provide protection to children and youth and prevention of misuse. Those regulations include product placement/labeling, sales age, advertising, prevention education, impaired driving, data collection, etc. The "how" of legalization is critically important to health and safety, just as it has been for alcohol.

Also note that our Police and Health Departments believe that it's important to continue to have tools to reduce the potential negative impacts of marijuana misuse, especially given increased potency and

increased youth use. Currently trending is an increase in derivatives, which are made by processing marijuana into higher potency, such as butane hash oil. These derivatives are resulting in more overdoses, ER visits, and psychotic breaks. For example, an amount of marijuana that would have been equivalent to one bottle of beer may now have the potency of a case of whiskey. There is good information on health issues connected to cannabis concentration at [Cannabis-Concentration-and-Health-Risks-2020.pdf \(uw.edu\)](#) .

For legalization to occur, the industry requires extensive regulation, however, we don't have the capacity to develop those oversight systems locally. The most manageable approach, in our opinion, is to have the State take the lead on legalization and regulation discussions, with our local input helping to guide the policy.

**State of the City:** We are preparing for the State of the City this coming Friday, February 17th. If you haven't already indicated you'd like to attend, please let me know (I have RSVPs from Emily Berge, Jeremy, Joshua, Larry, and Terry.) The presentation will be on topics you're very familiar with, including: 2022 in review, examples of "gnarly" challenges (Fiscal Stability and Housing), and our approach to problem solving. If you attend, keep your eye out for cameo appearances from Larry and Emily Berge! Also, Terry will share his lessons learned, wisdom, and encouragement to all of us, and I look forward to that.



**Grants for No Mow May:** Jonah organizers reported that they have been awarded grants from Pablo and Visit Eau Claire to develop education materials related to No Mow May. Stay tuned for more updates as spring gets closer!

**Housing Solutions Forum:** Recently, Scott Allen, Billie Hufford, and Aaron White attended a Housing Solutions Forum at UW Stout, hosted by Momentum West on Wednesday. Aaron joined a panel that included Barron and Chippewa Counties and discussed creative community-based solutions to address housing. The forum focused on creative housing solutions including tiny homes, land trusts, workforce development, and different approaches with development groups. The concepts shared were focused on affordable solutions at different levels of affordability. Staff is excited to watch some of the developments for successes and opportunities and further discuss how the different concepts might work within Eau Claire. Below are links to some of the projects and concepts presented.

- <https://www.tinytimbersagrihood.com/>
- <https://northcountryfoundation.org/midwest-rocs>
- <https://www.hoffmandevelopmentgroup.net/>
- <https://www.impactseven.org/>

**Recognition of School Resource Officers:** Eau Claire Police School Resource Officers (SROs) were recognized by the Eau Claire Area School District Board and Administrative Staff for their continuous work in keeping schools safe. There are five school Resource Officers that serve two High Schools and three Middle Schools. SROs are also responsible to the 12 elementary schools and a Montessori Charter school, resulting in over 10,000 children within the Eau Claire Area School District served.



**La Follette Forum:** Council Members and others are invited to attend an upcoming [La Follette Forum: All Policy is Implementation](#). Both Health Director Lieske Giese and Chief Matt Rokus will be panelists. The organizer said: “It is very heavy on the nitty gritty of policy implementation so any policy nerds would be very welcome.”

The information and registration (in-person and online) can be found here: <https://go.wisc.edu/LaFolletteForum>. The event is free and open to the public and promises to be a great day focused on discussing policy implementation. While they encourage people to pre-register, walk-ins are welcome.



The conference will include:

- Keynote speeches by Andrew Card and Melissa Harris-Perry;
- Three 90-minute sessions on substance abuse, COVID-19 response, and inclusive implementation; and
- Small-group discussions over lunch covering EMS, public safety, housing security, lead abatement, federal infrastructure funds, and renewable energy;

Each session will include an audience Q&A

**Council Calendar** (With Tentative Work Session Dates)

- ❖ Monday, February 13th: Distribution of 2023 Goals for Council Review
- Monday, February 13th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night

- Continuation of Street Hearings
  - Closed Session on Annexation
- Tuesday, February 14th: Council Meeting
  - Work Session on Vehicle Registration Tax
- ❖ Monday, February 20th: Manager Evaluation review will be sent to Council Members, Directors, Managers, and direct reports
- ❖ Week of February 21st: Informational Session on Vehicle Registration (if requested by Council)
- Monday, February 27th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
  - Continuation of Street Hearings
- Tuesday, February 28th: Council Meeting
  - First Reading of Proposed Vehicle Registration (if requested by Council)
  - Strategic Planning Work Session #2: Review of Community Values and 2023 Goals
- ❖ Wednesday, March 1st: Manager Evaluation responses due back to Human Resources.
- ❖ Tuesday, March 7th: Compilation of responses on Manager Evaluation will be emailed to Council Members for review
- Monday, March 13th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
  - Public Hearing on Proposed Vehicle Registration Tax (if requested by Council)
- Tuesday, March 14th: Council Meeting
  - Council action on Vehicle Registration Tax (if requested by Council)
  - Work Session on Boards, Commissions, and Committees
  - Closed session: Manager Annual Evaluation
- Monday, March 27: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
- Tuesday, March 28th: Council Meeting
  - Introduction of any ordinance changes related to Boards
  - CIP Budget Work Session #1: Financial Overview and Parameters
- Monday, April 10th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
- Tuesday, April 11th: Council Meeting
  - Last meeting for President Weld
  - Council action on any ordinance changes related to Boards
- Tuesday, April 18th: Organizational Meeting
- Tuesday, April 25th: Council Meeting
  - Study session on options for filling any vacancies
- ❖ Monday, May 1st: Council receives Proposed 2024-2028 CIP Budget
- Tuesday, May 9th: Council Meeting



- Council 2024-2028 CIP Budget Work Session #2
- Tuesday, May 23rd: Council Meeting
  - Council 2024-2028 CIP Budget Work Session #3
- Monday, June 12th: Regular Council Public Hearing/Discussion night
  - Public Discussion of 2024-2028 CIP Budget
- Tuesday, June 13th: Council Meeting
  - Council action on 2024-2028 CIP Budget

**Additional Dates:**

- Friday, February 17th: Eggs and Issues – State of the City
- Friday, February 17th: Senator Baldwin visit to Water Treatment Plant
- Wednesday, February 22nd: 29th Annual Chippewa Valley Rally
- Wednesday, March 1st: La Follette Forum 2023
- Friday, March 31st: Eggs and Issues – Legislative Breakfast

**Employee Spotlight:**

Here’s our next spotlight. (Give a shout-out to a City employee using this form: [Spotlight Form](#)).

Today we highlight **Engineer/Paramedic Andy Robinson!**

- Hire Date: 2/2014
- Your Hometown: I'm from Red Wing MN and came here for school at CVTC. I stayed because Eau Claire has most everything I need, without feeling too urban.
- Best Part of Job: My favorite part about the job is putting my problem-solving skills to work on every call. My nickname is ironically "Rowdy Randy," because I'm able to bring a calm head into challenging and stressful situations.
- Favorite Activities Off Duty: Off duty my favorite thing to do is sail with my wife on our small 1977 sailboat that I'm restoring. I also enjoy using the mountain bike trails at Pinehurst, hiking, camping, traveling, and tinkering with my amateur radios. Do you want to talk about lawn care? Let's compare soil tests. I'm also pursuing a Bachelor's in Finance through UW Whitewater.

