City of La Crosse, Wisconsin

City Hall
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

Meeting Agenda - Final

Board of Estimates

Thursday, October 9, 2025 | **4:00 PM** | **Council Chambers**

Discussion / Review / Finalize Recommended Operating Budget

This meeting is open for in-person attendance and will also be available through video conferencing via Zoom and livestream.

Livestream (viewing only): Visit the Legislative Information Center Meetings calendar (https://cityoflacrosse.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx) and click the "In Progress" video link to the right of the scheduled meeting in the meeting list.

Zoom link (participation):
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83473183380?pwd=SE55WWRKL2V2alhncW5VM3RLWGYrdz09
Passcode: CC2025
Call In (audio only): +13126266799, Meeting ID: 83473183380

Call to Order

Roll Call

Members: Mayor Shaundel Washington-Spivey, Council President Tamra Dickinson, Council Members Aron Newberry, Barb Janssen, Chris Kahlow, Erin Goggin, Larry Sleznikow, Rosanne Northwood, Jennifer Trost, Mackenzie Mindel.

Agenda Items:

25-0651 2026 Operating Budget Discussion.

Adjournment

Notice is further given that members of other governmental bodies may be present at the above scheduled meeting to gather information about a subject over which they have decision-making responsibility.

NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY
Requests from persons with a disability who need assistance to participate in this meeting should call the City Clerk's office at (608) 789-7510 or send an email to ADAcityclerk@cityoflacrosse.org, with as much advance notice as possible.

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Text File

File Number: 25-0651

Agenda Date: 10/9/2025 **Version:** 1 **Status:** Agenda Ready

In Control: Board of Estimates **File Type:** Budget

Agenda Number:

City of La Crosse

2026 Preliminary Operating Budget

Board of Estimates Meeting

October 9, 2025; 4:00 pm

- Proposed Budget Changes
- 2026 Projected Revenues
- 2026 Projected Expenses
- New Position Requests
- ERP & Levy Limit

Proposed 2026 Operating Budget Changes

Description of Changes Since 9/4/25 Board of Estimates Meeting

		2026 PROPOSED BUDGET CHANGES	DESCRIPTION
1	**GENERAL GOVERNMENT:**		
2	***FINANCE***	(17,378)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
3		(36,617)	Fund 7.5% of 3 positions with TIF Admin funds instead of levy
4		(9,500)	Reduce other contracted services, training, computer equipment, miscellaneous and overtime
5	***LEGAL***	(6,319)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
6		(22,485)	Remove legal software implementation/configuration
7	***CLERK***	(5,266)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
8		(2,000)	Eliminate calendar printing
9		(8,700)	Reduce LTE budget
10	***COUNCIL***	(500)	Eliminate professional fees
11		(500)	Reduce travel/lodging
12		(200)	Reduce travel/other
13	***MAYOR***	(3,159)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
14	***MUNICIPAL COURT***	(2,107)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
15	***INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY***	(10,532)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
16		(93,800)	Reduce administrative services
17	***HUMAN RESOURCES***	(6,056)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
18		(4,859)	Reduce hours for Human Resources intern position
19	***POLICE***	(112,478)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
20		(481,396)	Hold 4 positions open
21	***FIRE/FPBS***	(107,423)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
22		(429,792)	Hold 4 positions open
23		(5,000)	Reduce maintenance and personal protective equipment
24		(5,000)	Reduce personal protective equipment
25		(15,000)	Reduce LTE budget
26		(2,500)	Reduce specialty team training overtime

Proposed 2026 Operating Budget Changes

Description of Changes Since 9/4/25 Board of Estimates Meeting

		2026 PROPOSED BUDGET CHANGES	DESCRIPTION
27	***PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT***	(21,644)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
28		(12,000)	Change Admin Specialist position from 100% levy funding to 40% levy funding and change Planner to non levy funding
29		(1,022)	Reduce LTE budget
30		(50,000)	Reduce contracted services
31		(4,700)	Reduce travel, training, supplies memberships/subscriptions and clothing/uniform
32		(6,700)	Reduce Assessors travel, training, supplies memberships/subscriptions and clothing/uniform
33		(3,900)	Reduce Inspection overtime, travel, telephone, supplies, and clothing/uniform
34	***ENGINEERING***	(17,536)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
35		(64,228)	Reduce permits/fees, contracted service, travel, utilities, supplies, postage, membership/subscriptions
36	***HIGHWAY/REFUSE***	(46,340)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
		(144,548)	Reduce salt supply and garbage contracted service
37		(139,596)	Reduce street maintenance position & transfer streetsweeper labor to Storm Utility
38	***LIBRARY***	(43,180)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
39		(174,705)	Library Board approved reductions
40	***PARKS/RECREATION/GROUNDS***	(25,277)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
41		(20,000)	Reduce activity guide printing
42		(90,000)	Close northside pool
43		(5,000)	Eliminate forestry intern
44		(10,000)	Reduce trail maintenance
45		(7,000)	Eliminate timing contract and storage
46		(32,000)	Eliminate open Neighborhood Center hours
47		(5,000)	Reduce cleaning at Neighborhood Centers
48			

Proposed 2026 Operating Budget Changes

Description of Changes Since 9/4/25 Board of Estimates Meeting

		2026 PROPOSED BUDGET CHANGES	DESCRIPTION
49	**NON DEPARTMENTAL:**		
50	***RETIREE HEALTH INSURANCE***	(145,336)	Health insurance premium increase changed from 15% to 9% increase
51	***GENERAL EXPENSE***	(45,000)	Reduce beautification
52		(180,000)	Reduce contingency from $300,000 to 120,000
53		(70,000)	Eliminate market wage study & citywide rebrand campaign
54		(3,750)	Reduce supervisor/employee training
55		(25,000)	Eliminate economic development
56		(6,000)	Eliminate miscellaneous
57		(5,000)	Reduce bad debt expense
58		(20,000)	Reduce delinquent personal property tax chargebacks
59		8,300	Add safety shoe reimbursement program
		(2,804,729)	

2026 Proposed Revenue Sources

		2025 ADOPTED BUDGET	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET 9/4/25	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET 9/23/25	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) $	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) %	EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE	
1	**GENERAL GOVERNMENT**							
2	CLERK	$ 522,546	$ 520,603	$ 520,603	$ (1,943)	-0.37%		
3	POLICE	241,161	241,729	241,729	568	0.24%		
4	FIRE	1,192,915	175,115	175,115	$ (1,017,800)	-85.32%	*Inspection Department budget transferred to Planning, Reduced number of permits issued*	
5	PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT	28,600	695,900	695,900	667,300	2333.22%	*Inspection Department budget transferred to Planning, Reduced number of permits issued*	
6	ENGINEERING	420,812	384,986	384,986	$ (35,826)	-8.51%		
7	HIGHWAY & REFUSE/RECYCLING	281,000	461,000	461,000	180,000	64.06%	*Street work done for Utilities*	
8	LIBRARY	216,336	213,468	213,468	$ (2,868)	-1.33%		
9	PARKS, REC, FORESTRY/FACILITIES	536,000	596,000	596,000	60,000	11.19%	*Increased rental fee revenue*	
10	**NON DEPARTMENTAL:**							
11	GENERAL REVENUES	5,040,473	3,580,384	3,459,805	$ (1,580,668)	-31.36%	*Loss of ARPA funds*	
12	TAXES & SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS	2,240,000	2,240,000	2,240,000	-	0.00%		
13	STATE SHARED REVENUE	20,065,949	20,065,949	21,098,664	1,032,715	5.15%		*1,032,715*
14								
15	**OPERATING REVENUES (ROWS 2-13)**	**30,785,792**	**29,175,134**	**30,087,270**	**(698,522)**	**-2.27%**		26,798,469
16								25,765,754
17	**TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES**	**63,618,600**	**68,283,262**	**65,478,533**	**1,859,933**	**2.92%**		
18	***(from Expense worksheet)***							
19	**OPERATING BUDGET TAX LEVY***	**$ 32,832,808**	**$ 39,108,128**	**$ 35,391,263**	**$ 2,558,455**	**7.79%**		
20								
21	**DEBT SERVICE LEVY**	**$ 8,750,000**	**$ 8,600,000**	**$ 8,600,000**	**$ (150,000)**	**-1.71%**		
22								
23	**TOTAL CITY LEVY W/O TIF LEVY**	**41,582,808**	**47,708,128**	**43,991,263**	**2,408,455**	**5.79%**		

Notes:

**Row 19 is the difference between operating expenses and projected operating revenues and is the amount placed on the tax rolls for city operations.*

2026 Operating Proposed Expenses

		2025 ADOPTED BUDGET	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET 9/4/25	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET 10/9/25	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) $	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) %	EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE
1	**GENERAL GOVERNMENT:**						**NOTE: Variance for all departments listed below include salary & benefit increases. Adjusted health insurance cost increase down from 15% to 9%.**
2	CLERK	$ 601,778	$ 721,387	$ 705,421	$ 103,643	17.22%	*Increased LTE wages, postage, and supplies expense due to elections in 2026.*
3	COUNCIL	177,745	177,767	176,567	$ (1,178)	-0.66%	
4	ENGINEERING	1,927,021	2,005,873	1,924,109	$ (2,912)	-0.15%	
5	FINANCE	1,653,151	1,777,346	1,703,117	$ 49,966	3.02%	
6	HUMAN RESOURCES	636,862	664,286	647,109	$ 10,247	1.61%	
7	FIRE/COMMUNITY RISK	14,434,251	14,252,338	13,687,623	$ (746,628)	-5.17%	*Inspection Department budget transferred to Planning and fully budgeted*
8	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	2,649,743	2,913,405	2,809,073	$ 159,330	6.01%	
9	LEGAL	837,166	915,241	903,433	$ 66,267	7.92%	
10	LIBRARY	5,201,095	5,451,589	5,233,704	$ 32,609	0.63%	
11	MAYOR	332,477	350,360	347,201	$ 14,724	4.43%	
12	MUNICIPAL COURT	254,905	270,363	268,256	$ 13,351	5.24%	
13	PARKS/REC/FORESTRY/FACILITIES	5,041,152	5,232,062	5,037,785	$ (3,367)	-0.07%	
14	PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT	1,234,839	2,446,294	2,346,328	$ 1,111,489	90.01%	*Inspection Department budget transferred to Planning*
15	POLICE DEPARTMENT	13,931,995	14,957,206	14,363,332	$ 431,337	3.10%	
16	HIGHWAY & REFUSE/RECYCLING	8,377,481	8,842,708	8,512,224	$ 134,743	1.61%	*Increased Garbage/Recycling Services*
17					$ -		

2026 Operating Proposed Expenses

	2025 ADOPTED BUDGET	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET 9/4/25	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET 10/9/25	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) $	%	EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE
NON DEPARTMENTAL:				$ -		
CONTINGENCY	300,000	300,000	120,000	$ (180,000)	-60.00%	
RETIREE HEALTH INSURANCE	2,423,401	2,785,622	2,640,286	$ 216,885	8.95%	*Health insurance premiums increased 9% with 138 retirees on the City Health Insurance plan*
INSURANCE	845,713	1,179,605	1,179,605	$ 333,892	39.48%	Liability insurance premiums increased
TRANSIT SUBSIDY	745,925	866,340	866,340	$ 120,415	16.14%	Additional subsidy for Transit for wage increases
GENERAL EXPENSE	2,011,900	2,173,470	2,007,020	$ (4,880)	-0.24%	
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	**$ 63,618,600**	**$ 68,283,262**	**$ 65,478,533**	**$ 1,859,933**	**2.92%**	
DEBT SERVICE EXPENSES	**$ 8,750,000**	**$ 8,600,000**	**$ 8,600,000**	**$ (150,000)**	**-1.71%**	*Decreased debt service expenses due to decrease in Enterprise expense*
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$ 72,368,600**	**$ 76,883,262**	**$ 74,078,533**	**$ 1,709,933**	**2.36%**	

NEW POSITION + POSITION RECLASS REQUESTS NOT INCLUDED IN ABOVE NUMBERS:	
General Government	1,295
Special Revenue Fund	-
Enterprise Funds	-
Total new position costs	**$ 1,295**

City of La Crosse, Wisconsin

Proposed Adjustment to Authorized FTE List - 2026 Operating Budget

January 1 Hire

All salary figures are based on the 2025 Wage Scale. 2026 WRS Rate Used. 2025 Health Insurance Rates

General Government

Department	Position Title	Request Type	Grade	Salary Expense	Benefit Expense	Total Expense
*Police	Police Records Manager	Reclassification	12	$ 82,326.40	$ 31,910.48	$ 1,294.66
					Total Police*	$ 1,294.66
Enterprise Funds						
*Wastewater	Equipment Operator I	New Position	6	$ 52,000.00	$ 26,621.56	$ 78,621.56
	Utility Maintenance Mechanic	New Position	7	$ 55,660.80	$ 27,260.00	$ 82,920.80
					Total for Utilities	$ 161,542.36
					Total to Enterprise Funds	$ 161,542.36
					Proposed Total of New Positions	$ 162,837.02

Based on 2025 Wages and 2025 Health Insurance Premiums

Expenditure Restraint Program

1	2025 Adjusted Operating Budget	$	63,504,860	
2	Allowable increase Percent provided DOR (CPI)		2.96%	*Projected*
3	Allowable increase Amount		1,879,744	
4	**2026 Allowable Operating Budget**	**$**	**65,384,604**	
5				
6	**2026 Adjusted Proposed Operating Budget**	**$**	**65,358,533**	
7	**2026 Over/(Under) Expenditure Restraint**	**$**	**(26,071)**	

Levy Limits

1	2024 Payable, 2025 Actual Levy after Adjustments	$	41,582,809	
2	Net New Construction Adjustment (0.681%)		252,684	
3	**2026 Allowable Levy Limit**		**41,835,493**	
4				
5	**2026 Proposed Levy w/o TID Levy**		**43,991,263**	
6				
7	**Amount Proposed Levy Over/(Under) Levy Limit**		**2,155,770**	*

*There is available capacity to increase the levy due to unused Debt Levy Limits

Operating Budget Constraints Reference Sheet

Budget Constraints

There are 2 main constraints placed on municipal budgets from the state to limit growth in budgets. One constraint limits the growth on the revenue side of the budget, and the other constraint limits the expenditure side of the budget.

Levy Limit

The first constraint limits the revenue side of the budget, the levy limit. There are 2 different types of levies within the overall tax levy.

The Debt Levy: funds the principal and interest payments on the municipality's long term debt. There are no growth limits on the debt levy, a municipality can increase their debt levy up to the total amount of the general obligation principal and interest payments due in the budget year.

The Operating Levy: funds the day-to-day costs of the municipality. The state has imposed growth limits on the operating levy that is mainly tied to the municipality's Net New Construction[1]. The levy can increase from the previous year by the Net New Construction Rate. The other common adjustments that can be made to the levy limit are related to TIF's. When a TID closes there is a one-time adjustment to increase the allowable levy.

	Net New Const. %	Net New Const. $ Amt
2026	0.681%	$ 251,575.00
2025	0.936%	$ 342,571.00
2024	0.684%	$ 248,640.00
2023	0.997%	$ 358,840.00
2022	1.189%	$ 412,153.00
2021	1.649%	$ 564,272.00
2020	1.303%	$ 452,624.00

The key exception to the levy limit is the referendum option. Levies can be increased above the allowable limits if the amount is approved by referendum. The governing body must adopt a resolution specifying the proposed amount of increase in the levy beyond the amount that is allowed and stating whether the proposed increase is for the next levy only or if it will apply on an ongoing basis. The resolution must also specify the purpose of the levy increase. The resolution must then be submitted to the electors for a vote.

[1] Net New Construction is the value of all newly constructed or improved buildings and land within a municipality during the previous year, minus any value of any demolished or destroyed building and land.

Expenditure Restraint Incentive Program

The second major constraint limits the growth of budgets on the expenditure side of the budget, the expenditure restraint incentive program. This program is intended to incentivize municipalities to limit their growth in expenses by paying out state funds if the municipality qualifies. The program ties the allowable increase in expenses to two market figures, Consumer Price Index (inflation) and Net New Construction. In simplified terms, the limit is calculated by starting with a municipal's adopted total operating budget expenses. The budget amount is multiplied by the total percentage of Consumer Price Index Rate added to 60% of the net new construction % (capped at 2% total for the net new construction figure)

CPI (Inflation Rate)	2.7%
60% Net New Construction (capped at 2%)	+ (60%*0.681)
Total Adjustment Rate	3.10%
Adjustment Rate	3.10%
20XX Adopted Operating Expense Budget	* $63,598,069.00
Allowable Expenditure Increase	**$1,971,540.14**

A municipality can opt out of the Expenditure Restraint Incentive Program. The disincentive is that the municipality misses out on the State ERIP payment the following year (i.e. 2026 budget exceeded growth limit, there would be no 2027 payment received). The following budget year the municipality can opt back in to the program.

ERIP History:

	CPI (Inflation)	60% of Net New Construction	ERP Growth Factor	Expense Budget increase allowed	ERIP Payment Received
2026	2.60%	0.41%	3.0%	1,907,942.07	1,684,075
2025	3.20%	0.56%	3.8%	2,416,747.45	1,164,284
2024	5.40%		5.4%	3,317,371.42	1,164,284
2023	7.70%	0.60%	8.3%	4,997,541.53	-
2022	3.00%	0.71%	3.7%	2,094,146.83	1,173,297
2021	1.40%	0.99%	2.4%	1,388,016.96	1,175,694
2020	1.90%	0.78%	2.7%	1,520,671.02	1,288,235

Maintenance of Effort

A new budget constraint the state of Wisconsin placed on municipalities with the passing of Act 12 is the Maintenance of Effort in relation to law enforcement, fire protection and emergency medical services. This act placed requirements on public safety spending and tied this to the increase in supplemental state shared revenue passed in Act 12.

For law enforcement services, the City must annually certify that it maintained law enforcement services at a level at least equivalent to the previous year by one of the metrics below:

- Moneys raised by tax levy and expended for employment costs of law enforcement officers.
- The percentage of the total moneys raised by tax levy that is expended for employment costs of law enforcement officers.
- The number of full-time equivalent law enforcement officers employed by or assigned to the municipality, not including officers whose positions are funded by state or federal grants.

For fire protection and emergency medical services, the City must annually certify that it maintained fire protection and emergency medical services at a level at least equivalent to the previous year by two of the metrics below:

- Expenditures, not including capital expenditures, for fire protection and EMS.
- The number of full-time equivalent fire fighters and EMS personnel employed by or assigned to the county or municipality.
- The level of training and maintenance of licensure for fire fighters and EMS personnel providing fire protection and EMS within the county or municipality.
- Response times for fire protection and EMS throughout the county or municipality, adjusted for call location.

Failure to comply with the State's Maintenance of Effort results in a penalty of a 15% reduction in the City's shared revenue payment. For example, the 2026 estimate of shared revenue payment is $13,998,140, a 15% reduction penalty would result in a $2,099,721 penalty.

Budget Highlights and Assumptions

- **Revenues**
  - Increased street work done for City Utilities
  - Qualification of State Expenditure Restraint Program (ERP) aid of approximately $1.684 Million
  - Loss of one-time revenue from ARPA funds

- **Expenses**
  - A 3% Cost of Living Adjustment for Non-Represented Employees effective 1/1/26 is built into the budget
  - A step increase for employees has been included effective 7/1/26
  - A proposed 15% increase in Active & Retiree Health Insurance Rates in "2026 Proposed Budget 9/4/25" column. Health insurance increase was reduced to 9% in "2026 Proposed Budget 9/23/25" column
  - Collective bargaining agreement salary increases for the Police and Fire unions
  - Any requests of adjustments to the Authorized FTE List have not been included in the budget
  - Departments collectively reduced department budgets 2.21% through holding positions open and reductions to services and supplies in "2026 Proposed Budget 9/23/25" column

- **Operating Budget Constraints**
  - A net new construction figure of $251,206 (0.68%), the amount the City is allowed to increase the levy by and is proposing to utilize the full amount
  - 3.17% was used for the allowable percentage increase for expenditures based on the Consumer Price Index. This allows for an increase of expenditures of $2.016 Million to participate in the Expenditure Restraint Program for 2026, an increase of $4.664 Million is being proposed

2026 Proposed Revenue Sources

		2025 ADOPTED BUDGET	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET 9/4/25	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET 9/23/25	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) $	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) %	EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE
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5	PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT	28,600	695,900	695,900	667,300	2333.22%	*Inspection Department budget transferred to Planning, Reduced number of permits issued*
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7	HIGHWAY & REFUSE/RECYCLING	281,000	461,000	461,000	180,000	64.06%	*Street work done for Utilities*
8	LIBRARY	216,336	213,468	213,468	$ (2,868)	-1.33%	
9	PARKS, REC, FORESTRY/FACILITIES	536,000	596,000	596,000	60,000	11.19%	*Increased rental fee revenue*
10	**NON DEPARTMENTAL:**						
11	GENERAL REVENUES	5,040,473	3,580,384	3,580,384	$ (1,460,089)	-28.97%	*Loss of ARPA funds*
12	TAXES & SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS	2,240,000	2,240,000	2,240,000	-	0.00%	
13	STATE SHARED REVENUE	20,065,949	20,065,949	20,978,085	912,136	4.55%	
14							
15	**OPERATING REVENUES (ROWS 2-13)**	**30,785,792**	**29,175,134**	**30,087,270**	**(698,522)**	**-2.27%**	
16							
17	**TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES**	**63,618,600**	**68,283,262**	**66,200,885**	**2,582,285**	**4.06%**	
18	***(from Expense worksheet)***						
19	**OPERATING BUDGET TAX LEVY***	**$ 32,832,808**	**$ 39,108,128**	**$ 36,113,615**	**$ 3,280,807**	**9.99%**	
20							
21	**DEBT SERVICE LEVY**	**$ 8,750,000**	**$ 8,600,000**	**$ 8,600,000**	**$ (150,000)**	**-1.71%**	
22							
23	**TOTAL CITY LEVY W/O TIF LEVY**	**41,582,808**	**47,708,128**	**44,713,615**	**3,130,807**	**7.53%**	

Notes:

**Row 19 is the difference between operating expenses and projected operating revenues and is the amount placed on the tax rolls for city operations.*

2026 Operating Proposed Expenses

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1	**GENERAL GOVERNMENT:**						**NOTE: Variance for all departments listed below include salary & benefit increases. Adjusted health insurance cost increase down from 15% to 9%.**
2	CLERK	$ 601,778	$ 721,387	$ 716,121	$ 114,343	19.00%	*Increased LTE wages, postage, and supplies expense due to elections in 2026.*
3	COUNCIL	177,745	177,767	177,767	$ 22	0.01%	
4	ENGINEERING	1,927,021	2,005,873	1,938,190	$ 11,169	0.58%	
5	FINANCE	1,653,151	1,777,346	1,713,851	$ 60,700	3.67%	
6	HUMAN RESOURCES	636,862	664,286	641,114	$ 4,252	0.67%	
7	FIRE/COMMUNITY RISK	14,434,251	14,252,338	13,790,471	$ (643,780)	-4.46%	*Inspection Department budget transferred to Planning and fully budgeted*
8	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	2,649,743	2,913,405	2,856,604	$ 206,861	7.81%	
9	LEGAL	837,166	915,241	908,922	$ 71,756	8.57%	
10	LIBRARY	5,201,095	5,451,589	5,267,758	$ 66,663	1.28%	
11	MAYOR	332,477	350,360	347,201	$ 14,724	4.43%	
12	MUNICIPAL COURT	254,905	270,363	268,256	$ 13,351	5.24%	
13	PARKS/REC/FORESTRY/FACILITIES	5,041,152	5,232,062	5,055,785	$ 14,633	0.29%	
14	PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT	1,234,839	2,446,294	2,361,617	$ 1,126,778	91.25%	*Inspection Department budget transferred to Planning*
15	POLICE DEPARTMENT	13,931,995	14,957,206	14,441,174	$ 509,179	3.65%	
16	HIGHWAY & REFUSE/RECYCLING	8,377,481	8,842,708	8,576,353	$ 198,872	2.37%	*Increased Garbage/Recycling Services*
17					$ -		

2026 Operating Proposed Expenses

	2025 ADOPTED BUDGET	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET 9/4/25	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET 9/23/25	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) $	%	EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE
NON DEPARTMENTAL:				$ -		
CONTINGENCY	300,000	300,000	300,000	$ -	0.00%	
RETIREE HEALTH INSURANCE	2,423,401	2,785,622	2,640,286	$ 216,885	8.95%	*Health insurance premiums increased 9% with 138 retirees on the City Health Insurance plan*
INSURANCE	845,713	1,179,605	1,179,605	$ 333,892	39.48%	Liability insurance premiums increased
TRANSIT SUBSIDY	745,925	866,340	866,340	$ 120,415	16.14%	Additional subsidy for Transit for wage increases
GENERAL EXPENSE	2,011,900	2,173,470	2,153,470	$ 141,570	7.04%	
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	**$ 63,618,600**	**$ 68,283,262**	**$ 66,200,885**	**$ 2,582,285**	**4.06%**	
DEBT SERVICE EXPENSES	**$ 8,750,000**	**$ 8,600,000**	**$ 8,600,000**	**$ (150,000)**	**-1.71%**	*Decreased debt service expenses due to decrease in Enterprise expense*
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$ 72,368,600**	**$ 76,883,262**	**$ 74,800,885**	**$ 4,514,662**	**6.24%**	

81.55%

83.35%

NEW POSITION + POSITION RECLASS REQUESTS NOT INCLUDED IN ABOVE NUMBERS:	
General Government	1,295
Special Revenue Fund	-
Enterprise Funds	-
Total new position costs	**$ 1,295**

City of La Crosse, Wisconsin
Proposed Adjustment to Authorized FTE List - 2026 Operating Budget

January 1 Hire

All salary figures are based on the 2025 Wage Scale. 2026 WRS Rate Used. 2025 Health Insurance Rates

General Government

Department	Position Title	Request Type	Grade	Salary Expense	Benefit Expense	Total Expense	Notes
*Police	Police Records Manager	Reclassification	12	$ 82,326.40	$ 31,910.48	$ 1,294.66	The difference between Grade 11, Step 6 and Grade 12 Step 4 (with benefits) is $1,291.90
					Total Police*	$ 1,294.66	
					Total to General Fund	$ 1,294.66	
					Proposed Total of New Positions	$ 1,294.66	

Based on 2025 Wages and 2025 Health Insurance Premiums

Expenditure Restraint Program

1	2025 Adjusted Operating Budget	$	63,598,069	
2	Allowable increase Percent provided DOR (CPI)		3.17%	*Projected*
3	Allowable increase Amount		2,016,059	
4	**2026 Allowable Operating Budget**	**$**	**65,614,128**	
5				
6	**2026 Adjusted Proposed Operating Budget**	**$**	**66,200,885**	
7	**2026 Over/(Under) Expenditure Restraint**	**$**	**586,757**	

Levy Limits

1	2024 Payable, 2025 Actual Levy after Adjustments	$	41,582,809	
2	Net New Construction Adjustment (0.68%)		251,206	
3	**2026 Allowable Levy Limit**		**41,834,015**	
4				
5	**2026 Proposed Levy w/o TID Levy**		**44,713,615**	
6				
7	**Amount Proposed Levy Over/(Under) Levy Limit**		**2,879,600**	*

*There is available capacity to increase the levy due to unused Debt Levy Limits

BUDGET REDUCTION SECENARIOS

	2026 DEPT REQ	DEPT % OF TOTAL BDGT	REDUCTION 2.50%	REDUCTION @ 2.58%
FINANCE	1,777,346	2.91%	44,434	45,796
LEGAL	915,241	1.50%	22,881	
CLERK	721,387	1.18%	18,035	
COUNCIL	177,767	0.29%	4,444	
MAYOR	350,360	0.57%	8,759	
MUNICIPAL COURT	270,363	0.44%	6,759	
INFORMATION SERVICES	2,913,405	4.78%	72,835	75,069
HUMAN RESOURCES	664,286	1.09%	16,607	17,116
POLICE	14,957,206	24.53%	373,930	385,398
FIRE/FPBS	14,252,338	23.37%	356,308	367,236
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	2,446,294	4.01%	61,157	63,033
ENGINEERING	2,005,873	3.29%	50,147	51,685
HIGHWAY/REFUSE	8,842,708	14.50%	221,068	227,848
LIBRARY	5,451,589	8.94%	136,290	140,470
LACROSSE CENTER	0	0.00%	0	0
PARKS/RECREATION/GROUNDS	5,232,062	8.58%	130,802	150,805
NON-DEPARTMENTAL **	15,885,037			
GRAND TOTAL	**76,863,262**	**100.00%**	**1,524,456**	**1,524,456**

Total budget less non-departmental	60,978,225		58,543,107
	Reduction necessary to me	1,524,456	
	% reduction necessary to m	2.5000%	2.576672263%

** Note: Column 2.57% shows reductions necessary to offset non participating departments and assumes Parks takes on 1/3 the non participating departments portion. Remaining 2/3 of non participating departments is spread among the other participaing departments.*

*** Reflects $20,000 reduction to non-departmental requested by the Mayor on 9/6/25.*

City of La Crosse

2026 Preliminary Operating Budget

Board of Estimates Meeting

September 4, 2025; 1:00 pm

- Budget Highlights
- 2026 Projected Revenues
- 2026 Projected Expenses
- New Position Requests
- ERP & Levy Limit

Budget Highlights and Assumptions

- **Revenues**
  - Increased street work done for City Utilities
  - Qualification of State Expenditure Restraint Program (ERP) aid of approximately $1.164 Million
  - Loss of one-time revenue from ARPA funds

- **Expenses**
  - A 3% Cost of Living Adjustment for Non-Represented Employees effective 1/1/26 is built into the budget
  - A step increase for employees has been included effective 7/1/26
  - A proposed 15% increase in Active & Retiree Health Insurance Rates
  - Collective bargaining agreement salary increases for the Police and Fire unions
  - Any requests of adjustments to the Authorized FTE List have not been included in the budget

- **Operating Budget Constraints**
  - A net new construction figure of $251,206 (0.68%), the amount the City is allowed to increase the levy by and is proposing to utilize the full amount
  - 3.17% was used for the allowable percentage increase for expenditures based on the Consumer Price Index. This allows for an increase of expenditures of $2.016 Million to participate in the Expenditure Restraint Program for 2026, an increase of $4.664 Million is being proposed

2026 Proposed Revenue Sources

		2025 ADOPTED BUDGET	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) $	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) %	EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE
1	**GENERAL GOVERNMENT**					
2	CLERK	$ 522,546	$ 520,603	$ (1,943)	-0.37%	
3	POLICE	241,161	241,729	568	0.24%	
4	FIRE	1,192,915	175,115	(1,017,800)	-85.32%	*Inspection Department budget transferred to Planning, Reduced number of permits issued*
5	PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT	28,600	695,900	667,300	2333.22%	*Inspection Department budget transferred to Planning, Reduced number of permits issued*
6	ENGINEERING	420,812	384,986	(35,826)	-8.51%	
7	HIGHWAY & REFUSE/RECYCLING	281,000	461,000	180,000	64.06%	*Street Work done for Utilities*
8	LIBRARY	216,336	213,468	(2,868)	-1.33%	
9	PARKS, REC, FORESTRY/FACILITIES	536,000	596,000	60,000	11.19%	*Increased rental fee revenue*
10	**NON DEPARTMENTAL:**					
11	GENERAL REVENUES	5,040,473	3,580,384	(1,460,089)	-28.97%	*Loss of ARPA funds*
12	TAXES & SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS	2,240,000	2,240,000	-	0.00%	
13	STATE SHARED REVENUE	20,065,949	20,065,949	-	0.00%	
14						
15	**OPERATING REVENUES (ROWS 2-13)**	**30,785,792**	**29,175,134**	**(1,610,658)**	**-5.23%**	
16						
17	**TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES**	**63,618,600**	**68,283,262**	**4,664,662**	**7.33%**	
18	***(from Expense worksheet)***					
19	**OPERATING BUDGET TAX LEVY***	**$ 32,832,808**	**$ 39,108,128**	**$ 6,275,320**	**19.11%**	
20						
21	**DEBT SERVICE LEVY**	**$ 8,750,000**	**$ 8,600,000**	**$ (150,000)**	**-1.71%**	
22						
23	**TOTAL CITY LEVY W/O TIF LEVY**	**41,582,808**	**47,708,128**	**6,125,320**	**14.73%**	

Notes:

**Row 19 is the difference between operating expenses and projected operating revenues and is the amount placed on the tax rolls for city operations.*

2026 Operating Proposed Expenses

		2025 ADOPTED BUDGET	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) $	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) %	EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE
						NOTE: Variance for all departments listed below include salary & benefit increases
1	**GENERAL GOVERNMENT:**					
2	CLERK	$ 601,778	$ 721,387	$119,609	19.88%	*Increased LTE wages, postage, and supplies expense due to elections in 2026.*
3	COUNCIL	177,745	177,767	22	0.01%	
4	ENGINEERING	1,927,021	2,005,873	78,852	4.09%	
5	FINANCE	1,653,151	1,777,346	124,195	7.51%	
6	HUMAN RESOURCES	636,862	664,286	27,424	4.31%	
7	FIRE/COMMUNITY RISK	14,434,251	14,252,338	(181,913)	-1.26%	*Inspection Department budget transferred to Planning and fully budgeted*
8	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	2,649,743	2,913,405	263,662	9.95%	
9	LEGAL	837,166	915,241	78,075	9.33%	
10	LIBRARY	5,201,095	5,451,589	250,494	4.82%	
11	MAYOR	332,477	350,360	17,883	5.38%	
12	MUNICIPAL COURT	254,905	270,363	15,458	6.06%	
13	PARKS/REC/FORESTRY/FACILITIES	5,041,152	5,232,062	190,910	3.79%	
14	PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT	1,234,839	2,446,294	1,211,455	98.11%	*Inspection Department budget transferred to Planning*
15	POLICE DEPARTMENT	13,931,995	14,957,206	1,025,211	7.36%	*Fully budgeted*
16	HIGHWAY & REFUSE/RECYCLING	8,377,481	8,842,708	465,227	5.55%	*Increased Garbage/Recycling Services*
17						

2026 Operating Proposed Expenses

		2025 ADOPTED BUDGET	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) $	2026 VS 2025 VARIANCE INC (DEC) %	EXPLANATION OF VARIANCE
18	**NON DEPARTMENTAL:**					
19	CONTINGENCY	300,000	300,000	-	0.00%	
20	RETIREE HEALTH INSURANCE	2,423,401	2,785,622	362,221	14.95%	*Health insurance premiums increased 15% with 138 retirees on the City Health Insurance plan*
21	INSURANCE	845,713	1,179,605	333,892	39.48%	
22	TRANSIT SUBSIDY	745,925	866,340	120,415	16.14%	
23	GENERAL EXPENSE	2,011,900	2,173,470	161,570	8.03%	
24						
25	**TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES**	**$ 63,618,600**	**$ 68,283,262**	**$ 4,664,662**	**7.33%**	
26						
27	**DEBT SERVICE EXPENSES**	**$ 8,750,000**	**$ 8,600,000**	**$ (150,000)**	**-1.71%**	*Decreased debt service expenses due to decrease in Enterprise expense*
28						
29	**TOTAL EXPENSES**	**$ 72,368,600**	**$ 76,883,262**	**$ 4,514,662**	**6.24%**	
30						81.55%
31						83.35%

NEW POSITION + POSITION RECLASS REQUESTS NOT INCLUDED IN ABOVE NUMBERS:	
32 General Government	1,295
33 Special Revenue Fund	-
34 Enterprise Funds	-
35 Total new position costs	**$ 1,295**

City of La Crosse, Wisconsin
Proposed Adjustment to Authorized FTE List - 2026 Operating Budget

January 1 Hire

All salary figures are based on the 2025 Wage Scale. 2026 WRS Rate Used. 2025 Health Insurance Rates

General Government

Department	Position Title	Request Type	Grade	Salary Expense	Benefit Expense	Total Expense	Notes
*Police	Police Records Manager	Reclassification	12	$ 82,326.40	$ 31,910.48	$ 1,294.66	The difference between Grade 11, Step 6 and Grade 12 Step 4 (with benefits) is $1,291.90
					Total Police*	$ 1,294.66	
					Total to General Fund	$ 1,294.66	
					Proposed Total of New Positions	$ 1,294.66	

Based on 2025 Wages and 2025 Health Insurance Premiums

Expenditure Restraint Program

1	2025 Adjusted Operating Budget	$ 63,598,069	
2	Allowable increase Percent provided DOR (CPI)	3.17%	*Projected*
3	Allowable increase Amount	2,016,059	
4	**2026 Allowable Operating Budget**	**$ 65,614,128**	
5			
6	**2026 Adjusted Proposed Operating Budget**	**$ 68,283,262**	
7	**2026 Over/(Under) Expenditure Restraint**	**$ 2,669,134**	

Levy Limits

1	2024 Payable, 2025 Actual Levy after Adjustments	$ 41,582,809	
2	Net New Construction Adjustment (0.68%)	251,206	
3	**2026 Allowable Levy Limit**	**41,834,015**	
4			
5	**2026 Proposed Levy w/o TID Levy**	**47,708,128**	
6			
7	**Amount Proposed Levy Over/(Under) Levy Limit**	**5,874,113**	*

*There is available capacity to increase the levy due to unused Debt Levy Limits

City of La Crosse
2026 Operating Budget Preliminary Estimate
6/24/2025

1	2025 Adopted Operating Expenses:	$	72,368,600	2025 Operating Budget-Pg 4
2	Estimated Expense Adjustments for 2026:			
3	Projected Salary & Benefit Increase for Non-represented Employees		215,400	Annual merit (step) increases & related benefits
4	Across the Board pay adjustments		587,000	3% cost of living adjustment
5	Projected Salary & Benefit Increase for Union Employees		746,100	Fire 4% 1/2/26, Police 4% 1/2/26
6	Health Insurance Premium Increase		1,223,000	Estimated 15% Health Insurance rate Increase for Active & Retiree Health Insurance
7	Waste & Recycling Contract CPI Adjustment		98,000	4% CPI increase on recycling and waste contracts
8	Wisconsin Retirement System Rate Adjustment		-	Currently no estimated increase to WRS rates
9	Fuel		(263,300)	Decrease in Prices. Price down 20%. Quantity contracted down 3%.
10	Electricity		150,000	Estimated 11% increase in rates for 2026
11	Natural Gas		(45,000)	Estimated 12% rate increase for 2026, adjust down based on budgeted vs. actual history
12	Water		25,100	Estimated 30% rate increase subject to PSC approval
13	Sanitary Sewer		1,200	Estimated 3% rate increase
14	Storm Water		110,100	Estimated 142% rate increase
15	Property & Liability Insurance Premium Increases		50,000	2026 Premium estimates provided by WMMIC
16	Additional Debt Service Expenses		250,000	Adjustment for increasing debt service costs
17	Elections		100,000	Increased for 2 additional elections in 2026
18	Subtotal Estimated 2026 Expense Adjustments Increase/(Decrease)		3,247,600	**4.5% Increase in Expenditures from 2025 budgeted (Row 1) to 2026 Estimated (Row 19)**
19	**Total 2026 Estimated General Fund Budget Expenses**		**75,616,200**	*Operating Expenses & Debt Service Expenses*
20				
21	2025 Adopted Operating Revenues:		30,785,792	2025 Operating Budget-Pg 3
22	Estimated Revenue Adjustments for 2026:			
23	Increased Shared Revenue		270,000	Estimated increase of shared revenue
24	One Time Revenues		0	One time revenues used to balance the Operating Budget
25	Fund Balance		(1,528,000)	Expected decrease of fund balance funds used in the Operating Budget from $1.528M 2025 to $0 2026
26	ARPA Funds		0	ARPA funds were required to be fulled obligated by 12/31/24.
27	Subtotal Estimated 2026 Revenue Adjustments Increase/(Decrease)		(1,258,000)	
28	**Total 2026 Estimated General Fund Budget Revenues**		**29,527,792**	
29	**Estimated 2026 General Fund Net Levy**	**$**	**46,088,408**	***Levy for Operating Expenses & Debt Service Payments***
30	**2025 Adopted City General Fund Levy (Excluding TID)**	**$**	**41,582,808**	
31	**Net City Levy Excluding TID Increase/(Decrease) 2026 vs 2025**		**4,505,600**	***Difference Row 29 vs. Row 30***
32	Estimated Allowable Net New Construction (NNC) Increase		368,600	***Placeholder using 2025 NNC amount***
33	**Net City Levy Excluding TID Increase/(Decrease) 2026 vs 2025 including NNC**	**$**	**4,137,000**	**Increase would represent 14% of 2026 Estimated Operating Revenues**

Craig, Sondra

From: Tiana <tiana.traffas@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 23, 2025 7:10 PM
To: ZZ Council Members

Hello,

I am writing to say how much I value the arts in La Crosse. I am a local artist, born and raised in La Crosse and I am able to pursue the visual arts here because of the ever growing art scene. I believe that artists and the community are symbiotic in that we all benefit from a thriving arts scene. We have to nurture it. Please continue to fund the La Crosse Arts Board and all of the cultural programming they are doing. Let's keep La Crosse creative and cool!

Thank you,
Tiana

Craig, Sondra

From: Eli Picha <elipicha.pottery@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 2:02 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Art is Necessary for a Thriving City

Hello,
What is a city without art. Cement building to work in. People rush in and out without a care to stay and browse the city. If there were more places with art work people would not only stay in the city after work but flood in on the weekends to see our city. These workers would bring their families for dinners out in beautiful downtown La Crosse. If only it were beautiful.
From a La Crosse artist,
Eli Picha

Craig, Sondra

From: Cora Brown <coraebrown24@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 1:04 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Stripping Art Funding

Hi Guys,

My name is Cora Brown and I am a 19 year old born and raised in the city of LaCrosse loving the arts so much, it pushed me to pursue a career in becoming an art teacher. When I heard you guys were voting on the budget for the 2026 year and completely gutting the arts funding to the city, I knew I had to reach out.

For the last 19 years of my life, my family and I have enjoyed the public art that LaCrosse has to offer. When I was young, we attended nearly every outreach event down at riverside, including the coveted sand castle competition, and some of my fondest memories are at these events. On top of that, the countless murals, sculptures, and memorials that the city has commissioned local artists to do are so important to the fabric of our community. Not only does it help local struggling artists get some much needed publicity, but it brings the community together. The most recent example of this would be the mural painted on the side of the Board Store, right before you go over the vestibule. When it was first being painted this summer I didn't think much of it; but now, every time I pass by I get to see a little slice of what life is like growing up and living in this beautiful town represented visually. By cutting the funding from this important form of media, you are cutting off a vital way for people to see themselves both represented and understood in the place they reside.
To put it frankly, without art LaCrosse has no charm and I urge you guys to please reconsider your funding approach to help the future generations of LaCrosse grow up loving the arts and sparking passion as I have had the pleasure of doing.

Thank you for your time,
Cora Brown

Craig, Sondra

From: Lindsay Moe <lindsay@theliveinkitchen.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 3:15 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: LAX Arts Board

Hello,

I am writing in support of funding the LAX Arts Board in next year's budget. Funding for the arts board is important for supporting local artists both financially and morally and is currently helping to make La Crosse a more beautiful, arts-friendly place to live.

Lindsay Moe
Blogger at The Live-In Kitchen, Food Photographer, and Videographer at Wild Flour Media
https://theliveinkitchen.com
https://wildflourmedia.com

Craig, Sondra

From: Dylan Overhouse Productions <doverhouse0716@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 8:43 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: La Crosse Arts Board Funding

Hello,

I am writing in support of the La Crosse Arts Board. The city of La Crosse has become a more pleasant and vibrant place with the addition of public arts projects and the community it creates.
Without the arts and culture, a city is just an empty shell.
Please continue to fund and support the La Crosse Arts Board.

Thank you,

Dylan Overhouse

Dylan Overhouse
Photographer/Videographer
Dylan Overhouse Productions
(608) 518-2437
doverhouse0716@gmail.com
www.dylanoverhouseproductions.com

Craig, Sondra

From: Jennifer Sorenson <jen00pac@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 8:15 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: La Crosse arts funding

Please keep funding intact for the arts in the city of La Crosse! In this time of change, political turmoil and other challenges, protecting funding for the arts is more important than ever. We need to support artists and bring more art to the city of La Crosse!

Jen Sorenson
La Crosse resident
Sent from my iPhone

Craig, Sondra

From: Max Sorenson <msorenson.9@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 8:02 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: La Crosse Arts Board Funding in 2026 Operating Budget

Hi,

My name is Max Sorenson and I am an artist based here in La Crosse. I am writing to express my concerns over potential funding cuts to the La Crosse Arts Board and all of the wonderful community-based projects it (when supported by the City) makes possible for each and every person who calls La Crosse home. The arts are essential to our individual and communal well-being, and a cut to arts funding would ensure that unifying and uplifting power of the arts is doubly marred, first, by directly cutting funding sources for local artists, creative, and culture bearers and, then, by the resulting implication that the arts are "a luxury" that we sometimes may not be able to afford.

I believe there should always be room in the City's operating budget for the arts. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Max Sorenson

Craig, Sondra

From: juliet <juliethmaya@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 7:49 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Operating budget ART

Dear council members

A city needs many things and is one of them as art. The local founding of grants and policies that promote the creation, professional improvement and events focuss on culture and the arts is vital for the growth and enrichment of a City and it's communities.

The work of La Crosse Art Board impacts not only the artists and the "art scene" of LAX, but also of the nearby towns, and if important to keep it up working and growing. As an artist I know that the arts move the economy, creates community, foment the use and care of public spaces, and takes people out of the couch to really enjoy the city they live and the communitythey are part of.

Please maintain the Art Board budget. They do a great job and La Crosse is worthy.

Best,

Juliet Maya Buri
www.julietmayarts.com
IG: @JulietMayaArt

Craig, Sondra

From: Anita Tegen <ategen1954@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 6:55 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Arts Board

Hello,

Please include funding for the Arts Board in the 2026 City of Lacrosse budget. It is important for the arts to fund this board. Public art is essential for the continued beautification of the city. Please continue to fund this investment for our community.

Thank you,
Anita Tegen
Colorado Ct
Lacrosse

Craig, Sondra

From: Danny Ness <dannyness13@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 5:30 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: LAX Arts Board Funding

Hello council people of La Crosse,

It has come to my attention that that you are currently reviewing the city's operating budget for 2026 and plan on cutting the LAX Arts Board funding. This is unacceptable, as a resident of La Crosse who actively participates in the art scene, I know how important that funding is.

The La Crosse Arts Board is the backbone of this cities flourishing art scene that is a huge net positive in the city. Just a few weeks ago I attended the RAD opening and there is clearly a demand for arts in our city. This demand brings great economic and social benefit to the city and that cannot be understated.

Please do not cut the Arts Board funding.

Thanks
Danny,

Craig, Sondra

From: Jody Biergiel <jlbiergiel@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 4:37 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Arts board budget

Hello-

Please do not eliminate the art board budget! I moved here 2 years ago from California, and have found the art community incredibly supportive and enriching. It's one of the reasons I love to live here. The art board helps organize our monthly artists meet up, and gives grants to artists who just need a little support. Please keep funding this area.

Art is important for maintaining mental health and communicating to each other. Now is not the time, in our struggling democracy, to reduce support for the arts.

Thank you!
Jody Biergiel Colclough
2802 Quarry pl
La crosse

Craig, Sondra

From: Paige Shafrath <pkshafrath@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 4:28 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: City of LaCrosse Arts Board Funding

Hello -- just writing in to fight for the funding that supports the Arts Board's grants. Supporting local artists and art-focused initiatives in our community is essential to the growth of all people who call LaCrosse home. Art allows us to expand our perceptions, think deeper and build connections with one another. It often reunites us as a body in ways that words cannot. It is key that we keep providing these opportunities for those in our community to grow their talent and for all people to have opportunities that present ways of thinking differently.

Please keep the funding for the Arts board in full.

Thanks,
Paige Manges
City of LaCrosse Arts Board; VP

Craig, Sondra

From: Allie Norgord <alliemnorgord@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 4:04 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: La Crosse Arts Board Funding

Hello Council Members,

I am emailing you to show my and my communities support for the La crosse arts board and how I believe that funding should not only continue, but be increased.

I love the city of La Crosse and the Art within as well as artist community make La Crosse feel like home. There is so much love and I have been able to find community through the fellow artists here in La Crosse and the Arts Board is a foundation of that.

Please, keep funding the Arts Board.

Thank you from a La Crosse Artist,
Allie Norgord
they/them

Craig, Sondra

From: Jenna Smith <jennifer.smith7989@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 24, 2025 3:49 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: arts board funding

The La Crosse Arts Board funding that provides the grants to community members is VERY IMPORTANT to me, and should absolutely be continued next year.

Thank you,
Jenna Kelly
1702 31st st S
La Crosse, WI 54601

Craig, Sondra

From: Nora Berken <noraberken@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 25, 2025 9:23 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Funding for Arts Board

Please keep the funding for the Arts Board!!! It is vital for our community!!!

Nora Berken

Craig, Sondra

From: Christina Mehrkens <cmehrkens10@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 25, 2025 9:55 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: PLEASE Support Lax Art Board!

Hello there,

I am a 25-year old living at 930 Copeland Avenue, La Crosse, WI 54603.

As you are reviewing the 2026 operating budget, please keep in mind that the La Crosse Arts Board is incredibly important to our community. I heard from a friend that you are wanting to strip away everything except some of the grants and fund for a few public projects this upcoming year.

This is NOT a decision I support. Please consider the many budding artists that find themselves staying in our beautiful city and the opportunities that support them through the Lax Arts Board. Although you may not deem them necessary, there are many other important aspects to their funding that it would be cutting off entirely. This would not be forgotten by our artist communities and supporters, such as myself.

That is all, I just really love art supported in its entirety and large cuts made is not something to support.

Thank you for your time,

Christina Mehrkens
cmehrkens10@gmail.com
651-955-4831

Craig, Sondra

From: Eva Black <hello@evablack.studio>
Sent: Thursday, September 25, 2025 10:45 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Support for the Arts Board Funding

Dear Council Members,

Art is the heartbeat of a city, enriching culture, boosting the economy, and bringing life to the community. Please increase funding for the La Crosse Arts Board to keep our city vibrant and thriving.

Sincerely,

Eva Black
evablack.studio

Craig, Sondra

From: Kerrigan Trautsch <kerrigantrautsch@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 25, 2025 3:25 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Arts Board Funding-A Call to Action

To all whom this concerns,

My name is Kerrigan Trautsch, and I wear many hats in the La Crosse community. As a recent graduate of UWL, a nonprofit board member, a city board member, a resident, an employee of two institutions, a volunteer, an artist, and an activist, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of the arts in our city. Growing up in a small rural town, I remember visiting La Crosse and being captivated by its vibrant energy, the buildings, the coffee shops, the murals, and the beginnings of the creative pulse that seemed to breathe life into every corner. Since moving here for college, I've watched the arts scene flourish into a collaborative, inclusive, and inspiring force that touches every part of our community.

La Crosse is known for its natural beauty in the bluffs, but it's the arts that give our city its soul, personhood, and life. From the murals that brighten our streets to the music, festivals, and cultural events that bring us together, the arts foster connection, pride, and a sense of belonging. The recent opening of the Rivoli Arts District (RAD) is a testament to the momentum and potential of our creative community and it is the first space of its kind in the area to offer sustained, intentional growth for the arts. Coming from a rural area, and considering La Crosse is surrounded by rural areas, it's a lighthouse to creative spirits who wish to remain in the area while also having access to affordable, meaningful, and genuine art flourishing for all.

Personally, the arts have been a lifeline. If there had not been such a beautiful, committed art scene in La Crosse, I would have packed up my things and left for a much bigger city a long time ago.The creative community here has given me purpose, connection, and a deep sense of home. I am not alone in this. I've seen how the arts have revitalized unused spaces, supported mental health, and created opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to engage, express, heal, and process in ways *only* the arts can do.

That's why I am deeply alarmed and disappointed by the proposed cuts to the Arts and Culture Board in the 2026 city budget. This board has been instrumental in facilitating countless projects and partnerships from murals, concerts, local events, music festivals, and starting artists that not only enrich our lives but also attract tourism, support local businesses, and retain talent in our city. Additionally, the Arts and Culture board is the only resource in the area for any artist of any level or any medium to apply for funding of various levels. This resource and funding is fueled right back into the community as the art projects take place directly in La Crosse and serve as long-lasting or permanent investments in our people and our economy.

In a time when so many feel disconnected, overwhelmed, or uncertain, the arts offer a space for reflection, celebration, and community resilience. Cutting funding to the Arts and Culture Board would be a short-sighted decision with long-term consequences. It would send a disheartening message to young and aspiring artists, to students, to families, and to everyone who finds joy and meaning in creative expression. As someone deeply involved in volunteer efforts, student engagement, and multiple community boards, I can attest that the Arts and Culture Board is utilized far more than many realize. It's not only artists who benefit from the funding, but small businesses, downtown, non-profits, schools, parks, the library, and a plethora of other businesses that

utilize the funding, the actual art, the business it brings, and much more. Its impact is wide-reaching and essential.

I urge you all to reconsider any proposed cuts and to continue investing in the arts as a vital part of La Crosse's identity, economy, and future. Let us be a city that values creativity, connection, and culture, not one that turns its back on them. We have a long way to go, and I don't expect that it will be easy, but it's essential to the longevity and livelihood of our home and community.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

All the best,
Kerrigan Trautsch
(She/They)

Craig, Sondra

From: Luke Erickson <luke.erickson25@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 25, 2025 4:51 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: In Support of The La Crosse Arts Board Funding
Attachments: AEP6 Takeaways.jpg

Hello Members of the City Council,

My name is Luke Erickson and I am emailing you to express my support for the continued funding of The La Crosse Arts Board. The financial support that has come from the city of La Crosse for its artists is rare to see in cities of this size and I consider it a point of pride for our community.

I have included selections below from the Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6) which is an economic and social impact study of the nation's nonprofit arts and culture industry. Several regions in Wisconsin specifically have been surveyed with the cooperation of the Wisconsin Arts Board.

"Investment in the nonprofit arts and culture industry builds the communities where people want to live and work. It is where entrepreneurs and creative economy businesses are launched and where nighttime economies flourish. When we prioritize diverse cultural expressions and traditions, it nurtures social connections, promotes community pride and identity, and boosts tourism by providing the authentic experiences that draw visitors to the community. If visitors have a positive experience, it may become a place to work—and ultimately one in which to live. Creating livable communities is economic development."

Thank you for your time and attention,
Luke Erickson

TOP AEP6 TAKEAWAYS in the State of Wisconsin

1. Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6) is an economic and social impact study of the nonprofit arts and culture industry. In the State of Wisconsin, the sector generated $933.3 million in economic activity during 2022—$437.1 million in spending by arts and culture organizations and an additional $496.2 million in event-related expenditures by their audiences. That economic activity supported 15,851 jobs, provided $640.8 million in personal income to residents, and generated $190.1 million in tax revenue to local, state, and federal governments.
2. Nonprofit arts and culture organizations are businesses. They employ people locally, purchase supplies and services from nearby businesses, and engage in the marketing and promotion of their cities and regions. Their very act of doing business—creating, presenting, exhibiting, engaging—has a positive economic impact and improves community well-being. In the State of Wisconsin, nonprofit arts and culture organizations spent an estimated $$437.1 million which supported 8,854 jobs and generated $99.5 million in local, state, and federal government revenue.
3. Arts and culture drives commerce to local businesses. When people attend a cultural event, they often make an outing of it—dining at a restaurant, paying for parking or public transportation, enjoying dessert after the show, and returning home to pay for child or pet care. Overall, in the State of Wisconsin, attendees spend $50.59 per person per event, beyond the cost of admission. These dollars represent vital income for local merchants and a value-add with which few industries can compete.
4. Arts and culture strengthens the visitor economy. In the State of Wisconsin, 12.1% of attendees are nonlocal visitors who traveled from outside the State of Wisconsin; they spend an average of $112.38. Additionally, 52.5% of nonlocal attendees reported that the primary purpose of their visit was specifically to attend the performance, event, exhibit, venue, or facility where they were surveyed.
5. A vibrant arts and culture community keeps local residents—and their discretionary dollars—in the community. When attendees were asked what they would have done if the event where they were surveyed had not been available, 47.0% of attendees who live in the State of Wisconsin said they would have "traveled to a different community to attend a similar arts or cultural activity."
6. Arts and culture organizations contribute to community pride in the State of Wisconsin.
    - 89.4% of arts and culture attendees agree that the activity or venue where they were surveyed "is inspiring a sense of pride in this neighborhood or community."
    - 87.3% agree that "I would feel a great sense of loss if this activity or venue were no longer available."
    - 81.8% agree that the venue or facility where they were surveyed is "an important pillar for me within my community."

Craig, Sondra

From: Katelyn <katelynjozini@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 25, 2025 5:00 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: KEEP ARTS AND CULTURE FUNDING

Hello!
I am a resident of Alberta, Canada. I visited the city La Crosse a few years ago and the most memorable and vibrant experiences for me were the art displays, events and local entrepreneurship I've seen! Please don't cut their funding, I really want to come visit this city again. La Crosse has made a home in my heart keep your creatives close and fed!
Thank you,
-Katelyn

Craig, Sondra

From: David Nash <david.loring.nash@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, September 26, 2025 9:30 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Arts Board Funding

Hello,

I'm a health care worker in La Crosse and parent of two young children who love La Crosse.

Please consider continuing to fund the lacrosse art board. Over the 10 years I've lived here, I've never seen more exciting energy and changes growing at all areas in our community and that specifically includes the arts.

Think of any place you've visited and consider what made you say "wow, this is amazing." I would wager it often had to do with some type of vibrant artistic comment of the local culture. Art touches our food, our venues, our asthetic, and more. I think of trips to Europe where I walk through a city and am constantly surprised by parks with an artistic flair, murals, and artists.

There is only so much money, and there are many needs. But a city without a healthy, well funded arts community is like a meal without seasoning. A pretzel without salt or mustard, if you will :)

Please keep funding the arts to the best of your ability.

Sincerely,
David Nash

Craig, Sondra

From: Katie Bakalars <klbakalars@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, September 26, 2025 10:31 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: In Support of the La Crosse Arts Board Funding

Hello Members of City Council,

I am a co-founder/producer of Grey Area Productions which is partnered with The Pumphouse Regional Arts Center. We've predominantly been a grassroots theatre company that strives to allow accessible theatre for all, including those who cannot afford a normally priced ticket to see a live performance. We've always stood on the basis that art should be viewable for everyone.

In 2025, we received a $2500 grant from the Arts Board to open up one additional performance to be accessible without paying the ticketed fee. This performance was sold out. Because of this impact, we were able to have more audiences spread word of mouth about what we were doing and tour our next two shows to Viroqua. Our most recent show, "Every Brilliant Thing," had the highest audience numbers we've seen, with audiences ranging from Minneapolis to Chicago to Appleton.

We're of the mindset that theatre can impact our community greatly and bring in tourism. It works like a domino, and that extra push towards helping us secure rights and help support our art has helped us continue to grow in our efforts.

The work that the Arts Board is doing matters to our community. We are just a small piece of this puzzle, but I do believe that once these efforts start to disappear, they do not come back. Please be cautious while reviewing the operating budget for 2026. We owe it to our community and the artistic environment that we've created here in the Coulee Region for people who want to stay here past their college years.

Thank you for your time.

-Katie

Craig, Sondra

From: Caitlin Caliri <caitcaliri@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, September 26, 2025 10:40 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Funding for Arts Board

Hello Council Members,

My name is Caitlin and I am highly involved in art and theatre in La Crosse. I am urging you to reconsider the budget proposal in terms of the LAX Arts Board funding. With all the turbulence and stress in the world right now, people need somewhere to turn to express themselves and attune to the stories of others in order to build community and keep any semblance of mental health afloat. I know that personally, my participation in and engaging with the arts in the La Crosse Community has provided a sense of purpose in my life and allowed me to form so many relationships with fellow La Crosse citizens that I never would have experienced otherwise. Now more than ever, we need to build our communities to support each other mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. If the funding for the Arts Board is removed, that would result in significantly deleterious outcomes for our community as a whole. I urge you to reconsider these budget cuts as you review this proposal.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Caitlin Caliri

Craig, Sondra

From: Bao Xiong <kabaoxiong@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, September 27, 2025 4:21 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: FOR LAX ARTS BOARD

Dear Mayor Shaundel and City Council Members,

If you live in La Crosse, you've felt how deeply art shapes our community. Our city thrives on local music, performances, theatre and visual art — a spirit made possible by the limited yet truly special opportunities that exist for local artists, like those created by the LAX Arts Board.

The arts give us expression, healing, and a place to escape — a third space where we can dream and imagine. More importantly, art connects us on a deeply human level that transcends words, language, and culture. I urge you to stand with local artists and champion the organizations that make their work possible, like the LAX Arts Board and its vital funding programs.

All The Best,
Bao Xiong
kabaoxiong@gmail.com
forindependenthmongfarmers@gmail.com
mothhouse.org

Craig, Sondra

From: Julie Deyo <jldeyo@icloud.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 28, 2025 7:17 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Funding for the arts

Hello,
My name is Julie and I would like to ask the board to continue to fund the arts program.
Many people go to the performances in La Crosse which helps your local businesses to stay in business. Restaurants, gift shops, grocery stores, all benefit from art performances.
I live in Onalaska, however, felt it is important for the board to know that I travel to La Crosse for the performances and usually will go early to have dinner at one of the restaurants before the event. Potential impact of less performances means less business revenue. How many businesses will be impacted. How much of an impact will this have the tax base for the city. Could the tax base be reduced when businesses struggle and may ultimately close due to less foot traffic.
I believe funding the arts will lead to an all around great return on the investment.

Thank you for your consideration
Julie Deyo
Sent from my iPhone

Craig, Sondra

From: Kelly <kellysueleibold@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 28, 2025 8:55 AM
To: Washington-Spivey, Shaundel; ZZ Council Members
Subject: Park Closures and Arts Board Funding

Good afternoon Mayor Washington-Spivey and Council members! Two thoughts on my mind I wanted to email about, thanks in advance for your consideration and response.

One of my fellow County Board Supervisors said it well: "I believe a strong arts culture is vital to the success of our community now and especially in the future." While reviewing the 2026 Operating Budget I urge you to consider leaving arts board funding intact. I would hate to see grants for public art projects and other programs go away, especially in a community as vibrant as ours.

Tangentially related, I personally vended some of my artwork at the Farmers Market in Burns Park half a dozen times earlier this summer. I really enjoyed the atmosphere, I never felt threatened by others in the area. Following the closures I've now heard feedback that certain areas downtown such as behind the Children's Museum and in the Heritage Center have seen an uptick in (sometimes unwelcome) foot traffic, unsheltered folks swinging through because they have no other place to gather.

I believe Sadee on behalf of the Farmers Market Association was also prepared to offer up use of Habitat for Humanity's Neighbors Day tools for use with cleanup. Was this ever pursued? Do you have an estimated timeline?

I deeply appreciate your service and commitment to civic engagement. Have a lovely rest of your weekend!! I look forward to your reply.

Kelly Leibold
507-272-5408

Craig, Sondra

From: Annie Goldman <anngpottery@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 28, 2025 1:22 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Funding being cut for Arts board

I can't believe you folks have cut funding for the lacrosse Arts board! Art is what brings this community together. The whole downtown is filled with arts and artworks that have been funded through the Arts Council. What is wrong with you people? Do you know that one of the first human settlements was found in Greece tens of thousands of years ago and one of the first things they did once they got their food and shelter together was art. Art is inherent to human life and human welfare and human purpose. As a text paying member of lacrosse City in La Crosse County I implore you to reinstate the funding for the lacrosse Arts Council forth-with.
Annie Goldman artist and member of the lacrosse art community for over 35 years.

Craig, Sondra

From: Colson1961 <colson1961@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, September 27, 2025 10:10 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: 2026 La Crosse Arts Board Funding

Council members, please do not strip all the funds from next year's budget for the LAX arts board. The aspects of arts in our community helps make La Crosse a beautiful place in the Coulee Region; popular for tourism, which adds to our economy too. All the different aspects of La Crosse, including our arts aspects, make visitors shocked of everything we have; they feel we are diverse in all aspects like a large city but have a welcoming small town flair. I've been told this many times over the years. Please reconsider the budget and provide some funds for the City Arts Board. Thank you!

Cheryl Olson
colson1961@gmail.com

Craig, Sondra

From: Avery Van Gaard <averyvangaard@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 29, 2025 11:13 AM
To: ZZ Council Members; washingtonveys@cityoflacrosse.org
Subject: Operating Budget and Parks

Dear Mayor Washington-Spivey and City Council Members,

I am writing with deep concern about two recent decisions: the proposed elimination of Arts Board funding and the indefinite closure of two of our city's parks.

I am a life-long resident of La Crosse. Despite already holding degrees in Physics and Latin American Studies, I recently returned to higher education to pursue a degree from Western Technical College in Graphic Design—my passion and my future. Over the past year, my partner and I have taken a major step by incorporating our studio, investing in equipment, and committing to a downtown rental space. We made this investment because La Crosse has shown itself to be a place where the arts can thrive: the Rivoli Arts District, Arts Board grants, and the culture fostered by places like the Pump House, River City Arts, Root Note, and Grounded. These resources don't just enrich the daily lives of community members—they make it possible for artists like me to build a career here and for small businesses to root themselves in this community.

The Arts Board has been instrumental in fostering the growth of our creative community, funding public works that strengthen our cultural identity, drawing in visitors, and supporting local commerce. Cutting this funding now would stall the momentum we have built and weaken one of our strongest tools for economic and community vitality.

Similarly, while I understand the safety and management concerns that informed the decision to close the parks, leaving these spaces fenced and inactive deprives families and neighborhoods of valuable public amenities. Moreover, closing parks without fully engaging with service providers and organizations dedicated to supporting the unhoused population shifts challenges into other areas rather than addressing them, as has been the case throughout my 30 years in La Crosse. Please, take a different path. Collaborative approaches—grounded in partnerships with local nonprofits, housing programs, and public health services—are more likely to yield sustainable outcomes that balance public safety, access, and compassion.

Both the arts funding and the parks issue speak to a larger question of how we invest in our city's long-term well-being, our community. Decisions that restrict access to cultural and communal resources risk eroding the very strengths that have made our city vibrant and appealing to residents and visitors alike. Do we move toward solutions that uplift, connect, and sustain us, or do we retreat into short-term fixes that leave lasting gaps?

I urge you to reconsider both the proposed Arts Board funding cut and the indefinite park closures. Please work with existing community partners and seek creative, constructive solutions that strengthen our city instead of diminishing it.

Thank you for your service and your attention to these matters.

Avery Van Gaard

Craig, Sondra

From: Leigh Eck <leigheck@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 29, 2025 4:00 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Please Support the Arts

Hello,

Thank you for your service to our wonderful community! I am writing to ask you to please maintain funding for the Arts Board in 2026 Operating Budget for the city. There are so many exciting things happening across La Crosse in terms of both creative and visual arts and how arts based experiences are being bridged to K-12 spaces. Please continue to fund the Arts Board so that artists and arts organizations can continue to get projects off the ground and accessible to the broader La Crosse community.

The visual and creative arts can be a real cornerstone of La Crosse - something that will increase tourism, enrich the lives of both residents and visitors, and benefit the breadth of tourism based businesses across the Coulee Region. Please don't stop investing in what can help to rise the tide for all boats.

Thank you!
Leigh Eck
Brickworks neighborhood, Southern La Crosse

Craig, Sondra

From: Trinie MacFarland <triniemac@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 8:58 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: Funding for the La Crosse Arts Board

I am writing due to a concern of cutting funding for this very important topic.

We currently talk of needing to address mental health concerns for our youth and for adults. The joy and fulfillment in our lives comes from so many things in the arts. These include music, dance, theater, parks, and physical education. These funds help to meet those needs. Please do not eliminate funding for some of these very important mental and social needs that help citizens in our community to thrive and find joy.

Thank you for addressing this concern.

Trinie MacFarland
La Crosse citizen

Sent from my iPhone

To the Honorable Members of the La Crosse City Council and Mayor,

I am writing regarding the current $3 million budget shortfall the City of La Crosse is facing and the difficult decisions that must be made to ensure the city remains financially stable.

While I understand and share the appreciation for the Art Board and the valuable role it plays in making La Crosse a welcoming, creative, and vibrant place to live, I believe that in this moment of financial crisis, prioritizing essential services and preventing widespread layoffs must come first.

Cutting the Art Board's funding is far from ideal, but it is a responsible and temporary measure to safeguard the livelihoods of city employees across multiple departments. A reduction in staffing at this scale would not only send dozens of families into crisis but also diminish the city's ability to deliver critical services to residents. The ripple effects of layoffs would extend far beyond city hall, negatively impacting neighborhoods and the local economy.

I strongly urge the council to make it clear that this cut is not a permanent dismantling of the Art Board, but rather a temporary pause to stabilize the budget. Once financial conditions improve, the City should revisit this discussion and consider restoring funding to the Art Board so that it can continue its important mission of fostering community connection, creativity, and cultural enrichment.

In difficult times, leadership requires prioritization. Today, protecting jobs and ensuring stability across the city must take precedence. Tomorrow, when fiscal conditions allow, we can rebuild the programs that add richness and identity to our community.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter and for your service to La Crosse during such a challenging time.

Respectfully,

Matthew Rumde

Craig, Sondra

From: Judi K- Judikjazz <heartsjazz@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 6:58 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: funding for the Arts

It would be a shame to lose any teaching of the arts in our area.
'Our' Instructors have been vital to keeping the high standards for learning music, dance and theatre for our students and our area...
The Arts have enabled students to find self confidence, learn how to memorize and exercise their brains that are on the deep aspects of music...it's totally healthy and necessary, not just for social interaction, but real teamwork in every way. This all can be carried on into their adult lives with pride. There is so much more to this than meets the eye. I hope this council will give complete consideration when deciding what has to be done with the funding..

Best wishes
Judi K

Craig, Sondra

From: Sara Hafften <sarahafften@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 3, 2025 4:49 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: La Crosse Arts Board Funding

Hello Council Members,

My name is Sara Hafften and I am a professional medical and corporate photographer for Emplify Health by Gundersen. I graduated from The University of Wisconsin La Crosse and made the decision to live and work in this city primarily due to the beauty of the driftless landscape, relatively low cost of living, investment in higher education, and the presence of our thriving art community and local businesses.

Recently, I heard from the La Crosse Art Club (which I am a member of) that the City Council is currently reviewing the operating budget for 2026 and funding for the LAX Art Board is in danger. If funding is stripped, it would all but eliminate the grant program and other public art projects. These grants are vital to local artists and businesses that give back to our communities, establish La Crosse as a cultural hub for the arts, and inspire future generations.

Please consider reinstating funding for the La Crosse Arts board to invest in the cultural future of our city.

Sincerely,
Sara Hafften

Craig, Sondra

From: Kelly <kellysueleibold@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 28, 2025 8:55 AM
To: Washington-Spivey, Shaundel; ZZ Council Members
Subject: Park Closures and Arts Board Funding

Good afternoon Mayor Washington-Spivey and Council members! Two thoughts on my mind I wanted to email about, thanks in advance for your consideration and response.

One of my fellow County Board Supervisors said it well: "I believe a strong arts culture is vital to the success of our community now and especially in the future." While reviewing the 2026 Operating Budget I urge you to consider leaving arts board funding intact. I would hate to see grants for public art projects and other programs go away, especially in a community as vibrant as ours.

Tangentially related, I personally vended some of my artwork at the Farmers Market in Burns Park half a dozen times earlier this summer. I really enjoyed the atmosphere, I never felt threatened by others in the area. Following the closures I've now heard feedback that certain areas downtown such as behind the Children's Museum and in the Heritage Center have seen an uptick in (sometimes unwelcome) foot traffic, unsheltered folks swinging through because they have no other place to gather.

I believe Sadee on behalf of the Farmers Market Association was also prepared to offer up use of Habitat for Humanity's Neighbors Day tools for use with cleanup. Was this ever pursued? Do you have an estimated timeline?

I deeply appreciate your service and commitment to civic engagement. Have a lovely rest of your weekend!! I look forward to your reply.

Kelly Leibold
507-272-5408

Craig, Sondra

From: Avery Van Gaard <averyvangaard@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 29, 2025 11:13 AM
To: ZZ Council Members; washingtonveys@cityoflacrosse.org
Subject: Operating Budget and Parks

Dear Mayor Washington-Spivey and City Council Members,

I am writing with deep concern about two recent decisions: the proposed elimination of Arts Board funding and the indefinite closure of two of our city's parks.

I am a life-long resident of La Crosse. Despite already holding degrees in Physics and Latin American Studies, I recently returned to higher education to pursue a degree from Western Technical College in Graphic Design—my passion and my future. Over the past year, my partner and I have taken a major step by incorporating our studio, investing in equipment, and committing to a downtown rental space. We made this investment because La Crosse has shown itself to be a place where the arts can thrive: the Rivoli Arts District, Arts Board grants, and the culture fostered by places like the Pump House, River City Arts, Root Note, and Grounded. These resources don't just enrich the daily lives of community members—they make it possible for artists like me to build a career here and for small businesses to root themselves in this community.

The Arts Board has been instrumental in fostering the growth of our creative community, funding public works that strengthen our cultural identity, drawing in visitors, and supporting local commerce. Cutting this funding now would stall the momentum we have built and weaken one of our strongest tools for economic and community vitality.

Similarly, while I understand the safety and management concerns that informed the decision to close the parks, leaving these spaces fenced and inactive deprives families and neighborhoods of valuable public amenities. Moreover, closing parks without fully engaging with service providers and organizations dedicated to supporting the unhoused population shifts challenges into other areas rather than addressing them, as has been the case throughout my 30 years in La Crosse. Please, take a different path. Collaborative approaches—grounded in partnerships with local nonprofits, housing programs, and public health services—are more likely to yield sustainable outcomes that balance public safety, access, and compassion.

Both the arts funding and the parks issue speak to a larger question of how we invest in our city's long-term well-being, our community. Decisions that restrict access to cultural and communal resources risk eroding the very strengths that have made our city vibrant and appealing to residents and visitors alike. Do we move toward solutions that uplift, connect, and sustain us, or do we retreat into short-term fixes that leave lasting gaps?

I urge you to reconsider both the proposed Arts Board funding cut and the indefinite park closures. Please work with existing community partners and seek creative, constructive solutions that strengthen our city instead of diminishing it.

Thank you for your service and your attention to these matters.

Avery Van Gaard