REACHING OUT



By **Becky Roberts, Outreach and Engagement Specialist**

Communication Changes: Streamlining and Modernizing How We Advertise County Unit Meetings

I recently sat down with WTA staff Heather Zimmerman, Kelly Richards and Casey Gast. This team is amazing! They help to keep us organized, manage daily operations, and communicate with members. Behind the scenes, they are busy managing staff calendars, directing hotline requests, handling logistics for convention, workshops, meetings and other gatherings, and balancing the books.

The majority of our communications also pass through this team. If you have ever called our office, received an email blast, visited our website, watched a recording, opened a letter from WTA, or sat down with our magazine, they were involved. We are proud of the many touchpoints we maintain with our members, but we are also keenly aware of the time, effort and cost required to make this happen.

One of our strategic plan goals is to make better use of staff and financial resources. Simultaneously, we would like to make it easier for county units and legislators to regularly attend county unit meetings. This article will describe upcoming changes we plan to make to communications to accomplish each of these goals.

Q. First, what is the county unit meeting?

The county unit is the backbone of our organization. It provides the very localized structure that empowers us to carry out our mission to provide legal information, education and legislative advocacy in all corners of the state. WTA has 71 county units. Most units represent member towns and villages within a given county. We also have one unit representing three counties (Racine, Kenosha, Walworth) and two units representing one county (Marathon has a western and eastern unit). Each county unit is encouraged to meet at least four times per year. However, this number varies. Some units meet as few as two times per year, while others meet as frequently as eleven. In an average year, we hold roughly 300 county unit meetings.

Q. How are county unit meetings <u>currently</u> advertised?

Throughout the year, WTA staff are constantly managing and updating a master list of county unit meeting dates. County unit leaders are asked to provide the date, time, location and agenda for each county unit meeting at least three weeks in advance of the meeting. Once received, staff update the calendar on the WTA website and begin preparing physical mailings. A mailed letter is currently sent to local officials within member towns and villages for every county unit meeting held. County unit officers, district directors, and legislators also receive mailed letters. Finally, we send an email reminder 3-5 days in advance of each meeting.

Q. Why are we making changes?

As postage costs have skyrocketed, so too has the WTA postage budget – it now stands at $112,000. Increasing costs have been accompanied by a decline in postal service reliability. It is not unheard of for a letter to take two to three weeks to travel from Shawano to the outer reaches of the state, sometimes arriving after the county unit meeting has occurred. The new county unit communication system will save money and ensure you actually know when county unit meetings are taking place.

Many county units have begun scheduling meetings 1-2 years in advance and attribute increased attendance in part, to local officials and legislators being able to plan ahead. Having an agreed upon series of meeting dates and times allows WTA staff, directors, county unit leaders, local officials and legislators to plan their schedules and avoid conflicts.

Q. How will WTA communicate meeting dates in 2027?

WTA will use four primary methods to communicate meeting dates:

1. Annual list of meeting dates – physically mailed in late 2026 or early 2027 and posted online
2. Monthly magazine – physically mailed with list of upcoming county unit meeting dates
3. Website calendar – updated monthly with meeting date, time, location and agenda
4. Email blast – agenda and reminder sent 2 weeks and 3-5 days in advance of each meeting

Q. Who will receive these communications?

The annual list of meeting dates will be physically mailed to all member town and village officials and legislators. The WTA magazine is also physically mailed to all WTA members (unless you have opted for the email version). If you are reading a print copy of this article you are on our mailing list!

Regular email blasts prior to each meeting will be sent to all town and village officials that have provided email addresses. Town and village officials include clerks, treasurers, town boards and village boards. County unit leaders, district directors and legislators are also copied on these emails.

The WTA website and calendar are updated regularly and visible to anyone visiting the site. A new landing page for county unit meetings can be found here: https://www.wisctowns.com/events-calendar/county-unit-meetings/

Checklist for County Unit Leaders

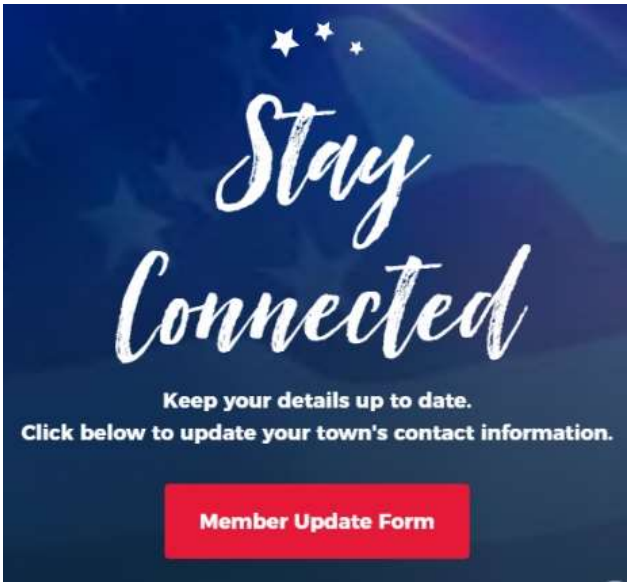
- ✓ Communicate annual meeting dates by November 15, 2026.
- ✓ Provide date, time, location and agenda at least 3 weeks in advance of each meeting.
- ✓ Send to wtowns@wisctowns.com

Checklist for Towns and Villages

- ✓ Use ‘Member Update Form’ on WTA website to submit updated contact info.
- ✓ Look for annual meeting dates mailed in late 2026 or early 2027.
- ✓ Watch for upcoming meeting dates in monthly magazine.
- ✓ Look at email and website for detailed agenda.
- ✓ Reach out if you do not receive updates.

Q. How do we update our contact information?

Effective communication relies on having updated contact information. If you are aware of a town or village member that is not receiving print or email communications, please reach out. Sometimes this is due to not having updated contact information. Other times, people have blocked or unsubscribed from our email messages. Please use the 'Member Update Form' on the WTA homepage to submit new or updated names, addresses and emails for all town and village officials. This form can also be found on the top right side of our contact page: https://www.wisctowns.com/about-us/contact/



Q. What are we asking of county unit leaders?

County unit leaders are asked to schedule meeting dates at least one year in advance. Please report 2027 county unit dates to wtowns@wisctowns.com by November 15, 2026. County unit leaders should also follow up at least 3 weeks in advance of each meeting to confirm the date, time and location of each meeting and submit a detailed agenda. A list of additional instructions will be sent to county unit leaders to guide them through this process.

Communication At a Glance

Method	Frequency	Who receives?
Website	New! - Annual list of meeting dates by county unit will be posted on WTA website. Calendar will continue to be updated monthly with meeting date, time, location, and agenda.	Visible to anyone visiting WTA website
Magazine	New! - Monthly magazine will list upcoming county unit meeting dates.	WTA members and subscribers
Mail	New! - Annual list of meeting dates will be sent once per year by mail. Individual meeting notices previously mailed will now be distributed electronically.	Town and village officials, county unit leaders, district directors, legislators
Email	New! - Email with date, time, location and agenda will be sent 2 weeks prior to each county unit meeting. Second email reminder will be sent 3-5 days prior.	Town and village officials, county unit leaders, district directors, legislators