



---

## CITY MANAGER UPDATE TO THE CITY COUNCIL

---

### In This Update:

- **From the City Manager:** Upcoming Events, Updates from Recreation, Shared Revenue and Housing Bills Updates, US Bank Purchase, Encampment
- **Council Calendar**
- **Special Employee Spotlight:** Aaron Nicholson

### From the Manager

Upcoming Events: Here are a few events you may want to join in on...

- [Chippewa Valley Multicultural Festival](#), Sunday, August 20th, 1 to 6PM, Phoenix Park: This festival is a community event open to all. There will be food trucks, performers, and many culture related information and activity tables.
- [Annual Blugold Breakfast and Academic Year Opening Meeting](#), Tuesday, Aug. 22nd, 7AM: Start the fall semester with the annual Blugold Breakfast and academic year opening meeting. The event will welcome UWEC's newest faculty and staff, celebrate achievements, hear from shared governance leaders, and honor excellence award winners.
- [Grand Opening of The Eddy](#), Monday, August 28th, from 3 to 4PM, the Eddy (at 1700 Oxford Avenue): Join Cinnaire Solutions and the W Capital Group to celebrate the Grand Opening of The Eddy. Developed in close partnership with the City of Eau Claire, this new mixed-income apartment building will provide quality affordable housing for the community in close proximity to downtown and major employers.
- [Some Chamber Events](#): The Chambers has a number of activities coming up. First, the Chamber is hosting an event called "Making a Difference: Your Voice in Local Government." Scott Rogers said that this will be a primer on local government – municipal councils, county boards, and school boards -- with a look at how the bodies are made up, election dates, and more. Other upcoming events include the [Chamber & CVTC Business Community Breakfast](#) on September 12th, the [Bravo to Business Awards](#) on Sep 21st, and the Legislative Breakfast on [Sep 29th](#)).

**Former City Manager Steve Atkins:** A recent article reported that Steve Atkins, who served as Eau Claire’s City Manager from 1978 to 1983 passed away. I don’t believe anyone currently at the City worked with Steve, but some retirees remember him well and mentioned that they appreciated his management style, which the article describes like this: “Atkins was known for his philosophy of “management by walking around,” according to his obituary. City staff appreciated his ability to listen, consider new ideas and be decisive.”



Steve Atkins, city manager of Iowa City for 21 years, kicks back in his office July 24, 2007, three days before retirement. He said in an interview then that he was looking forward to a change of pace so that he could have more time to focus on two of his passions: reading and painting. (The Gazette)

IOWA CITY — Steve Atkins, who served as city manager of Iowa City for 21 years and said he hoped his legacy would be one of consistency, died Aug. 1 at age 78. He was battling Parkinson’s disease, according to his obituary.

Atkins was city manager from 1986 to 2007, when he retired. Seven mayors served during Atkins’ long tenure.

Former Iowa City Mayor Matt Hayek, who joined the City Council shortly after Atkins left, said Atkins was a “good man and a mentor to me.”

**Updates from Recreation:** Here’s some news from Recreation, as their busy summer season winds down.

**Summer Activities:** Summer Recreation activities are nearing completion with most activities ending the week of July 31st and some ending the week of August 11th. Staff will be working on activity enrollment summaries and attendance reporting documents to submit to ECASD for the agreed upon per registrant reimbursement to Recreation for all ECASD partnership activities. In 2022, Recreation received \$124,920 from ECASD for summer school activity reimbursement. The 2023 reimbursement is anticipated to be similar to 2022. Planning for fall/winter activities is already well underway with the recent publication of the fall PrimeTimes (take a look here! [Activity Guide | Registration Information | City of Eau Claire, Wisconsin \(eauclairewi.gov\)](#)). Fall activity registration beginning on Wednesday September 6th.

**Fairfax Pool:** The Fairfax Pool season has been going well all year and is nearing completion, with the facility planned for seasonal closure after the last day of public swim on August 25th and the Doggie Fest event on August 27th. As of July 30<sup>th</sup>, Fairfax Pool YTD attendance is at 26,207 daily admissions and 14,400 membership admissions, for a YTD total of 41,287. This total attendance number is 6,338 ahead of the same period for 2022. The concession stand is also doing well, with 2023 YTD sales of \$50,371 as of July 30<sup>th</sup>. This is \$16,093 ahead of the same period for 2022. Summer swim lessons ended the week of July 31st, and winter swim lessons will begin in September.

Hobbs Ice Arena: Hobbs is beginning to ramp up for the fall/winter season with seasonal staff recruitment underway. Most staff from last season are planning to return, and there will still be 8 to 12 seasonal operations hires depending on availability of each new hire. Local groups are still skating in the offseason training programs, and they will transition to preseason camps in late August and September. Upcoming dry-floor events at Hobbs in September include a Chippewa Valley Roller Derby one day mixer event and the fall edition of the Here We Grow Again Consignment Sale. Ice will be installed in the O'Brien Rink during the last week of September, and the facility will be at full operation beginning the first week of October through April of 2024.

Athletic Events: Upcoming athletic events include the NAFA men's fastpitch softball world series tournament the weekends of August 10th-13th and August 17th-20th, the beginning of high school football season with scrimmages and practices starting the weekend of August 4th-6th, and the beginning of the fall soccer season for AYSO and EC United at the Soccer Park. The fall soccer season begins on August 28th and runs through the end of October. Scheduling of athletic facilities for the 2024 calendar year will begin in September.

**Shared Revenue and Housing Bills:** We continue to monitor the implementation of the shared revenue and housing-related bills passed in July, and here are some updates.

Shared Revenue: With regard to shared revenue, you may have heard Oshkosh City Manager Mark Rohloff, City of Kaukauna Mayor Anthony Penterman, and me discuss the new shared revenue package as part of a segment on the WPR Morning Show. [City managers welcome more state revenue but envision a better system | Wisconsin Public Radio \(wpr.org\)](#)

Manager Rohloff had a great comment about how it's virtually impossible to explain the shared revenue formula any more. When he teaches about it at his municipal government class at UW Oshkosh, there's no reasonable way to describe how the formula works.

Comments I shared included:

- *No Pattern:* There's a huge variation across communities, with no pattern. Looking at communities that have 20K residents or more, current shared revenue varies between \$10 per capita and \$439 per capita. Some of the very low shared revenue communities are wealthier. One Milwaukee suburb that has per capita shared revenue of only \$13/person, but high resident income and low poverty that might help counter balance it. But a different suburb of Milwaukee that also received very little shared revenue (\$24/per capita) has twice the poverty and about half the median resident income. Eau Claire receives \$88 per capita and has low resident income (\$33,152) and high poverty (15.5%)
- *Percent Change Widens Gaps:* Because the new formula is based on a guaranteed percent increase over the current, the adjustment widens the disparity. For example, one \$439 per capita will see a \$98 increase, while a community with only \$20 per capita will see only a \$14 increase. Shared revenue apportionments will grow with the sales tax revenue. Thus, those with the highest at the start will grow more than those with the lowest, further increasing the

disparity. So, for example, if sales tax revenue grows three percent in one year, the highest per capita community will see a growth of \$14 per capita in the coming year. Meanwhile, the lowest per capita community will see a growth of 80 cents per capita.

- *Need More Tools:* Prior City Managers have made cuts for 30 years, finding efficiencies and turning over every stone, including during Act 10 which changed the municipal landscape. After those years of cuts, budgets are further aggravated by the labor shortage, the pandemic, and inflation rates of six and seven percent in recent years. With a budget of \$154 million, the increase of \$18/per capita is less than one percent for Eau Claire, and about enough to cover inflationary increases for one or two departments for one year. The only tools we have available to generate revenue are ones we have already used in the past year – a Referendum (\$44/household) and a Local Vehicle Registration Fee (\$24/car). Tax law suits, including from one of our major hospital system, further shift the burden of taxes to our struggling households. We need more tools in our toolkit to reduce the singular and heavy burden of property taxes on local homeowners.

Housing Bill Updates: City staff and many partners throughout the state are closely watching the housing-related bills and how the new polices and funding get implemented. Ned Noel recently reached out to the LWM to check in and heard the following...

- *Question:* “Act 16 ‘Truth in Zoning’ has become law along with the other housing support bills. Does the League have any updated information on the implications or recommendations?”
- *Answer from League Staff:* “We do not have anything additional to date, but we are working with some other groups on educational resources, and WHEDA is working on the implementation of the new loan programs. We have been reaching out to them frequently to check in on their progress. We are hopeful we will receive more information from WHEDA in the next couple of weeks.”

**Encampment:** The City’s entire Streets Division spent a morning recently clearing out a large encampment in the Cannery District by the river bank. When an operation like this occurs, people camping are notified in advance that belongings will be removed. The City also works with service providers to offer options to people camping.



**US Bank Purchase:** As of this week, the City officially owns the US Bank lot between City Hall and the Library. Here’s a sneak peek of some the space. We are working to think about how it can be used, in the short run at least, for some consolidated City customer service functions and parking for the Library. We will arrange to take Council Members for a tour after Monday night’s Council meeting.



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

- Monday, August 21st: Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
  - US Bank Tour
- Tuesday, August 22nd: Council Meeting
  - Work Session on Budget
  - Work Session on Forestry, requested by Council Members Werthmann and Gragert
- Tuesday, September 5th: Joint Plan Commission and City Council Meeting for Zoning Overhaul Discussion
- Monday, September 11th: Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, September 12th: Council Meeting
- Monday, September 25th: Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, September 26th: Council Meeting
- ❖ *September 29th – City Council receives 2024 Proposed Operating Budget*
- Monday, October 9th: Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
  - Public Hearing #1 on 2024 Proposed Operating Budget
- Tuesday, October 10th: Council Meeting
  - City Council Operating Budget Work Session #3 (Department Directors)
- Monday, October 23rd: Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
- Tuesday, October 24th: Council Meeting
  - City Council Operating Budget Work Session #4 – Amendment Discussion
- ❖ *November 3rd – City Council Budget Amendments Due*
- Monday, November 6th: Joint Plan Commission and City Council Meeting for Zoning Overhaul Discussion

- Monday, November 13th: Council Public Hearing/Discussion Night
  - Public Hearing #2 on 2024 Proposed Operating Budget
- Tuesday, November 14th: Council Meeting
  - City Council action on 2024 Proposed Operating Budget and levy
- Monday, December 18th: Joint Plan Commission and City Council Meeting for Zoning Overhaul Discussion

**Additional Dates:**

- Friday, August 18th: Eggs and Issues
- Sunday, August 20th: Chippewa Valley Multicultural Festival
- Tuesday, August 22nd: Annual Blugold Breakfast and Academic Year Opening Meeting
- Monday, August 28th: Grand Opening of the Eddy
- Friday and Saturday, September 1st and 2nd: Fire Leadership Conference
- Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>: Chamber and CVTC Breakfast
- Friday, September 15th: Council Retreat
- Friday, September 29th: Eggs and Issues Legislative Breakfast

Here’s our next employee spotlight!

Today we highlight **Aaron Nicholson!** (Submit your highlight suggestion here: <https://forms.gle/f1PUPpFaWStsvH458>)

**What coworkers say about Aaron:**

A co-worker submitted this quote about Aaron: “Aaron is an all-around great guy to work with. He works hard, treats everyone fairly, is extremely polite, and even volunteers in his home town.”

**More about Aaron...**

- Job Position: “I am currently the Streets & Fleet Manager. I have been working for the city for 7 years, 9 months, 25 days with about half in streets and half in utilities.” (Aaron submitted this in February, so it’s now nearly 8.5 years!)
- What people may not know about me: “My wife Whitlee and I are expecting a baby at the end of June and have a nine-year-old son, Bentley. I also have one semester left to complete my



Bachelor's degree." (This summer, the baby arrived!)

- Favorite activities: "My favorite activity (thanks to my wife) is going up to the family cabin in Birchwood. It is so relaxing to go up there with nothing to do and spend time with family. We enjoy going out on the pontoon and fishing whenever we can. My other favorite activity is serving on Township Fire Department. I have been doing this since I was 17 and has been one of the most rewarding activities I have ever been involved in."
- Best part about working for the City: "There is so much to like about working here! Throughout all of the divisions we have very talented, compassionate, and creative work groups. The people I get to work with every day is by far the best part of this job. After that, I enjoy coming to work each day because every day presents its new challenges and opportunities to solve them. Every day is different and sometimes you never know what will pop up. Lastly, I am very passionate about serving. Whether it is here at the city providing results to the citizens, serving my tour in Iraq, or responding to emergency's with Township Fire, I love helping people."
- Life Philosophy: "'If not you, then who?' Sometimes a decision needs to be made in a quick moment. Take the initiative, make the best decision for the current issue or challenge in front of you because, 'if not you, then who?'"