



MARATHON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AGENDA

Date & Time of Meeting: **Thursday, March 12, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.**

Meeting Location: **Courthouse Assembly Room, Courthouse, 500 Forest Street, Wausau WI**

Committee Members: Kurt Gibbs, Chair; Chris Dickinson, Vice-Chair; Matt Bootz, Randy Fifrick, Jean Maszk, Stacey Morache, John Robinson, Mike Ritter, Al Drabek, Jennifer Aarrestad

Marathon County Mission Statement: Marathon County Government serves people by leading, coordinating, and providing county, regional, and statewide initiatives. It directly or in cooperation with other public and private partners provides services and creates opportunities that make Marathon County and the surrounding area a preferred place to live, work, visit, and do business. (Last updated: 12-20-05)

Committee Mission Statement: The Executive Committee of the Marathon County Board exists for the purpose of implementing the County Strategic Plan by coordinating policy formation among the Committees and providing leadership for all County Board policies through supervision of administrative staff.

Persons wishing to attend the meeting by phone may call into the **telephone conference beginning five (5) minutes prior to the start time indicated above using the following number:**

Phone #: 1-408-418-9388 Access Code: 146 235 4571

When you enter the telephone conference, **PLEASE PUT YOUR PHONE ON MUTE!**

The meeting will also be broadcast on Public Access or at <https://tinyurl.com/MarathonCountyBoard>

1. **Call Meeting to Order**
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
3. **Public Comment (15 minutes)** *(Any person who wishes to address the committee during the "Public Comment" portion of meetings, must provide his or her name, address, and the topic he or she wishes to present to the Marathon County Clerk, or chair of the committee, no later than five minutes before the start of the meeting. All comments must be germane to the jurisdiction of the committee)*
4. **Approve Minutes from February 12, 2026 Meeting**
5. **Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance, Resolution, or Policy**
 - A. Discussion and Possible Action by EXEC
 1. Discussion of WCA Legislative Conference – are there areas for further review by this committee?
 - B. Discussion and Possible Action by EXEC to Forward to County Board for Approval
 1. Public Hearing and Adoption of the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan for 2026 Repealing and Recreating Chapter 26 of the Marathon County Code of Ordinances
(Any written public comment received prior to March 11, 2026 at noon will be provided to the committee members prior to the public hearing and will be maintained as part of the official record. However, these written comments will not be read aloud at the meeting.)
6. **Educational Presentations and Committee Discussion**
7. **Next Meeting Date & Time, Location, Announcements and Future Agenda Items**
 - A. Committee members are asked to bring ideas for future discussion
 - B. Next meeting: **Thursday, April 9, 2026 at 3:00 pm**
8. **Adjournment**

A quorum of members of the County Board, or any of Marathon County's governance or non-governance subgroups (e.g. boards, commissions, committees or task forces) may attend the above noticed meeting in order to gather information. No action will be taken by any other subgroup of the County, aside from the body publishing this agenda. This notice is provided in accordance with State ex rel. Badke v. Greendale Village Bd., 173 Wis.2d 553,494 N.W.2d 408 (1993).

*Any person planning to attend this meeting who needs some type of special accommodation in order to participate should call the County Clerk's Office at 261-1500 or e-mail countyclerk@marathoncounty.gov one business day before the meeting.

SIGNED Chair Kurt Gibbs
Presiding Officer or Designee

EMAILED TO: Marathon County Media Group
EMAILED BY: Kim Trueblood
DATE & TIME: _____

NOTICE POSTED AT COURTHOUSE
BY: Kim Trueblood
DATE & TIME: _____



MARATHON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AGENDA

Date & Time of Meeting: **Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.**

Meeting Location: **Courthouse Assembly Room, Courthouse, 500 Forest Street, Wausau WI**

Kurt Gibbs	Present
Chris Dickinson	Present
Jennifer Aarrestad	Present
Matt Bootz	Present (W)
Al Drabek	Present
Randy Fifrick	Excused
Jean Maszk	Present (W)
Mike Ritter	Present
Stacey Morache	Present
John Robinson	Present

Staff Present: Lance Leonhard, Kim Trueblood, Candace Pesch, Brian Desmond, Jeff Pritchard, Laurie Miskimins
Others Present: NCWRPC Staff

[Meeting Recording](#)

1. **Call Meeting to Order**
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
3. **Public Comment**
4. **Approve Minutes from January 22, 2026 Meeting (:34)** – Motion by Drabek, Second by Aarrestad to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried on a voice vote unanimously.
5. **Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance, Resolution, or Policy**
 - A. Discussion and Possible Action by EXEC
 1. Review and prioritize Administrator’s 2026 Work Plan (1:34) – Motion by Robinson, Second by Morache to approve the ranking provided and forward to the full board for consideration.
 2. Resolution Recommending Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan of Marathon County, Wisconsin <https://www.marathoncounty.gov/about-us/comprehensive-plan> (6:20) – Motion by Drabek, Second by Morache to approve the resolution stating the intent to hold a public hearing and forward the plan to the full board for approval. Motion by Robinson, Second by Drabek to amend the resolution to add “and potential amendments” to the second to the last Whereas following “public hearing.” Motion to amend carried on a voice vote unanimously. Original motion as amended carried on a voice vote unanimously. Resolution attached to these minutes.
 - B. Discussion and Possible Action by EXEC to Forward to County Board for Approval
6. **Educational Presentations and Committee Discussion**
7. **Next Meeting Date & Time, Location, Announcements and Future Agenda Items**
 - A. Committee members are asked to bring ideas for future discussion
 - B. Next meeting: **Thursday, March 12, 2026** at 3:00 pm. That meeting will include the public hearing on the Comp Plan.
8. **Adjournment** – Motion by Dickinson, Second by Aarrestad to adjourn. Motion carried on a voice vote unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Kim Trueblood, County Clerk

EXEC Resolution 2026-1

RECOMMENDING ADOPTION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MARATHON COUNTY, WISCONSIN

WHEREAS, section 66.1001(4), Wisconsin Statutes, establishes the required procedure for a local government to adopt a comprehensive plan, and section 66.1001(2) identifies the required elements of a comprehensive plan; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Committee was charged to update the plan and make the recommendation to the County Board to adopt the "comprehensive plan" under section 66.1001(4)(b); and

WHEREAS, the County has prepared the attached the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan, containing all maps and other descriptive materials, to be the comprehensive plan for the County under section 66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Committee of Marathon County hereby recommends adopting the attached Comprehensive Plan as the County's comprehensive plan under section 66.1001(4), Wisconsin Statutes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk certifies a copy of the attached Comprehensive Plan to the County Board for official adoption; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Executive Committee hereby recommends that, following a public hearing, and potential amendments, to the County Board take up adoption of an ordinance to constitute official approval of the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan as the County's comprehensive plan under section 66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes.

Ayes 9 Nays 0 Abstain 0 Absent 1 Voice Vote

Approved and adopted this 12th day of February, 2026

Denied this 12th day of February, 2026

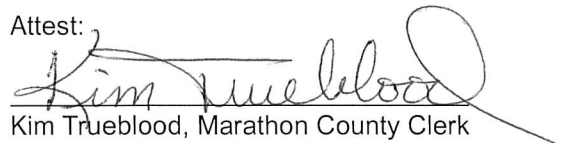
Approved as to Form:

SEAL



Brian Desmond, Corporation Counsel

Attest:



Kim Trueblood, Marathon County Clerk

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2026

- 8:00 a.m. **Registration & Continental Breakfast**
- 9:00 a.m. **Welcome & Pledge of Allegiance**
Lance Pliml, Chair, WCA Board of Directors
- 9:05 a.m. **Opening Remarks**
Mark D. O'Connell, President & CEO, Wisconsin Counties Association
- 9:10 a.m. **Evers' Administration**
Moderator: Mark D. O'Connell, President & CEO, Wisconsin Counties Association
- 9:30 a.m. **Washington Update**
Matthew D. Chase, CEO & Executive Director, National Association of Counties
Mark D. O'Connell, President & CEO, Wisconsin Counties Association
- 10:15 a.m. **Break**
- 10:30 a.m. **Transportation Delivers: A Sustainable Funding Discussion**
Debby Jackson, Executive Director, Transportation Development Association
Robb Kahl, Executive Director, Construction Business Group
Moderator: Collin Driscoll, WCA Government Affairs Associate
- 11:00 a.m. **Legislative Update**
WCA Government Affairs Team
- 12:00 p.m. **Lunch**
- 12:45 p.m. **Forward Analytics**
Kevin Dospoy, Director, Forward Analytics
Jacob Anderson, Research Analyst, Forward Analytics
Moderator: Michael Lamont, Vice President of Programs & Services, Wisconsin Counties Association
- 1:15 p.m. **Leadership Staff Roundtable**
Maggie Gau, Chief of Staff, Governor Tony Evers
Jenny Toftness, Chief of Staff, Speaker Robin Vos
Ashley Czaja, Chief of Staff, Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu
Moderator: Marcie Rainbolt, WCA Government Affairs
- 2:00 p.m. **Break**
- 2:15 p.m. **Keynote Address**
Mark D. O'Connell, President & CEO, Wisconsin Counties Association
- 3:00 p.m. **Legal Update**
Andy Phillips, Attolles Law, s.c.
- 3:45 p.m. **Conclude**
- 5:00-7:00 p.m. **Reception Honoring County Government**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2026

- 7:30 a.m. **Hot Breakfast Buffet**
- 8:30 a.m. **Call to Order & Welcome**
Mark D. O'Connell, President & CEO, Wisconsin Counties Association
- 8:35 a.m. **Legislative Leadership Roundtable**
Devin LeMahieu, Senate Majority Leader
Dianne Hesselbein, Senate Minority Leader
Robin Vos, Assembly Speaker
Greta Neubauer, Assembly Minority Leader
Moderator: Kyle Christianson, Partner at Wimmer & Company
- 9:35 a.m. **Break**
- 9:50 a.m. **Ask The Attorney**
Andy Phillips, Attolles Law, s.c.
- 10:50 a.m. **Keynote Steve Ackerman, Badger Talks**
The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald: The Ship, the Storm, and the Song
We explore the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald from perspectives of the weather, the ship and the song by Gordon Lightfoot.
- 11:50 a.m. **Conclude with Giveaways**
Grab a boxed lunch

Affordability: More than Wages vs. Prices

Kevin Dospoy, Director and Jacob Anderson, Research Analyst

Few economic terms are used more frequently today than “affordability.” Whether in news headlines or policy discussions, the term is routinely cited. Public discourse on the topic usually centers around the money a typical household has to spend and the price of the goods and services purchased by that household.

Over the past 25 years, the amount earned by a typical household has increased substantially. At the same time, a broad set of goods and services have increased in price by a similar amount.

Economists typically measure the growth in household earnings by measuring the change in median household income, which includes salaries, wages, Social Security, and some government transfers. In 2000, the median household income in Wisconsin was \$45,090 per year. By 2024, this figure grew by 83% to \$82,560. Preliminary estimates for 2025 show this figure may have grown by 90% since 2000.

The change in the price of various goods is measured by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, most commonly reported as the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Since 2000, the cost of the standard basket of goods and services measured by the CPI has increased by almost 87%, meaning the products measured were almost 1.9 times more expensive in 2025 compared to 2000. While the CPI reflects average prices and individual experiences may vary, the figure is the most well-rounded and thorough measure of price changes.

Because these two measures have increased by virtually the same amount since 2000, the usual conclusion would be that the purchasing power of the typical household has changed little during this period. If that is the case, why is “affordability” one of the most frequently cited economic concerns in public discourse?

A common interpretation of the data assumes price changes affect all parts of a household budget evenly

and that households can easily adapt their budgets as prices change. In reality, much of a typical household’s budget is tied up in goods and services that are difficult to reduce, substitute, or eliminate, such as housing, transportation, health care, and education.

Affordability, in this context, is not simply a question of wages keeping up with, or even outpacing inflation. Instead, it is the ability of a household to purchase goods and services without compromising the ability to meet other essential needs.

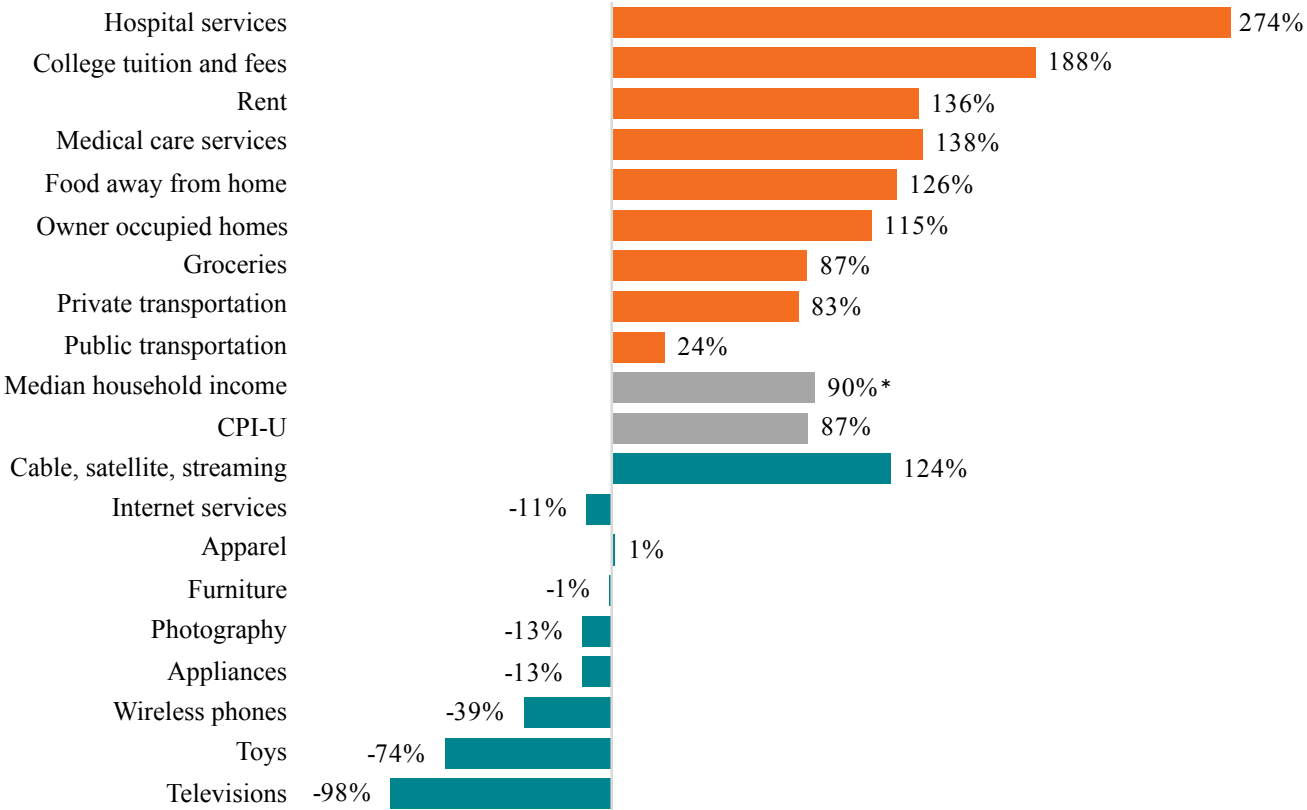
When something is unaffordable, it reflects more than just an increase in price relative to income. In practice, unaffordability forces households to spend down their savings, take on debt, reduce spending in other areas, or forgo goods and services altogether.

If affordability depends on whether households can absorb higher essential costs, then average price growth is an incomplete measure. What matters is not just the overall growth in prices, but which categories are driving those increases and the ability of household spending to adapt to such changes. As such, the remainder of this Spotlight examines the costs of essential goods and services separately from those that may be considered discretionary.

ESSENTIAL COSTS

“Essential” goods and services are products without which an individual could not fully participate in the job market or society in general. Put another way, these goods and services are difficult to substitute and they account for an unavoidable share of household budgets. They are also less predictable and less deferrable. These can include hospital services, medical care, food, housing, college tuition, and transportation. Prices for most essential goods and services outpaced the 87% growth in inflation and increased more than the 90% growth in median household income.

Figure 1: Prices of Essential Goods and Services Outpace Discretionary
 Increase in prices of Essentials (Orange), Discretionary/Nonessential (Teal) CPI-U and Median WI Household Income (Grey), 2000-2025



*2025 data based on preliminary estimates

Since 2000, medical care services have increased by over 138%. This is the BLS category that measures prices paid for health care services, including doctor visits and nursing homes. Hospital services, which includes inpatient and outpatient care, increased by 274% during this time period. These figures do not necessarily reflect out-of-pocket costs, but even costs paid by insurers filter down to consumers.

Grocery prices have increased by 87%, which is around the same rate as inflation over this period. An important note about “food at home” as measured by BLS is that the figure does not reflect the true magnitude of substitution (for example, switching to a store brand product that is cheaper). More significantly, prices for “food away from home,” which measures, in part, restaurants and food delivery services, increased by almost 126% from 2000 through 2025. One contributing factor can be food producers and manufacturers utilizing economies of scale that may keep grocery prices relatively low. Restaurants and food delivery service prices are driven in large part by the increasing cost of labor.

Housing costs have risen as well. Prices for owner occupied homes have increased by 115% while the price of rent has increased an average of nearly 136%. These prices are relatively inflexible, meaning that locked-in mortgages reduce the impact to existing homeowners, but new buyers and renters may bear the brunt of such price increases.

College tuition and fees, a consistent cause of financial strain for younger Wisconsinites, have increased an average of 188% since 2000. This increase represents the cost of tuition and fees but excludes financial aids, scholarships, and room and board.

Transportation expenses can be measured in various ways. Private transportation, which measures the cost of owning a new or used car, motor fuel, and maintenance, has increased by 83% since 2000. Public transportation measures the prices of taxis, subways, buses, air travel, etc. These costs have risen by just 24% during the same time period.

As essential costs rise faster than median household income, they consume more of household budgets and leave less room for additional expenses. Since

these essential costs cannot easily be substituted, reduced, or eliminated, they consume the first part of a household budget. The remainder is what is left for discretionary spending.

A common critique of any discussion surrounding affordability is that households spend too much on discretionary goods. To evaluate this claim, the next section examines the change in the cost of several discretionary goods and services.

DISCRETIONARY SPENDING

Discretionary goods and services are those that can more easily be reduced, substituted, or eliminated without causing members of a household to lose access to basic necessities. Such goods can include televisions, cellphone services, computer software and video games, toys, and household appliances and furnishings.

There are various goods that at one point could have been considered discretionary, but now may be essential. For example, in 2026 mobile phones can certainly be considered essential. Yet, they are included here because more expensive phones can be substituted for much less expensive models. Another example is transportation. A new car can be significantly more expensive than a used car. While in many cases, a vehicle is a necessary and essential good, the wide difference in price between a new and used car allows the good to be discussed alongside other forms of discretionary spending.

Electronic goods decreased in overall prices significantly over the past 25 years. Televisions declined by 98% in price after accounting for quality improvements. The price of wireless phones declined by

39%. Prices for toys and appliances dropped by 74% and 13% respectively. Such a substantial decrease in prices reflects more manufacturers and producers entering the market, increasing competition for better and more refined products, and innovations in the electronics industry. On the other hand, cable, satellite, and live streaming services have increased by 124% during the same time period.

These price changes are illustrated in figure 1. The divergence between essential and discretionary goods is evident. Taken together, these changes shed some light on why households feel that their purchasing power has declined. Discretionary goods are cheaper as households are earning more money than previously. But the savings in discretionary spending are often insufficient to offset increases in essential goods and services such as healthcare and hospital services.

Households can try to adapt their budgets to accommodate the increased cost of essential goods by reducing spending in nonessential categories, but discretionary goods cannot be reduced or eliminated entirely. Affordability is not about whether households can still buy televisions and smartphones. It's more about what is left after essential goods and services consume an ever-increasing portion of household budgets.

Comparing median household income to the CPI on the surface shows little change in affordability over the past 25 years. On the other hand, digging deeper and comparing median household income to the price changes of essential and discretionary goods and services shows that household budgets have changed substantially.



MARATHON COUNTY AGENDA MEMORANDUM

TO: Marathon County Executive Committee
FROM: Laurie Miskimins, Conservation, Planning, & Zoning Director
DATE: March 12, 2026
SUBJECT: Adoption of the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan 2026

Action Requested

Following the March 12, 2026, public hearing and any final amendments to the final draft, we respectively request the Executive Committee forward the full draft to the County Board for adoption, repealing and recreating Chapter 26 of the Marathon County General Code of Ordinances.

Background

Over the past year and a half, county staff, working in coordination with the Northwest Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, have collaborated with standing committees to complete a comprehensive update of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan. This effort included updating all background data and supporting studies, revising issue statements in every chapter, and reviewing and refining the goals, objectives, and action strategies throughout the plan.

Governing Statute/Ordinance/Policy

Sec. 66.1001, Wis. Stats., establishes the required elements and procedures a local government must follow to adopt or amend a comprehensive plan.

Statute states a comprehensive plan shall contain the following elements:

- Background Information, Issues, and Opportunities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Agriculture, Natural, and Cultural Resources
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Implementation

In addition, the statute requires that:

- The comprehensive plan be updated at least once every 10 years.
- At least one public hearing be held prior to adopting, amending, or updating the plan.
- The plan does not take effect until it is adopted by ordinance (or repealed and recreated, as applicable).

Discussion/Analysis

The Marathon County Comprehensive Plan serves as a guiding document for the county. It provides an assessment of who we are as a community and what we value. For Marathon County government, implementation of the Comprehensive Plan directs how the county responds through community and governmental partnerships, budget priorities, policies, and strategic planning, to foster a community that is the preferred place to live, work, visit, and do business.

More specifically, the Comprehensive Plan is used to develop the Strategic Plan and direct Administrator and Department Head workplans. It is also used as the basis for, among other things, updating the zoning ordinance, recommending improvements, and establishing or guiding policy for County action related to plan elements.

As part of this update, the overarching goals remained largely unchanged. Objectives were refined to more clearly reflect the county's role in achieving them. In many cases, this included adding terms such as "support" where the county is one of several partners responsible for advancing an objective. Action strategies, or specific approaches the county may pursue to advance each objective, were reviewed to determine their continued relevance and to identify new strategies where appropriate.

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a living document and may be amended at any time. While state statute requires the county to update the plan at least once every 10 years, amendments may be warranted throughout the life of the plan as new issues emerge or trends shift. However, frequent minor amendments should be avoided, as they can undermine the plan's integrity and long-term vision. It is recommended that the county conduct a formal review at the five-year mark to determine whether more substantial updates are necessary.

Public Notification

Throughout the process, ongoing updates were made to municipalities across Marathon County, including at Towns Association meetings. Updates were also regularly posted on the county's website to keep the public informed of opportunities to come to standing committee meetings to discuss the chapters, goals, and objectives.

In compliance with statutory requirements, notice of the public hearing was published in the newspaper, posted at the County Clerk and Conservation, Planning, and Zoning (CPZ) offices, and distributed by mail and email to all towns, villages, and cities within Marathon County, all non-metallic mine operators, surrounding counties, and other interested parties who requested notification.

Recommendation

Following the March 12, 2026, public hearing and any final amendments to the final draft, we respectively request the Executive Committee forward the full draft to the County Board for adoption, repealing and recreating Chapter 26 of the Marathon County General Code of Ordinances.

Attachments and References

Please review the draft comprehensive plan and a summary document of goals, objectives, and strategies at: <https://www.marathoncounty.gov/about-us/comprehensive-plan>

Any written public comment received prior to March 11, 2026, at noon will be provided to the committee members prior to the public hearing and will be maintained as part of the official record. However, these written comments will not be read aloud at the public hearing.

Financial Review

The Comprehensive Plan informs development of the Marathon County Strategic Plan and subsequent Administrator and departmental workplans. The plan itself does not obligate the county to specific funding commitments. Funding decisions are made through the annual budget process.

2026 Goals, Objectives, & Strategies by Chapter

February 12, 2026

Chapter 3: Health and Human Services Goal: Marathon County promotes the physical, mental, and social health of the community and takes steps to support healthy living for residents at all stages of life.

1. Enable older adults and people with disabilities to live safely and independently in their communities.
 - a. Encourage an increase in supply of accessible housing options.
 - b. Support efforts to increase use of assistive technologies and access to supportive services.
 - c. Develop a plan to address how to support persons of all ages with disabilities and the changing demographics of persons with disabilities.
 - d. Coordinate amongst county departments and partner with community agencies on efforts to connect seniors with programs and services that may reduce social isolation.
2. Support expansion of access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food.
 - a. Support efforts to increase participation in nutrition assistance programs.
 - b. Continue to partner with Marathon County Hunger Coalition.
3. Support every child in reaching adulthood with health, stability, education and growth opportunities.
 - a. Provide resources to reduce childhood trauma.
 - b. Create a trauma-informed care system.
 - c. Develop a framework for building resilient children and providing parent resources.
 - d. Continue to work toward truancy reduction.
 - e. Support policies that support affordable, high-quality childcare.
 - f. Coordinate on programs that promote early childhood development, youth mental health, and out-of-school learning opportunities.
 - g. Strengthen cross-sector partnerships with schools, nonprofits, health providers, and social services to align resources and reduce service gaps for children and families.
4. Reduce the impact of chronic diseases.
 - a. Support implementation of community-based strategies that promote healthy behaviors.
 - b. Where appropriate, support increasing access to preventative care.

- c. Partner with healthcare providers and community organizations to support early identification and management of chronic conditions.
 - d. Support efforts to provide the public with education to make informed choices related to their overall health.
- 5. Reduce injury risks and improve safety across all age groups.
 - a. Develop and implement innovative approaches to injury prevention using data, community input, and cross-sector collaboration.
- 6. Increase access to timely, affordable, and effective mental health treatment close to home.
 - a. Develop a continuum of services within a therapeutic community.
 - b. Attract and retain qualified treatment providers and behavior educators.
 - c. Develop a more comprehensive approach to crisis prevention and serving people in crisis.
 - d. Participate in efforts to assess service gaps, shortages, and barriers to mental health care. OR Conduct a Community Needs Assessment and create a plan to address identified gaps in service.
 - e. Support efforts to remove barriers and increase access where appropriate.
 - f. Collaborate with providers on ideas to improve efficiency and capacity through shared services, workforce support, and technology investments.
- 7. Foster a welcoming community in Marathon County.
 - a. Advance policies, practices, and partnerships that promote understanding for all residents and workers.
 - b. Support programs and partnerships that encourage civic engagement and social connections.

Chapter 4: Community Character Goal: The local history, culture, social pride, and community character are established and enhanced as defining elements which make Marathon County a vibrant and inviting place to be.

- 1. Promote a variety of safe and affordable housing options that meet the needs of all community members.
 - a. Support efforts by local municipalities to locate housing for special needs populations within easy and safe access to medical care, shopping, transportation facilities, and other necessary services.
 - b. Assist local governments in evaluating codes related to temporary, manufactured, and/or mobile housing to better serve migrant workers and the agricultural economy.
- 2. Support efforts to reduce homelessness.

- a. Maintain regional coordination and approaches to addressing housing supply and homelessness.
 - b. Support, coordination, engagement, and implementation of efforts to address homelessness and its underlying causes.
 - c. Develop an action plan to reduce homelessness and increase homeless prevention services.
3. Enhance community livability, including the unique characteristics of all communities, by investing in healthy and safe neighborhoods throughout the county.
- a. Encourage communities within Marathon County to update their comprehensive plans, at least every 10 years.
 - b. Promote programs, via information sharing, that support the rehabilitation of older homes. especially those in need of critical repairs such as roofing, weatherization, or private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS).
 - c. Encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures.
 - d. Facilitate connections between homeowners and technical and financial assistance resources to make necessary improvements and maintain safe, livable housing.
 - e. Complete Safe Streets for All Study and identify priorities for regional coordination and implementation.
 - f. Incorporate accommodations for bicycles, pedestrians, and transit into all County Road projects, in accordance with the *Marathon County Rural Bike Network & Technical Guidance* document.
 - g. Support efforts that increase access to green spaces/open spaces.
 - h. Capitalize on our existing local community assets, support placemaking efforts or events to bring the community together around shared places and values.

Chapter 5: Natural Resources Natural Resources Goal: The natural resources of Marathon County are managed in a balanced way (so they are protected and preserved) for current and future generations’ health, enjoyment, and benefit.

- 1. Promote sound land use decisions that conserve and preserve natural resources in balance with economic development and growth.
 - a. Maintain and update existing land use policies to address growth and natural resource protection.
 - b. Promote infrastructure development that protects natural resources.
 - c. Identify and preserve unique regional areas for natural resource protection and environmental remediation.

- d. Promote programs that support the rehabilitation of older homes, especially those in need of critical repairs such as roofing, weatherization, or private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS).
2. Mitigate and adapt county strategies to respond to impacts from changing weather patterns.
 - a. Support landowners, through existing programs and permitting processes, to identify and implement project improvements that enhance resilience to changing weather patterns.
3. Support strategies that protect and improve air quality.
 - a. Support initiatives that reduce air pollution.
4. Protect and preserve soil health with a focus on prime agricultural areas.
 - a. Continue to monitor compliance with the soil conservation standards of the Farmland Preservation Program.
 - b. Develop strategies to encourage best management practices to reduce agricultural soil runoff to protect water and soil quality.
 - c. Encourage the protection of agriculture by continuing to encourage towns to participate in zoning.
 - d. Continue to seek funding mechanisms to provide technical and financial assistance to agricultural landowners and operators to develop nutrient management plans and implement conservation best management practices.
 - e. Work with UW-Extension to meet with local agricultural operators to identify their individual needs and opportunities to best assist them in retaining and improving their farming operations.
5. Promote balanced use of non-metallic mineral resources and ensure mine reclamation.
 - a. Continue to actively enforce the non-metallic mining ordinance.
 - b. Identify and maintain a map of active mining operations and significant non-metallic mineral resources.
 - c. Consider zoning areas around mines and non-metallic mineral resources to restrict residential development or other land uses that might conflict with mining operations.
6. Protect and sustainably manage public and private county forest resources.
 - a. Implement the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Strategic Direction for forests.
 - b. Encourage private forest owners to adopt best management practices and sustainable forest management practices.

- c. Work with UW-Extension and the WDNR to encourage (and increase) sound forest management practices by owners of private forestlands.
- 7. Manage solid waste and contaminants to reduce negative impacts on the environment and on health.
 - a. Implement best practices for leachate management.
 - b. Provide leadership on waste, recycling, diversion, environmental education, and outreach to begin the transition from waste management to resource management.

Chapter 6: Water Resources Goal: The water resources in Marathon County are of the highest quality, for the safety of residents and the health of aquatic ecosystems and are protected from damaging behaviors like overuse and pollution.

- 1. Support protection and enhancement of the quantity and quality of potable groundwater and potable surface water supplies.
 - a. Work to implement strategies in the updated Land and Water Resource Management Plan and the Groundwater Plan.
 - b. Continue to develop and implement priority watershed management plans and Targeted Management Plans (TRM) to minimize impacts on water quality.
 - c. Continue to conduct tests and analysis of contaminants in private wells.
 - d. Increase awareness of the importance of testing private wells on a regular basis.
- 2. Coordinate with regional partners to promote efforts that protect municipal and private well water recharge areas.
 - a. Facilitate discussions between municipalities and landowners around wellhead recharge areas to identify strategies and solutions for long-term land use and management practices that will protect and enhance the drinking water supply.
 - b. Support public water suppliers in finding funding sources to protect and enhance their drinking water supply.
 - c. Continue to promote best management practices with private well landowners to protect and enhance their water supply.
- 3. Reduce agricultural nonpoint runoff to surface water (soil sediment, organics, and nutrients).
 - a. Develop and maintain policies and programs to promote sustainable soil practices.
 - b. Develop a comprehensive approach to restore riparian wetland and buffer areas to enhance buffering of agricultural runoff.

- c. Continue to enforce animal waste and manure management regulations to guard against water contamination resulting from livestock facilities.
- 4. Manage lake, stream, and reservoir resources to balance concerns of shoreland residents, users, local businesses, and protect natural resources.
 - a. Support updating floodplain maps.
 - b. Continue to support the efforts of the WDNR and lake district organizations to protect and improve the water quality and habitat of lakes.
 - c. Work with UW-Extension to provide information and education regarding Best Management Practices and other measures local municipalities and property owners can implement to improve water quality.

Chapter 7: Public Safety Public Safety Goal: Marathon County is a safe and secure community for all residents and visitors through cost-effective and high-quality public safety services.

- 1. Provide cost-effective and high-quality public safety services.
 - a. Promote coordination amongst public safety departments to identify efficiencies in reducing jail population.
 - b. Continue to evaluate ideas that align or streamline policies and procedures across departments.
 - c. Consider the potential to consolidate emergency service agencies.
- 2. Mitigate the impacts of drug and alcohol abuse in Marathon County through evidence-based practices.
 - a. Develop a comprehensive approach to address the use of drugs and alcohol in children and young adults of Marathon County.
 - b. Identify and advance public policy and programs that would support the mitigation and prevention of drug and alcohol misuse and abuse among residents of Marathon County.
 - c. Identify and track data points to measure the impact of drug and alcohol abuse among residents of Marathon County.
- 3. Promote efforts to reduce recidivism.
 - a. Develop a comprehensive (risk-based assessment) approach to address juvenile offenders to reduce the likelihood of recidivism.
 - b. Develop comprehensive forensic mental health treatment options.
 - c. Develop a comprehensive approach to classification and programming for persons in jail.
 - d. Improve the court system to effectively and efficiently serve more people through the process.

4. Improve road safety.
 - a. Improve the infrastructure in areas with high numbers of traffic crashes, especially those involving vulnerable users, including bicyclists and pedestrians.
 - b. Improve signage and speed limits on county roads that see higher volumes of farm vehicles, horse and buggies, and/or bicycle traffic.
 - c. Review system-wide crash data every four years to identify safety issues and problems that need to be addressed.
 - d. Continue to work with federal, state, and regional transportation organizations to maintain a safe and efficient countywide roadway system.
 - e. Complete a Safe Streets for All analysis within the MPO area.
5. Plan for and identify appropriate measures to be taken related to disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.
 - a. Update the Marathon County All Hazards Mitigation Plan every five years.
 - b. Encourage mitigation and adaptation techniques in County infrastructure projects to reduce disaster losses and break the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repetitive damage.
 - c. Encourage municipalities to either adopt the county mitigation plan or create their own to reduce costs associated with disaster response and recovery by promoting mitigation activities as well as disaster-resilience and sustainability.
 - d. Encourage senior officials to learn more about their role in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Chapter 8: Infrastructure: Transportation Goal: The transportation infrastructure in Marathon County is maintained to the highest standard practicable to allow safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services in and through the County.

1. Support a safe, efficient, fiscally sustainable, multimodal transportation system.
 - a. Incorporate accommodation for bicycles, pedestrians, and transit into all County road projects, in accordance with the Marathon County Rural Bike Network & Technical Guidance document.
 - b. Provide coordination support to municipalities working to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian accommodations on non-County Road facilities.
 - c. Encourage and support transportation services and facilities that meet the needs of the transportation disadvantaged, including the elderly, children, people with disabilities, veterans, and low-income people, and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- d. Continue monitoring community public transit needs and collaborate with partners to ensure the most effective and efficient use of limited transit resources.
 - e. Support pavement preservation and replacement schedules in accordance with Appendix F of the Marathon County Highway System Study (2050 Plan) completed in 2022.
 - f. Provide a modern Highway Shop and Office Facility designed to enhance safety, optimize storage, streamline maintenance operations, and improve efficiency for the Highway Department’s fleet and staff.
2. Improve access management on major roadways.
- a. Continue to work with federal, state, and regional transportation organizations to maintain a safe and efficient countywide roadway system.
 - b. Work with local municipalities to identify safe and efficient truck routes.
 - c. Continue to work with WisDOT and the local communities on right-of-way, access control, and local road crossing issues along State Highway 29.
 - d. Preserve and protect existing and potential rights-of-way for transportation facilities at curves, intersections, or areas where line of sight and safety need improvement.

Chapter 8: Infrastructure: Utilities Goal: The utilities infrastructure in Marathon County is maintained to the highest standard practicable to support the residents and businesses of the County.

1. Ensure compliance with state codes for new and replacement of private on-site waste treatment systems.
- a. Ensure Marathon County General Code of Ordinances Chapter 15 – Private Sewage Systems remains in full compliance with state regulations to protect human health and safety, safeguard environmentally sensitive areas, and preserve water quality.
 - b. Continue to track and monitor septic systems to promptly identify failing systems, prioritizing repairs or replacements for those located in environmentally sensitive zones such as shoreland districts, wetlands, and areas near other residential developments.
 - c. Facilitate connections between property owners and available resources to support the timely replacement of failing septic systems.
 - d. Consistently provide property owners and system installers with current information on regulations and permitting requirements related to on-site wastewater treatment systems.

2. Support efforts to provide adequate energy, telecommunications services, and high-speed internet access throughout the County.
 - a. Support energy-saving efforts by working with local communities, utility companies, and other partners, and by encouraging the use of smart practices and technology that use less energy.
 - b. Actively review and engage in planning large energy projects, when allowed by state law, to make sure they match county goals, limit harm to the environment and land use, and protect the interests of local communities.
 - c. Assist local governments in adopting zoning and land use regulations that are consistent with federal and state telecommunications laws, while balancing community character and the strategic placement of wireless infrastructure.
 - d. Encourage and support the expansion of affordable, high-speed broadband access in underserved and rural areas through coordination with internet providers, state and federal grant programs, and local planning initiatives.
3. Provide cost-efficient solid waste management and leadership related to waste management in the region.
 - a. Operate the landfill in an efficient manner while striving to cover all expenses and build a model for financial sustainability.
 - b. Implement best practices for leachate management.
 - c. Build relationships with community haulers, municipalities, businesses, and organizations to demonstrate the value of the services and programs solid waste provides to the community.
 - d. Provide leadership on waste, recycling, diversion, environmental education, and outreach to begin the transition from waste management to resource management.

Chapter 9: Land Use Goal: Marathon County makes sound land use decisions which balance the needs of agriculture, recreation, economic development, and growth to wisely maximize the land's potential.

1. Promote the preservation of agricultural land.
 - a. Evaluate and map prime agricultural soils throughout the county to guide land use decisions, protect the most productive farmland, and incorporate these areas into the Marathon County zoning code to better protect these areas.
 - b. Promote the use of farmland preservation zoning by working with towns to adopt Farm Preservation or Exclusive Agriculture zoning that limits non-agricultural development and supports eligibility for state farmland preservation tax credits.

2. Promote practices that preserve soil health and land productivity.
 - a. Work with local partners to promote no-till, cover cropping, crop rotation, and other practices that reduce erosion and build soil organic matter.
 - b. Work with towns, agricultural stakeholders, and conservation staff to create a county level ordinance that limits or regulates winter manure spreading in high-risk areas to reduce runoff, protect water quality, and preserve soil structure.
3. Encourage revitalization of former residential properties in rural areas.
 - a. Identify and map vacant, abandoned, or dilapidated residential properties to prioritize redevelopment.
 - b. Evaluate the need for a county-supported program to assist with the removal of abandoned, unsafe, or severely deteriorated structures on residential properties, with the goal of restoring these lots to safe, buildable conditions for future residential use.
4. Provide tools for managing and coordinating growth.
 - a. Host workshops or webinars for town boards, plan commissions, and other local officials to explain comprehensive planning requirements, update processes, and explain how to effectively use their plan to guide decisions.
 - b. Provide technical assistance, data, mapping, and templates to towns seeking to update their comprehensive plans, ensuring consistency with county goals and compliance with state planning laws.
 - c. Continue to routinely update the zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure they support the goals and objectives outlined in the County and local comprehensive plans.
 - d. Continue to work cooperatively with municipalities to eliminate conflicts between county and local zoning and development regulations.

Chapter 10: Education, Workforce Development, and Economic Development:

Education Goal: Every child and adult in Marathon County can get a high-quality education.

1. Support initiatives that expand access to education and employment opportunities, helping individuals gain the skills and resources needed to become self-supporting.
 - a. Support policies that support affordable, high-quality childcare.
 - b. Support policies and programs to provide a variety of means for people to access continuous education to be competitive in tomorrow's economy.
 - c. Support policies and programs to increase independent living and self-reliance skills for all.
2. Redevelop the current University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point-Wausau campus.

- a. Engage local and regional stakeholders to study potential uses of the campus.
- 3. Support the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point at Wausau, Northcentral Technical College (NTC), and other higher education institutions in Marathon County.
 - a. Maintain collaboration efforts with higher education institutions.
- 4. Provide high-quality library service.
 - a. Periodically evaluate demand for library services, including resource needs. Use this evaluation to budget for new resources and facility improvements.
 - b. Continue to explore opportunities to use new technologies to increase access to library resources.

Chapter 10: Education, Workforce Development, and Economic Development:

Workforce Development Goal: Marathon County is a community where residents can find family supporting employment, and businesses have access to a strong, skilled workforce.

- 1. Support efforts to ensure future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce prepared to meet the needs of both existing and emerging industries and technologies.
 - a. Work with the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Bureau (NCWWDB) to create job readiness programs aligned with business sector needs.
- 2. Support a framework to enhance business climate and retain and expand businesses and jobs.
 - a. Consider aligning land use regulations to support business growth, streamline permitting, and encourage redevelopment of underutilized properties.
 - b. Provide access to low-cost capital investment opportunities for businesses.
- 3. Promote and increase communication between economic development, workforce development, and other organizations.
 - a. Continue supporting efforts that improve the quality of life in the County to attract new people to the local labor force.
 - b. Encourage and support partnerships between Northcentral Technical College, the University of Wisconsin system, and others to provide a diverse range of high-quality educational services for local and regional businesses.
 - c. Encourage communication and cooperation between employers, school districts, and higher education institutions to ensure a well-trained, competitive workforce with skills to meet the needs of a changing marketplace.

Chapter 10: Education, Workforce Development, and Economic Development:

Economic Development Goal: Marathon County has a diverse economy, with opportunities where people and businesses can grow and be successful.

1. Encourage development and redevelopment of key employment centers in areas that possess strong market potential, provide good transportation access for workers, and promote the efficient movement of goods.
 - a. Support efforts to engage the public and private sectors to provide leadership for county economic development efforts.
2. Contribute to a collaborative regional approach to economic development.
 - a. Support activities that strengthen Central Wisconsin and the Wausau metro area's position as a regional health care center.
 - b. Explore new economic development incentives that create well-paying jobs and career opportunities across multiple industries.
3. Support an innovative atmosphere to foster an entrepreneurially supportive environment.
 - a. Respond to changing economic conditions and opportunities through periodic review and updating of economic development strategies, policies, investments, and programs.
 - b. Encourage efforts to reinvigorate and rediscover our shared community assets.
 - c. Enhance awareness of MCDEVCO as the primary point of contact for business expansion and start-up information.
4. Support the adoption and growth of technology-enabled businesses and workforce skills to strengthen Marathon County's economic competitiveness, productivity, and ability to attract and retain employers and talent.
 - a. Support employer-led upskilling and reskilling initiatives.
 - b. Coordinate and align emerging technology training across departments and with other agencies to efficiently grow Marathon County employee skills and capabilities.
5. Maintain infrastructure to support economic growth.
 - a. Maintain a safe highway network to provide access to all communities in the County.
 - b. Support technology in the workplace, particularly through access to broadband.
 - c. Work with municipalities to maintain a competitive inventory of serviced industrial land and office sites.
 - d. Provide appropriate access for trucks and employees for all business and industrial park sites.

6. Support the Central Wisconsin Airport.
 - a. Continue to maintain a partnership between Portage and Marathon Counties to support Central Wisconsin as a regional airport.
 - b. Support CWA efforts to expand service to the area.

Chapter 11: Recreation, Tourism, and Cultural Resources Recreation, Tourism, and Cultural Resources Goal: Marathon County takes advantage of its many natural and cultural amenities to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to be active and engaged in a wide array of activities and events.

1. Support and promote access to quality, accessible, affordable recreation opportunities.
 - a. Recommend that new parks and park renovations be constructed with universal design.
 - b. Maintain and improve the Marathon County park and forest system in a cost-effective manner.
 - c. Establish a consistent source of funding for parks, recreation, and forestry.
 - d. Minimizes use conflicts and resource impacts of recreational activities.
 - e. Balance timber production and recreation uses of County parks forestlands.
 - f. Support the efforts of volunteer and nonprofit groups to build and maintain trails, parks, and facilities that are consistent with the goals of this plan.
 - g. Work cooperatively with local municipalities to develop extensions and connections to local trail systems.
 - h. Continue to provide quality, affordable, county recreation programs for the community.
2. Promote tourism throughout the County region, with a strong emphasis on promotion of outdoor recreational tourism, heritage tourism, and the arts.
 - a. Continue to work with area tourism organizations.
 - b. Evaluate potential investments in County park and forestlands that would draw additional visitors to the area.
3. Encourage protection of historically significant buildings and sites from development impacts.
 - a. Support the preservation of historically or culturally significant agricultural operations that contribute to rural character.
 - b. Consider identifying especially scenic roads as candidates for preservation in a state rustic road program.
 - c. Support the County Historical Society as it relates to identifying and protecting countywide significant cultural resources.

- d. Consider the impacts to known cultural resources when reviewing development plans and/or permits involving land disturbance.
- 4. Increase and expand awareness of cultural resources.
 - a. Conduct a county wide cultural resources study, to update the previous one conducted in 1977.
 - b. Work with the County Historical Society, Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT), and local municipalities to establish and install signage identifying historically significant buildings and sites.
- 5. Develop a plan to modify recreation offerings in response to changing weather patterns in winter.
 - a. Evaluate services and facilities for potential updates or renovations that would allow the recreation offerings and amenities to be utilized independent of weather patterns.

Chapter 12: Intergovernmental Cooperation Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal:

Marathon County is a cooperative and collaborative partner with other municipalities and organizations to most effectively and efficiently provide services to residents.

- 1. Promote technology and resource sharing.
 - a. Continue to work cooperatively with the City of Wausau on sharing data services and park and recreation services.
 - b. Continue to provide mapping assistance to local municipalities.
 - c. Leverage cutting-edge technology, advanced systems, and modern infrastructure to address current and future challenges.
- 2. Encourage proactive conflict resolution.
 - a. Work with municipalities to identify and resolve potential conflicts between jurisdictions.
 - b. Work with UW-Extension to provide information and forums to foster intergovernmental communication and encourage local officials to share information related to land use, growth management, and other governmental activities.
 - c. Continue to work with UW-Extension to conduct workshops and/or provide information on conflict resolution techniques.
- 3. Promote cost-effective public services.
 - a. Support efforts by local municipalities to establish cooperative service and joint facility arrangements.
 - b. Continue to provide E-911 Dispatch services for all police, fire, and EMS agencies in Marathon County.

- c. Work with local municipalities and other government agencies to explore opportunities to share costs and/or consolidate public services.
 - d. Continue to cooperate with other counties on solid waste management.
- 4. Provide coordination of regional development and planning activities.
 - a. Create resources and learning opportunities to assist communities in planning, zoning, and subdivision review.
 - b. Assist efforts by municipalities to implement and update their comprehensive plans.
 - c. Encourage local municipalities to share their plans with adjacent communities.
 - d. Continue to cooperate with other units of government on issues involving natural resources, transportation facilities, and other systems that cross jurisdictional boundaries.
- 5. Encourage participation in all levels of government.
 - a. Continue to actively work with the State of Wisconsin and the federal government.
 - b. Continue to actively participate in the Wisconsin Towns Association, League of Municipalities, and other similar organizations.
 - c. Continue to staff and actively participate in the Wausau Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).
 - d. Continue to explore opportunities to enhance awareness of and access to media tools that allow County citizens to become informed about on-going and current County activities.
 - e. Maintain strong relationships with all units of government within the county.

ORDINANCE #O-13-26
ADOPTING MARATHON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2026 – REPEAL AND RECREATE
CHAPTER 26 OF THE MARATHON COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES

WHEREAS, sec. 66.1001(4), Wis. Stats., establishes the required procedure for a local government to adopt or amend a comprehensive plan, and Sec. 66.1001(2) identifies the required elements to be addressed; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan may be used as the basis for, among other things, updating the zoning ordinance, recommending improvements, establishing or guiding policy for County action regarding elements in the plan; and

WHEREAS, The Marathon County Comprehensive Plan was updated in accordance with Sec. 66.1001(2)(i) that states a comprehensive plan shall be updated no less than once every 10 years; and

WHEREAS, the County has prepared the attached the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan 2026, containing all maps and other descriptive materials, to be the comprehensive plan for the County under section 66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes.

WHEREAS, on February 12, 2026, the Executive Committee adopted a resolution recommending County Board adoption of the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan 2026 update; and

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2026, the Executive Committee held a Class 1 public hearing on the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan 2026 update, with notice in compliance with the requirements of sec. 66.1001(4)(d) Wis. Stats.; and

WHEREAS, on March 24, 2026, the County Board voted to approve the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan 2026, as set forth in the Attachment, repealing and recreating Chapter 26 of the General Code of Ordinances with the Marathon County Comprehensive Plan 2026.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the County Board of Supervisors of the County of Marathon that Chapter 26 of the General Code of Ordinances entitled Marathon County Comprehensive Plan is hereby repealed and recreated pursuant to the Attachment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk certifies a copy of the attached Comprehensive Plan to the County Board for official adoption; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said ordinance shall take effect upon passage and publication as required by law.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ayes _____ Nays _____ Abstain _____ Absent _____ [] Voice Vote

Approved and adopted this 24th day of March, 2026

Denied this 24th day of March, 2026

Approved as to Form:

SEAL

Brian Desmond, Corporation Counsel

Approved as to Financial Impact (if necessary):

Attest:

Samantha Fenske, Finance Director

Kim Trueblood, County Clerk

Kurt Gibbs, County Board Chair