

League of Wisconsin Municipalities: Regional Meetings reveal critical local service needs

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MADISON - The League team recently concluded a series of fall regional meetings in River Falls, Ashwaubenon, Mount Pleasant, Dodgeville, Merrill and Port Edwards, highlighting how the broken system of funding local governments is taking a toll on essential local services. Dozens of local leaders gathered and agreed the system must be fixed to avoid further dangerous impacts to public safety. In addition to local leaders from across the state, the regional meetings were attended by state leaders including Sen. Cowles, Rep. Macco, Rep. Steffen, Rep. Hintz, Sen. Wanggaard, Speaker Vos, Rep. Wittke, Sen. Jacque, Rep. Sortwell, and Rep. Novak.

“We are grateful to each and every state and local leader who took the time to participate in these regional sessions, and who shared often eye-opening stories about gaps in local services. These life-threatening impacts brought on by a broken funding system must be addressed soon,” said Jerry Deschane, Executive Director of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities. “We are committed to working with our state and local partners, and we look forward to finding a meaningful path forward to fix this broken system that has been neglected for too long.”

During the listening sessions, local leaders revealed:

- Several Northwest Wisconsin communities rely on Minnesota providers for EMS assistance. While this may fill a short-term gap in public safety, the lack of local capacity for life-saving service is not sustainable.
- In the Northeast, the Village of Howard reported they have no onsite fire staffing for their third shift. Emergencies don't end at a certain time, so this can't be taken

lightly because you expect your emergency call to be answered when you need help.

- In North-Central Wisconsin, over 80% of the year, a Northern Wisconsin Career Fire Department does not have enough staff to respond to simultaneous EMS and fire emergencies. As a result, this means they have to call for assistance from their Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) partners and wait for them to show up before entering a burning building.

- Lack of adequate funding for police, fire and EMS is so critical an issue that the entire elected leadership of New London borrowed a bus and noticed the meeting so that the mayor, Common Council, and staff could attend the League's Regional Meeting and seek help for this crucial issue.

You can read more about the League's Regional Meetings on Page 8-9 of October's edition of [*The Municipality*](#).