

**MANITOWOC COUNTY FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Communication and Technology Building**  
**October 23, 2025**

Attendance: Chair Hansen, Supervisors Grambow, Hacker, and Lillibridge were in attendance. Supervisor Shimulunas was excused.

Also in attendance: County Executive Bob Ziegelbauer, Corporation Counsel Peter Conrad, Finance Director JJ Gutman, County Board Chair Martell, Supervisors Behnke, Bonde, Engelbrecht, Heilman, Jadowski, Maresh, Metzger, Muench, Neil, M. Phipps, R. Phipps, Schiesl, Sitkiewitz, Weiss, and Zimmer, Sheriff Hartwig, Coroner Green, Child Support Director Damman, District Attorney LaBre, Clerk of Court Linderud, Register of Deeds Tuesburg, Treasurer McCulley, Personnel Director Eisenschink, Public Works Director Breit, Information Technology Director Kalista, Register of Probate Koppa, and Human Services Director Fure.

Call to Order:

Chairman Hansen called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

Public Comment:

Chairman Hansen declared public input open at 6:38 p.m.

Jasmine Schwerma, Town of Two Creeks, advocated for the employees to receive more than a 1% payroll increase for 2026. She believes employees will start looking for positions elsewhere for higher pay.

Curt Green, Town of Liberty, congratulated the Sheriff for finding the means to provide a school resource officer for the Valders School District. He expressed his distaste for the 2026 budget and how the budget was unsupportive of building maintenance, sheriff departments equipment, and lack of respect for county employees with only a 1% raise.

No one else present wished to speak, subsequently Chair Hansen closed public comment at 6:47 p.m.

Approve the minutes of the September 8, 2025 Finance Committee meeting:

Supervisor Hacker moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Supervisor Grambow. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Approve vouchers for September 2025 in the amount of \$3,845,524.71: Supervisor Lillibridge moved, seconded by Supervisor Grambow to approve the vouchers. Upon vote, the vouchers in the amount of \$3,845,524.71 were approved.

Resolution Denying Claim (Charter Communications, Inc): Supervisor Hacker moved to deny the claim for Charter Communications, Inc, seconded by Supervisor Grambow. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance Amending Manitowoc County Code Chapter 1 and Chapter 2: Corporation Counsel explained the amendments to the code are for Chapter 1 and 2. Chapter 1 assigns the oversight committee of Public Works, which is the department Information Systems is currently under. Chapter 2 would create the separate Information System Department. Supervisor Hacker moved to amend the Chapter 1 and 2 of the County Code, seconded by Supervisor Lillibridge. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution Adopting the 2025 Levy for 2026 Budget:

Chair Hansen opened discussion regarding the Public Safety Committee budget amendment requests and AI software. Along with any other amends others might bring in.

Hansen allowed Coroner Green to speak regarding his department budget request for \$15,000 to create .6 and .8 staff personal for the office. Green explained all the statutory requirements that fall under his department advocating to stabilize the departments work force with 24/7/365 coverage as required by law. He would like to hire the current on call employees because they are very qualified and they already have the hours in.

Personnel Chair Maresh explained their committee did not approve the request because the coroner has on call people. The committee would like to wait until the new medical examiner is hired in January 2027, then the new hire can pick their employees.

County Board Chair Martell understands the prospective of waiting until the new director is hired. However, he would like the new medical examiner to walk into an already successfully run office with staff. Is there a detriment in waiting? Green explained the detriment would be losing the qualified individuals that are already working on call.

Martell established this is for the 2026 coroner's budget, not the 2027 medical examiners budget. Lillibridge questioned the difference between the staffing needs of a coroner versus a medical examiner and if the current on call staff would fit under the medical examiners staff. Green explained the current on call staff are qualified degreed professional certified in death investigation that follow the state statutes for Wisconsin. They are not easy positions to replace and we cannot find people to apply. The additional staffing would be an incentive for the current on call employees to stay. The department is in need of these positions right now, not a year and half from now. Discussion took place.

Supervisor Grambow moved to fund \$15,000 from Human Services levy to the Coroners levy to fund the .6 and .8 employees and requested the Human Services Director to figure out what line item the funds will come from, seconded by Supervisor Hacker.

Discussion took place regarding the use of opioid funds versus the Human Services levy due to the number of deaths that are ruled overdoses of individuals with opioids in their system. Human Services Director Fure informed the committee there would be an Overdose Fatality Review committee in which everything involved with this committee would qualify under the opioid funds. The coroner's office and staff are included with those meetings. Martell and Hacker suggested if the coroner can demonstrate there would \$15,000 worth of autopsies proving opioid use could the opioid funds be designated towards that expense. Green informed the committee that all the drug overdose deaths are tested for opioids and the testing is irrefutable. Corp Counsel would need to see how many the autopsies take place in the year that are tied to opioids to ensure this would be allocable to the opioid funds.

Supervisor Grambow amended his motion to allocate opioid funds to fund the \$15,000 for the .6 and .8 employees in the 2026 budget, seconded by Supervisor Hacker. Upon vote, motion carried unanimously.

Hansen allowed District Attorney LaBre to speak regarding her budget request of \$25,000 for personal service use of an investigator. LaBre first addressed the lack of merit raise for county employees and how not having a merit raise was a downfall to the employees in her office. She informed the committee that what some of the employees deal with is not normal everyday items

a common worker deals with and some type of merit pay is needed for our employees. She is advocating for merit pay for all county employees. The second item would be the need for another investigator. Currently, she has to request assistance from other departments, such as a reserve deputy under the Sheriff's department. She would like to have the reserve investigator added as a \$25,000 budget line item under the DA's budget because that reserve investigator serves the DA's office.

Supervisor Behnke explained both the DA's budget and the Sheriff's reserve deputy are paid for with the same levy dollars. The Sheriff's dept. budget is almost 16 million, and believes the sheriff can provide a reserve deputy as needed to the DA to assist with their investigative work in their office. The Sheriff would not bill the DA's budget for the reserve deputy because it all comes out of the same monies. Discussion took place. No action was taken.

Supervisor Behnke suggested the Sheriff's request budget increase of \$40,000 for the taser and body cameras Axon proposal could come from the operational savings when the cost shifts from Information Systems to the Sheriff's Department for the AI draft one software. The savings in operational cost would be sufficient to cover the now \$32,000 software or there is enough money in the IS reserve fund to cover the AI software.

Supervisor Hacker moved to reallocate \$32,000 from the Information Systems reserve fund by and increase the budget line item for the AI body cam project by \$32,000, seconded by Supervisor Grambow. Discussion took place. Upon vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Supervisor Behnke suggested taking the \$370,000 of the borrowed \$770,000 for Public Works projects that are identified on page 50 of the budget to increase the current 1% proposed employee wage increases to 2% for county employees. The performance-based increases will remain frozen for the 2026 budget. The remaining \$400,000 would be used to lower the levy from a 2.6% increase to an approximate 1.2% increase. Discussion took place.

Hansen called for a recess at 8:14 p.m. Reconvened at 8:18 p.m.

Chair Hansen moved to reallocate the borrowed \$770,000 from Public Works Capital Projects by taking \$370,000 to increase the current 1% proposed employee wage to 2% for county employees and the remaining \$400,000 would be used to reduce the levy, seconded by Supervisor Lillibridge. Discussion took place.

Hacker called the question. Upon vote, the motion failed to end debate as a 2-3 vote. Supervisor Grambow, Lillibridge, and Martell voted no.

Chair Hansen provided a friendly amendment to his motion to borrow only \$370,000 to increase the current 1% proposed employee wage to 2% for county employees and remove the borrowing of \$400,000 to reduce the levy, seconded by Supervisor Lillibridge. Upon vote, the motion failed 2-2 vote. Supervisor Grambow and Hacker voted no.

County Treasurer McCulley requested the possibility of an extra hire in her office during the busy times in her office. Currently, she and her deputy are working 10 to 12-hour days trying to catch up with the last 4 months. With extra hire this person would be able to assist when needed. She would be looking for a temp to cover 250-450 hours; 4 weeks in July, 2 weeks in December, and hours to cover medical/sick leave/vacation if needed. Martell did agree that this would have to be considered sooner rather than later. Hansen suggested Personnel would need to review the extra hire wage situation before a decision could be made.

Child Support Director Damman expressed her concern with the budget not including the additional pay increase for the employees. The employee turnaround is constant due to individuals receiving higher wages for the same job, but in a different county. Without any type of merit raise, not only in her department but the whole county needs some type of compensation. Something needs to be done to retain good employees.

Sheriff Hartwig expressed the same concerns about employee retention and morale with no merit increase.

Supervisor Hacker moved to eliminate the \$1,965,000 borrowing for the courthouse dome project, seconded by Supervisor Grambow. Discussion took place. Upon vote, the motion carried 3-1. Supervisor Hansen voted no.

Supervisor Lillibridge motion to reconsider borrowing only \$370,000 to increase the current 1% proposed employee wage to 2% for county employees, seconded by Chair Hansen. Upon vote, the motion was carried 4-1. Supervisor Grambow voted no.

Chair Hansen moved to borrow only \$370,000 to increase the current 1% proposed employee wage to 2% for county employees, seconded by Supervisor Lillibridge. Upon vote, the motion was carried 4-1. Supervisor Grambow voted no.

Martell discussed the opioid settlement and how the funds are being allocated and spent. Discussion followed.

Adjournment:

Supervisor Hacker moved to adjourn, seconded by Supervisor Grambow. Motion passed unanimously. The committee adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica Backus, County Clerk