

January 22, 2026 West Allis Taxpayer Association (WATA) Meeting Minutes

Opening Remarks

Bill Savage opened the meeting by welcoming attendees. He asked members of the West Allis-West Milwaukee School Board to introduce themselves. Mr. Savage then invited Alderman Dan Roadt (filling in for Alderperson Marty Weigel) to provide remarks before turning the meeting over to the School Board for their presentation.

Follow-Up Report: Fire and Rescue Services Merger

Dan Roadt, Alderman for the City of West Allis, provided a follow-up report regarding the merger of the West Allis and Wauwatosa Fire and Rescue Services.

- Alderman Roadt announced the newly established name of the merged department and explained that it will operate as its own independent entity, with the City of West Allis providing human resources services. Milwaukee Metro – is the name and attendees were confused as to why.
- The City of West Allis will receive just over \$4 million per year for five years from a state initiative encouraging consolidation of fire and rescue services.
- During his remarks, Alderman Roadt stated that the majority of calls are medical rather than fire-related. Several attendees disputed this characterization.
- Multiple attendees expressed that they were previously unaware of the merger and noted the process seemed too far along for meaningful public input.
- Alderman Roadt shared that three of the City's new snowplows received names through a public naming contest.
- Questions were asked during the discussion that Alderman Roadt was unable to answer. Again, Mr. Roadt was filling in for Mr. Weigel who has been reporting to us.

Member Comments

AmyRose addressed attendees regarding the importance of community involvement and staying informed on local government matters. Emphasizing that residents must actively participate in meetings to remain aware of decisions affecting the community, particularly since the City's newsletter mailer has been discontinued. Noting that without regular participation, many community members may not be aware of current developments.

She stated that Common Council and committee meetings are publicly available online. AmyRose added that WATA aims to provide opportunities for open conversations surrounding issues facing the community. Her comments were prompted by the level of concern and frustration expressed by attendees.

West Allis-West Milwaukee School Board Presentation and Discussion

Superintendent Tarrynce Robinson was introduced, followed by Aaron Norris, Director of Finance and Operations, who presented financial data and planning information. Packets with graphics and details were distributed.

Topics Highlighted by Aaron Norris/WAWM

Private school enrollment was noted as a factor affecting the local tax rate. Norris compared communities and explained the district's perspective that funding decreases occur when students are not enrolled in the public district.

Issues Raised by Attendees

- The Governor allowed the school districts to raise the tax levy, which the districts can chose to maximize.
- Students were referred to as “members,” which several attendees found objectionable because they are students and children.
- The district’s transparency was questioned, with concerns that WAWM did not fulfill Open Records requests related to spending on promotion, consultants, and all expenses associated with promoting the two referenda items.
- The district did not disclose its planned 8% tax levy increase until the day after the two referenda passed. Attendees stated this indicated the district knew of the increase prior to the election but intentionally delayed disclosure, which they considered deceptive.
- The district’s framing of “funding loss” from private school enrollment was clarified by AmyRose as deceptive. She noted that private schools include not only religious schools but also other public alternatives such as virtual academies, not just traditional private institutions. Attendees emphasized that if a student is not enrolled in the district, the funds are not truly lost.
- Questions were raised regarding the Governor’s line-item veto and the impact on local tax levies.

Specific financial impacts discussed:

Community members, and WATA founders asked clarifying questions on ambiguous points, which Norris addressed during the presentation.

WATA thoughts on the West Allis Schools Presentation.

Thursday, January 22, 2026 the West Allis Taxpayers Association invited members of the West Allis-West Milwaukee School Board to meet with members of our group. The district business manager and the superintendent attended as well. I was impressed by the many board members who showed up and “took the heat”. The group commended them for coming on several occasions throughout the evening. The meeting was longer than planned. I tried to close discussion and Alderperson Dan Roadt rightly reminded me that if people still had questions they should be heard.

We understand the difficulties that schools face today. As a member of two school boards (six years each) I tell you these officials’ workday and night. They really do. The district has a “assistant business manager” a position which I’ve never heard of before. But I’m not an all-time expert. Aaron, the business manager, gave an interesting 30-minute presentation that was informative, BUT certainly was crafted to put the district spending in the best light (no one can blame them for that I suppose). The entire board and Aaron received some pushback on their attempt to blame some of the recent tax increases on school choice. It is true that the district must pay out for choice students within the district but they (as I as of now understand it) also collect the levy for those students. It also makes no sense to blame choice schools for the recent increase since choice schools are not new this year. Interestingly enough, open enrollment was not part of their presentation, and I’ve asked for those numbers. The district also stated that they have no DEI programs and no staff is hired for that purpose. The taxpayer group was clear that one or two more tax increases and West Allis would be finished. Businesses would go out of business and families, retirees in particular, would need to sell.