

TOWN OF UTICA

Town Board Meeting ~ Minutes

Thursday, September 14, 2026

5:30pm – Review Invoices
6:00pm – Town Board Meeting

Notice is hereby given that a Town Board meeting in the Town of Utica, Winnebago County, and State of Wisconsin for the transaction of business as is by law required or permitted to be transacted at such a meeting will be held at the Utica Town Hall, 1730 County Road FF in said Town. Discussion and Action may occur on the following items, except for Public Forum.

The Town Board meets regularly the SECOND MONDAY OF EACH MONTH AT 6:00PM (unless otherwise noted). All meetings are open to the public, this is a public meeting. Any person wishing to attend who, because of a disability, requires special accommodation, should contact Chairman Len Schmick at 920-850-0758 at least twenty-four (24) hours before the scheduled meeting time so appropriate arrangements can be made. As such, all members, or a majority of the members, of the Town Board may be in attendance. While a majority of the Town Board members or the majority of any given Town Board Committee may be present, only the Town Board will take official action based on the agenda. Posted at: townofuticawi.gov, Town Hall, and Pickett Country Market.

DRAFT

1. Call the Meeting to Order

Chairman Schmick called the meeting to order at 6:00pm

PRESENT: Chairman Leonard Schmick, Supervisor #1 Ben Sawall, Supervisor #2 Chuck Kuhrt
Treasurer Trisha Hunter, and Clerk Jenny Sonnleitner; 38 present

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. CONSENT AGENDA:

A) Approve Town Board Meeting Minutes: August 10, 2026

B) Affidavit of Posting/Publication

C) Approve Payment of Bills

Chairman Schmick motions that we accept the Consent Agenda consisting of approving Town Board Meeting Minutes from August 10, 2026; Affidavit of Posting/Publication, and approve payments of bills; seconded by Supervisor Sawall; Carried 3-0

"These meeting minutes are only a draft of the minutes of the meeting. They have not been approved yet. They are subject to change and you may not rely on their accuracy. For more information, please contact the clerk or a town board member."

4. Treasurer's Report: August 2026

Treasurer Hunter mentioned the accounts that are 70% or more: Chairman account is at 74%, Legal is over 100% and will adjust tonight, Clerk is at 84%, Tax Collection Software is at 76%, Other Insurance is at 91%, Plan Commission and Board of Appeals are at 100%, Building Inspection is over 100% and will adjust tonight, Sanitation is at 76%, Transportation is over 100% and will adjust tonight, Public Works overall is at 90%, Human and Health Services is at 100%.

5. Public Forum: 2-Minutes to comment on an Agenda item or new business; state your name & address. (No action taken by the Board)

Kevin Fritz asked what the status is on the abandoned house by the creek and railroad tracks in Fisk and the septic may not be taken care of. Also, Rush Lake Watershed Inc is asking towns to donate \$250-\$500/year. They need to carry insurance, which costs about \$1500/year, along with fees for the tax-exempt club and liability insurance. Chairman Schmick stated they should send us something in writing stating what they are going to do with the money and what they need it for. The house belongs to whomever owns it, not much we can do with it.

Walt Whiting mentioned he was glad the Town hosted a meeting regarding solar farms. Finds it strange that we have our own zoning, yet we can't do anything. Feels hung out to dry by the state, or the county. We should have input because we have our own zoning. Would like the town to consider working with the Town's attorney to see if we could change the zoning to Industrial or Commercial. It's wrong to go under the umbrella of a farm, yet take all the income off there. Understands there is a resident that will build their home using containers. This is not addressed in our Ordinance, is there anything we can do? Chairman Schmick said the containers aren't as bad as you think. They would still need to pass the building codes. The County and City don't have control of solar farms. Once the project is over 100 megawatts, there is nothing we can do. We can handle any provisions; make sure roads are covered, possible birms to not see the panels, and how to clean it up. There were 9 lawsuits, all 9 lost. Walt said the news mentioned the President's anti-green energy drive. Chairman Schmick said we could spend a lot of time and money on this and not win. Projects like this is a State issue. Make sure to vote for the people who are not for green energy. This is because of a law put into effect in 1988. Walt mentioned data centers, and hopes the Board gets on board with the County. Chairman Schmick said that we plan to, we are just waiting on the County's version.

Kevin Fritz stated the acreage shrunk to 1000 acres. This depends on the election if this happens. There is a project in Central Sands that is taking irrigation and capping the wells.

Jennifer Kramer asked about the cars on Mahlke and County Road M on County Road FF. Nothing has been done yet. Chairman Schmick said the owner was at a previous meeting and he is aware of it. Jennifer asked if we should go to DNR and Winnebago County since it's against their zoning too? Chairman Schmick said to give him some time and then we could get the attorney involved.

Warren Davies mentioned trees could be trimmed along County Road FF between James and County Road N. There is a 2-mile stretch of low hanging trees that are hitting tractors and sprayers. Chairman Schmick will contact the County since it is a County Road.

Darrin Rice stated he is running for Sheriff this fall. He has 25 years with the Sheriff's office. Started in Corrections, worked in patrol, investigations and promoted up to his current rank as Field Services Captain; is in charge of patrol and detectives for the agency. Served on special teams, lead special teams throughout his career.

Eric Whiting wanted to comment on the solar farm. If we are told that we have no control whether or not it can be built, why can they take the control of taxation through zoning to offset. Some of the other townships have County zoning, then it's a County argument. We should continue to have our own zoning. To be told to just roll over and take it, but to be sure to get out and vote, for an opposing party, I'm not willing to take that answer. Chairman Schmick said to contact our state representatives, they are the ones that can change the law.

Roberta Wenzel stated that she is extremely upset about solar farms. Some leases have been signed, some since 2018-2021. Asked if this is public record on what land has already been signed? Chairman Schmick said no, it's not public record. They don't want people contacting and harassing the landowners who signed the leases, it's their business. Roberta asked if we are aware of how many acres have already been leased? Chairman Schmick said that there is enough acreage to do 100 megawatts; about 135 acres, as of the first meeting at the coffee house. We won't find out until the building starts. Chairman Schmick said there is nothing we can do if we find out who signed contracts.

Kevin Fritz asked if we will still need to give the land owners a conditional land use permit? Chairman Schmick said no, this has nothing to do with conditional use permits or Town zoning, this is a State mandate; wish it wasn't out of our hands.

Sue Shea asked if we can have restrictions, can we make it so owners don't want to do it? Chairman Schmick said no, it would need to be an agreement; still not sure this is really happening. We will hold meetings on what we plan to do.

Duane Lepianka asked how these farms would be taxed? Can solar farms be taxed higher since the homes next to them will be worth less? Chairman Schmick said they don't pay property taxes once they change it into a solar farm. They will have to pay a lot of money to the Towns that they put these in solar farms in. Duane asked if there could be something in the clause to offset the home value if it's less because they are next to a solar farm? Chairman Schmick said there would be provisions to help offset the loss.

Patsy Beck asked if the solar panels are going to benefit our electricity or is somewhere else benefiting? Chairman Schmick said some homes in our town use Alliant. We don't have control where that power goes.

Roberta Wenzel asked about the payment from Alliant Energies, would that be annually? Chairman Schmick thinks it is annually, there may be some upfront payments. Contact your State Representatives, Public Service Commission, etc. We need energy, we need it from somewhere.

Mike Pucci asked if there is a current map where this is at yet? Chairman Schmick had a map but that has changed, nothing detailed yet.

Supervisor Kuhrt asked if shoreland zoning has any input? Chairman Schmick said that is through the County.

Kevin Fritz believes this is part of the right to farm bill that was passed in the 90's as part of the mega dairies.

Tom Pollack, Town Clerk for the Town of Nekimi, mentioned he lived through this already. The Town of Nekimi was facing a solar project awhile ago and teamed with Eldorado. They hired a law firm in Waukesha. They tried to fight it versus making an agreement. Eldorado pulled out, and Nekimi spent about \$40,000 in attorney fees. We didn't stop them, they just backed off and went away. Elections do have consequences. The reason they don't have maps is because there is no official application for this project yet. When the application is formally filed, then there will be official maps on who is part of the project. Their Assessor said taxes are based on land use; \$2/acre on farmland to \$68/acre on commercial use. Any cables less than 4' will have to be removed. They'll put it at 4'6" and not remove it. Chairman Schmick told everyone to go to the hearings.

Matt Krause stated 4 townships are involved. Can the four get together at a single meeting to discuss with the residents to agree if we want an attorney for this? Chairman Schmick said that is up to the townspeople. We would need to hold a Town meeting. No one has extra money laying around. It depends if we want to take that risk. Let's wait to see if the application is filed. We don't want to be behind, but no place to go now.

Patsy Beck said there may be no place to go now, but this still needs to be addressed as we go through the process.

Kathy Paschke talked with Rachel Cabral-Guevara and she commented that the Governor appoints the PSC. The current PSC is in favor of the solar farms, which is why we are being urged to vote for the opposing party who is currently in office. The Senate, Republican controlled, did not approve the people who are currently in this PSC, the reason they did not approve them is because if a Republican is elected Governor, he has the right to fire all three of those members and replace them with people who are favorable to his line of thinking. If they had approved them, then any Governor coming in would not have been able to fire them, and could finish out their terms. A reason to go vote. The Governor appoints the people to this commission, right now they have not gotten approval by the Senate of the state, therefore, they could all be replaced. A lobbyist from Alliant got wind that Nate Gustafson was asking questions, that's why these meetings started in Omro. It pays for us to be active, be vocal. Townspeople's voices need to be heard.

Roberta Wenzel stated that it is important to go to other township meetings, to hear what is being said.

Kathy Paschke stated she was involved in Town zoning years ago. Our A2 zoning states crops of the typical family farm. Solar farms don't fall under that at all. The Town should enforce the zoning, tax them more, something, every little bit helps.

Public Session closed.

6. BUDGET:

A) Any 2026 Amendment Resolutions

Chairman Schmick read the Resolution and motions that the sum of \$2 from General Buildings and Plant account to Legal account, \$450 from General Buildings and Plant account to the Building Inspection account, and that the sum of \$45,000 from the 2027 Fire Truck Payment be moved to Transportation; seconded by Supervisor Kuhrt. Carried 3-0

B) Set Budget Workshop Date

Monday, September 28, 2026 at 6pm

7. Solar Farms

Chairman Schmick stated we talked about this during the public forum.

8. Data Center Ordinance and Information

Chairman Schmick stated we are waiting on the County to see what they do and we will adopt that.

9. WINNEBAGO COUNTY:

A) Comp Plan Ad-Hoc Meeting Update from August 18, 2026

Chairman Schmick said he went to their meeting in the past. There were six other Town Chairmans attending. The one in charge told us that we couldn't talk, vote, etc., just there to listen. There was no discussion, they just voted. Not going to future meetings.

B) Chapter 16 – POWTS

Chairman Schmick said that we agree with Dana Wood's email and waiting for the County's response.

C) Joint Powers Sheriff Agreement

Chairman Schmick motions we accept as it is written, seconded by Supervisor Sawall. Carried 3-0

10. Recycling Ordinance – DNR Update

Supervisor Sawall motions we accept this as written and modified, seconded by Supervisor Kuhrt. Carried 3-0

11. Preliminary Population Estimate for the Town of Utica as of 1/1/2026: 1371

12. Town Web Website Proposal

Clerk Sonnleitner read options on what our website could do: HeyGov, HeyLicense, HeyReserve (extra \$2700/year), meeting videos online. Supervisor Sawall motions to leave as is; seconded by Chairman Schmick. Carried 3-0

13. ROADS:

A) Maintenance Updates

Chairman Schmick said Rustic Meadows is done, the sign is up that says Dead End Road; only have ditch mowing to do yet.

B) 2027 Maintenance Agreement

Clerk Sonnleitner said this hasn't been sent to us yet.

14. RUSH LAKE COMMITTEE

A) August 12, 2026 Meeting Update. Next meeting: September 22, 2026 at Town of Nepeuskun

Chairman Schmick mentioned the next meeting date.

B) Reappoint Chuck Kuhrt to a 3-year term

Chairman Schmick motions to reappoint Chuck Kuhrt for another 3-year term on the Rush Lake Committee; seconded by Supervisor Sawall. Carried 3-0

15. FIRE / EMS DEPARTMENTS:

A) Fire Chief's Report

RTR is working with the ethanol plant regarding the high-capacity well to put in a city fire hydrant. It will be usable again.

1) New Applicant(s)

No new applicants

2) Retirement(s)/Termination(s)

Addison Hogland resigned and is going back home, she contributed to the cost of her training.

3) Truck & Routine Truck Maintenance Updates

Pumper 12 failed the pump test, has failed since 2023. It is recommended to take it out of service, as it was back then. It is failing the vacuum and pump tests, both ways. Supervisor Sawall asked what it would take to replace the pump? Fire Chief Roberts said it is a 1975 truck, it was the first new truck they bought. Seems to be more sentimental and it doesn't get used at trainings and it doesn't go to fires. It's just taking up room and spending money on it. Supervisor Sawall asked if they could try to sell it. Fire Chief Roberts said they have received offers. Chairman Schmick said if you aren't using it, something to consider then.

4) Buildings and Grounds

NA-

5) Training

Having a Mavis (radio) drill on Sept 29. Jaws equipment from Firehouse Subs is here. There are two cars in the parking lot to train on, using the battery-operated jaws. Sent 4 people to FVTC for flashover training on Sept 2, that went very well. Applied for funding assistance program from the State. We should get about \$20,000 every year. There is a new program from the State where they will pay for the initial EMT basic training. Caylin Tesch can be reimbursed, about \$350. We have an extra defibrillator and cabinet here at the Hall. It can be recessed in the wall or sticking out. Can have an alarm on it for a cost of \$250. Supervisor Kuhrt said the alarm is significantly loud. Fire Chief Roberts hasn't asked anybody about installing it yet. Supervisor Kuhrt said he can look at it and get it done.

6) SOP/SOG

We are coming to the end of the 3-year term for the Chief and Officers being voted on and appointed in by the Board. Officers are also coming up to be reinstated, or new people to come in. Doesn't feel it is fair for the Fire Chief to appoint the officers. Would like more interaction from the Board and the department to set up interviews. The Chief, Assistant Chief, and a couple from the membership committee would be there to interview the people. This should be based on a merit system, not to show favoritism. Working on position descriptions and what is expected; skills, training, attendance. Chairman Schmick agreed that it should be based on merit, we need input from the fire department to know what the merit system is. Fire Chief Roberts is working on that. Would like to have Lieutenants which would be a stepping stone into leadership. We currently don't have this position. There are less people available during the day. Less farmers are volunteering and more people working during the day. Can step up and lead to assist the captains. A lot could be handled by other people to trust others to do more things.

Supervisor Kuhrt asked about maintenance and how often is the oil changed in the trucks? Fire Chief Roberts said there are some trucks that only have a couple hundred miles put on over the year. They are going off of mileage and are checking once a month. The Dryer plant in Pickett pays \$200 per load to haul water and clean out the whole duct work. Chairman Schmick asked if they get the hydrant working, will that change? Fire Chief Roberts said it will probably be located somewhere along County Road M, hopefully just outside the gate. It takes about 20 feet of hose and takes a while to get it set up. Tom Thiel said there is vacant lot by the track, could possibly put the hydrant there. Josh Heine stated it takes 8 minutes to fill the tanker from the fire station, it takes 6 minutes to fill at RTR, once the hydrant is set up.

B) Fire Department & Town Ordinance / Bylaws – Any Updates

No updates

C) Volunteer Firemen's Picnic Update

Picnic and golf outing went well. Supervisor Sawall asked when they will have the numbers? Fire Chief Roberts said they are waiting for all the bills to come in, hopefully know more at the meeting in October.

D) August 2026: (5 Fire Calls / 9 EMS Calls)

Fire Chief Roberts asked to get the Board's opinion on voting in new officers. Supervisor Sawall said an interview would be an appropriate way to move forward. Chairman Schmick said even though this is voluntary, it should be based on merit. You want to work with nice, friendly guys. Bring who you think is best. Fire Chief Roberts said it's open to everyone on the department. Supervisor Sawall said that if there is certain training that they need to do, they need to have that done. Chairman Schmick said if any of the officers aren't current in their trainings, it would affect their chances of being involved.

- 16. AMBULANCE SERVICE / S.W.E.M.S.** Next meeting: October 29, 2026 at 6:00pm at Town of Omro Town Hall
Chairman Schmick said the ambulance service is going very well.

17. WI Town Association

A) County Meeting: Thursday, October 1, 2026 – Town of Winneconne (6:00pm dinner) – Board plans to attend

B) Workshops: September – Fall Workshop / October 4-6 – Annual Convention

18. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE PICKETT COMMUNITY CENTER'S NEWSLETTER:

A) TOWN BOARD MEETING: Monday, October 14, 2026 – 6:00pm at the Utica Town Hall, 1730 County Rd FF in Fisk

B) 2026 ELECTION DATES: November 3 – Utica Town Hall, 1730 County Rd FF in Fisk

19. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:

A) WI Towns Assoc Monthly Newsletter; Land Transfers; Building Permits: Becker 282 Cty Rd M, Berg 5415 Fisk Ave; Quality Roofing Inc.

20. Adjournment

7:17pm

Jenny Sonleitner, Clerk

Chairman Leonard Schmick		Treasurer Trisha Hunter	
Supervisor #1 Ben Sawall		Clerk Jenny Sonleitner	
Supervisor #2 Chuck Kuhrt			

Minutes to be Reviewed / Approved at the October 14, 2026 Town Board Meeting.