



Joint Legislative Council's Report of
the Study Committee on Publication of
Government Documents and Legal Notices

[2017 Assembly Bills 119 and 120]

March 3, 2017

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STUDY COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION OF GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS AND LEGAL NOTICES

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March 3, 2017

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PART I

KEY PROVISIONS OF JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Joint Legislative Council recommends the following for introduction in the 2017-18 Session of the Legislature.

2017 ASSEMBLY BILL 119, RELATING TO METHOD OF NOTIFICATION WHEN A LEGAL NOTICE IS PROVIDED ELECTRONICALLY

Assembly Bill 119 modifies current law relating to the method of notification when a legal notice is provided electronically. Specifically, the bill draft requires that a qualifying municipality include an easily identifiable link to its notices on the municipality's website homepage.

2017 ASSEMBLY BILL 120, RELATING TO INFORMATION REQUIRED TO BE INCLUDED IN CLASS 2 AND CLASS 3 LEGAL NOTICES

Assembly Bill 120 allows a municipality the option to publish a summary for the second and third insertions that are required for publication of certain Class 2 and 3 notices if the summarized notice also identifies a number of sources where the full-text content may be viewed.

PART II

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

ASSIGNMENT

The Joint Legislative Council established the Study Committee on Publication of Government Documents and Legal Notices and appointed the chairperson by an April 18, 2016 mail ballot. The committee was directed to update and recodify chs. 35 and 985, Stats., relating to the publication and distribution of government documents and legal notices, to reflect technological advances and remove obsolete provisions. The committee was also directed to study whether, and in what circumstances, current law regarding the publication and distribution of government documents and legal notices, including qualifications for official newspapers, should be modified to allow for information to be made available only electronically or through nontraditional media outlets, and the committee was directed to recommend legislation regarding any such modifications.

Membership of the Study Committee was appointed by a June 10, 2016 mail ballot. The final committee membership consisted of one Senator, three Representatives, and seven public members. A list of committee members is included as **Appendix 3** to this report.

SUMMARY OF MEETINGS

The committee held three meetings on the following dates:

July 26, 2016

August 30, 2016

October 10, 2016

At the July 26, 2016 meeting, the Study Committee heard testimony from several invited speakers and had an initial discussion of the committee's assignment.

Beth Bennett, Executive Director, and Denise Guttery, Media Services Director, Wisconsin Newspaper Association (WNA), presented information regarding the history of publication of legal notices in newspapers. She said that newspaper publication of legal notices is a fundamental part of government going back centuries and that the current system works well. She noted that each state requires some form of legal notice publication in newspapers, and that Wisconsin's strict regulation of legal notice publication in newspapers, including statutorily set fees, creates a system of fair play.

Ms. Bennett described the statutorily required statewide website that archives published legal notices, www.wisconsinpublicnotices.org, and called it the leading public notice archive in the country. She said that the website aggregates each published legal notice each day, and is maintained by fees paid by newspapers. She also said that the website provides verification that

legal notices were actually published, and allows viewers to view the actual legal notice as it appeared on the newspaper page.

Ms. Guttery provided a demonstration of how the statewide legal notice publication website works in practice.

Ms. Bennett and Ms. Guttery responded to questions regarding the operation and security of the legal notice publication website, and the membership of the WNA.

Gregg Walker, WNA Board Member and Publisher of Lakeland Publishing in Minocqua; and Andrew Johnson, Publisher of the Wisconsin Free Press Group (Mayville, Dodge County Pioneer-Campbellsport News), noted that newspapers are innovative and responsive to changes in technology, and that newspapers still gather most of the news that goes to digital media platforms.

Mr. Walker also expressed concern that the study committee does not have any representation from the northern third of the state. He said that the northern part of the state is different than other parts of the state because newspapers play a much larger role in delivering information to citizens. He urged the committee to consider the role of newspapers in the northern part of the state as the committee completes its work.

Mr. Johnson stated that public notices work well for local governmental issues, and provided a number of examples how notices of local reports, meetings, and actions were seen by citizens reading their local newspaper. He said that citizens would not have had the opportunity to be engaged in these local affairs had they not seen the notices in the newspaper. He stated that now is not the time to limit mandatory legal notice publication in newspapers.

Mr. Walker and Mr. Johnson responded to questions regarding fees paid by local governments to newspapers, the necessity of third-party publication of legal notices, and local newspaper reporting shortages.

Curt Witynski, Assistant Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities; and Sandra L. Wesolowski, Clerk, City of Franklin, provided background information on publication requirements applicable to cities and villages under current Wisconsin law. He discussed the costs to municipalities of publishing legal notices and noted that cities spend significantly more than villages because of the requirement that cities designate an official newspaper and publish city legal notices in that newspaper. He stated that villages need not designate an official newspaper and instead may choose to publish village legal notices by posting them in three public places or in one public place and on the village's website.

Mr. Witynski recommended the committee consider legislation that would extend to all municipalities the option of posting legal notices in one public place and on a municipality's website in lieu of newspaper publication.

Ms. Wesolowski described her duties as a city clerk relating to publication of legal notices, and discussed the costs her city incurs publishing legal notices in the newspaper. She also stated that, if permitted to post legal notices in one public place and on a city's website, a city would be able to maintain the accuracy of effective dates and comply with legal notice classes better than newspapers.

Mr. Witynski and Ms. Wesolowski responded to questions regarding the percentage of villages that have elected to designate an official newspaper, municipalities' technological capacity to operate and maintain a website, the role of newspapers in maintaining government transparency, and how individuals receive news from their local government.

Carol Nawrocki, Assistant Director, Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA); and Karen Weinschrott, Clerk, Town of Grand Chute, provided background information on WTA and described how towns are diverse in geographic size, population, proximity to urban areas, and extent of commercial development.

Ms. Weinschrott stated that she has never heard of a case in which a citizen learned about town business by reading a legal notice published in a newspaper. She said that many town property owners are not residents and rely on the town's website for information about town business. She also said that people will access information as long as they know where to find information, and the type of media used is largely irrelevant. She stated that a significant amount of taxpayer dollars are spent to reach a small amount of people because people do not read newspapers to find and read legal notices.

Ms. Nawrocki outlined proposed law changes recommended by WTA, including the elimination of the requirement that towns publish certain types of legal notices in newspapers and clarification of the applicability of 2015 Wisconsin Act 79 to the open meetings law. She also stated that eliminating paid newspaper publication would not hurt the public, would not make it more difficult to enforce the open meetings law, would not jeopardize the reliability of legal notices, and would not diminish accountability for municipal officers.

Ms. Nawrocki and Ms. Weinschrott responded to questions regarding towns' technological capacity to operate and maintain a website and the role of newspapers in maintaining government transparency.

Dan Rossmiller, Director of Government Relations, Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB), said that school boards, much like municipalities, want options and flexibility regarding publication of legal notices. He noted that the current requirement that school board meeting proceedings be published is especially costly for school boards, and he requested that the committee consider allowing school boards the option to post such notices in one public place and on the Internet.

Mr. Rossmiller responded to questions regarding the amount of money spent by school boards on publication of legal notices, the role of newspapers in maintaining government transparency, and school boards' use of the media to promote school boards' interests.

Chairman Spiros stated that the committee received a substantial amount of information at its initial meeting, and asked that committee members offer suggestions of additional issues they would like Legislative Council staff to research before the next meeting. Legislative Council staff commented that they will prepare research for the committee on the following topics:

- Expenditures and revenues relating to publication.
- Newspaper utilization by different demographic groups.

- Utilization, creation, maintenance, and security of current local government websites.
- Publication rates as set by the Department of Administration, and the selection and qualification of newspapers as the official newspaper of a local government.
- Limitations on government advertising in relation to referenda.
- Practices relating to the authentication of digital publications.

At the August 30, 2016 meeting, the Study Committee heard testimony from one invited speaker, received a research briefing from Legislative Council staff, and discussed the committee's assignment, including ideas for legislation offered by committee members.

Judy Steffes, Owner, WashingtonCountyInsider.com, introduced herself and talked about her experience as a journalist for both print and digital media outlets. She showed committee members her website, www.WashingtonCountyInsider.com, and urged committee members to consider allowing digital-only news outlets to qualify as an official newspaper that satisfies legal notice publication requirements. She touted her website's low advertising fees, 24/7 availability, and unlimited space for print as features that newspapers cannot offer local governments.

Ms. Steffes responded to questions from the committee regarding her website's content, her experience covering local affairs and legal notices, and her website's business model.

Steve McCarthy and **Scott Grosz, Legislative Council staff**, presented the committee with prepared research addressing issues raised by committee members at the previous meeting.

Mr. McCarthy presented information regarding expenditures and revenue for both newspapers and local government relating to publication of legal notices, newspaper utilization by different demographic groups, and utilization and creation of local government websites.

Mr. Grosz presented information regarding maintenance and security of local government websites, practices relating to the authentication of digital publication, publication rates set by the Department of Administration (DOA), and limitations on government advertising for referenda.

Information and data was collected from a number of sources, including WNA, the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, the Wisconsin Municipal Clerks Association, the Pew Research Center, the Legislative Audit Bureau, the Legislative Technology Services Bureau, and DOA.

Mr. McCarthy and Mr. Grosz responded to questions from the committee regarding DOA publication rate-setting, available data on readership of newspaper legal notices, and capacity of local governments to maintain websites.

Mr. Grosz read the committee's scope of assignment statement.

Senator Miller began the discussion by commenting that his priority for the committee is ensuring citizens receive notice, and he asked others to share their priorities for the committee. The committee discussed various priorities, including transparency and flexibility for local governments to decide how best to reach citizens.

Chair Spiros commented that his first priority is transparency and his second is flexibility for local governments. He commented that cost-cutting and budgeting is an important consideration

for a local government, and that he did not want the committee to impose new restrictions or mandates on local government publication of legal notices. Chair Spiros then invited committee members to offer specific ideas for the committee to consider.

Representative Jacque suggested limiting the length of certain mandatory notice requirements by requiring a brief summary and direction to a local government's website for more information. The committee discussed his idea, including discussion of shortening the number or length requirements for class 2 and 3 notices. Michael Schlaak said he thought that, if changes were to be made to class 2 and 3 notice publication requirements, a full notice should still be required for the first publication.

Representative Genrich suggested there needs to be a systematized online publication option for local governments that is secure. He commented that information must be free, but recognized that providing the information comes with a cost. Matthew Blessing commented that the Wisconsin Historical Society currently pays for maintaining digital archives for different types of state and local government documents and that model could be used if the committee pursues a permissive, third-party online publication option.

Senator Miller said the committee should consider the fact that many citizens consume communications in both print and digital form. He suggested the committee consider establishing requirements for local governments that have the statutory option to post on a website to establish a consistent manner of posting and to maintain online postings for a set period of time. He also suggested that clarification be added to the statutes to require that a local government that posts on its website must do so in a conspicuous way, such as on the website's home page. The committee discussed his ideas.

Chair Spiros explained that members should offer any more suggestions they have. He said that Legislative Council staff will summarize those ideas, and synthesize them into an options paper that will be presented to the committee for consideration at the next meeting.

Representative Jacque suggested that the state could bear some of the cost of an online clearinghouse for legal notices. He said the online clearinghouse could be operated either as the arm of a state government agency, the WNA, or some other third party. He wanted local governments then to have the option to post to the online clearinghouse or in print newspapers. Some committee members expressed concern that no local governments would choose to publish legal notices in newspapers if the state were to bear the cost of an online clearinghouse.

Representative Jacque also suggested that municipalities have the option to publish legal notices in mass mailings that go out on regularly scheduled intervals. Ms. Burmaster commented that it would be impossible for her community and other larger communities to ensure that citizens are receiving notices sent via mass mailings because so many property owners reside elsewhere.

Mr. Grosz recapped the ideas that had been offered, and grouped them into four general categories: (1) website navigation standards; (2) permissive option for electronic publication; (3) limiting the length of mandatory notice requirements; and (4) revising standards for class 2 and 3 notices to allow limited electronic publication.

The committee then generally discussed the ideas that had been presented. Tim Lyke commented that he worries that greater flexibility would mean less notice and less transparency. Senator Miller indicated he would only support ideas that expand notice to citizens. Mr. Blessing requested that the committee ensure any drafted language carefully avoids using the phrase “publication of government documents” because that phrase has a different meaning to the Historical Society than “publication of legal notices.”

Representative Jacque asked Legislative Council for a list of state and local documents that are required to be kept in print. He commented that his office regularly receives large, unsolicited documents that could be accessed electronically at a cheaper cost to the state. Mr. Blessing approximated that 90% of such documents are already available electronically and then by request in print form.

At the October 10, 2016 meeting, the Study Committee heard a brief review by Legislative Council staff of Memo No. 2, *Options for Committee Recommendations*, and discussed each item described in the Memo.

Senator Miller began discussion of options relating to internet site navigation standards for municipalities that may post notice pursuant to 2015 Wisconsin Act 79 by describing his efforts to survey websites of local units of government. He recommended a link or button on the homepage of a municipal website that would direct readers to a page reserved for notices, noting it would be too cumbersome to post notices directly on a homepage. Maribeth Witzel-Behl suggested that this request should be clarified to require a link in order to minimize any technical requirements associated with providing an electronic “button.”

Committee members next discussed the merits of specifying additional archival and organizational requirements for a website used to post notice under Act 79. After discussing options for notice archives, searching and sorting functions, and authentication requirements, the committee also noted the impact such requirements would have on the complexity of municipal websites.

Following a request from Chair Spiros, Mr. Stodder moved, seconded by Senator Miller, to recommend legislation that would require a municipality that was authorized to post notice electronically under Act 79 to include an easily identifiable link to its notices on the municipality’s website homepage. The committee passed the motion on a unanimous voice vote.

The committee next directed its attention to the second and third options described in Memo No. 2. Committee members discussed the merits and impacts of newspaper publication. Mark Stodder raised the question of whether newspaper publication was in fact a significant burden on local government, and posed the question of whether any savings to local government would offset reductions in accountability provided by newspaper publication. Ms. Witzel-Behl asked whether the small text of newspaper notice was sufficient in comparison to more easily-read text available online. Heather Rogge shared information she had received regarding the usage of municipal websites by residents versus nonresidents. Mr. Lyke asked whether information was available regarding viewership of newspaper websites. Mr. Stodder suggested that the presence of notices in newspapers provides better opportunity for inadvertent discovery of the information as compared

to notices placed on municipal websites. Mr. Blessing offered his advice that website viewership data is often inaccurate.

Senator Miller offered the suggestion to allow municipalities to summarize the content of subsequent newspaper notices, under certain conditions, following an initial publication in the newspaper. Legislative Council staff identified this proposal as relating to the third option in Memo No. 2. Committee members discussed the proposal and made suggestions to clarify the conditions under which such summaries could be provided.

Senator Miller moved, seconded by Mr. Schlaak, to recommend legislation that would allow a municipality the option to publish a summary, instead of publishing any full-text content that may be required under current law, for the second and third insertions that are required for publication of Class 2 and 3 notices, if the summarized notice also indicates that the full-text content may be viewed at the following sources:

- The newspaper in which the initial insertion of the Class 2 or 3 notice was published.
- The municipal website.
- The Wisconsin Newspapers Association website.
- A physical location maintained by the municipality.

The committee clarified that the proposed legislation would apply only to a notice that relates to municipal business and that is not related to a court proceeding, and that the proposed legislation would not apply to any notice required to be published by a party other than a municipality. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

Following discussion of option three from Memo No. 2, the committee revisited its discussion related to option two from the Memo. Ms. Witzel-Behl suggested that the committee explore the option of allowing a summary to be posted for *ex post* notices, if they include reference to where full-text content may be obtained. Chair Spiros suggested that public interest relating to publication of notice may be different for notices that relate to municipal action that has already occurred. Mr. Stodder raised the point that newspaper publication serves an archival function as well as an announcement function. Mr. Lyke offered a recent example of a school board that revisited its action on an issue following public interest in the published minutes of a meeting.

Representative Jacque moved, seconded by Ms. Witzel-Behl, to recommend legislation to allow a municipality the permissive option to publish notice that directs the public to the substance of board proceedings, rather than directly publishing the substance of those proceedings. The motion failed on a vote of Ayes, 5 (Reps. Spiros and Jacque; and Public Members Burmaster, Schlaak, and Witzel-Behl);

Noes, 6 (Sen. Miller; Rep. Genrich; and Public Members Blessing, Lyke, Rogge, and Stodder).

Chair Spiros asked Legislative Council staff to describe options relating to permissive electronic publication, including the question of whether an option for electronic posting should be authorized for any type of legal notice.

Members discussed their general consensus that the committee should retain the current requirements for print publication of legal notices and maintenance of the statewide public notice website. The committee discussed the likelihood that future technological advancements and changes in how people access information may necessitate broader changes to the law, but agreed that this committee should not be making those changes at this time. Chair Spiros tabled the option and no votes on any questions were taken.

The committee agreed to vote on final approval of the forthcoming bill drafts via mail ballot.

PART III

RECOMMENDATIONS INTRODUCED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

This Part of the report provides background information on, and a description of, the bills as recommended by the Study Committee on Publication of Government Documents and Legal Notices and introduced by the Joint Legislative Council.

2017 ASSEMBLY BILL 119

Background

Under current law, certain municipalities may, in lieu of newspaper publication, provide certain legal notice by posting a notice in three public places or, as authorized by 2015 Wisconsin Act 79, by posting a notice in one public place and placing the notice electronically on an internet site maintained by the municipality.

Description

For qualifying municipalities that elect to provide legal notice by posting a notice in one public place and placing the notice on the municipality's internet site, Assembly Bill 119 requires the municipality to include an easily identifiable link to its notices on the municipality's website homepage.

2017 ASSEMBLY BILL 120

Background

Under current law, publication of a legal notice may be prescribed as a Class 1, 2, or 3 notice, where the class of notice corresponds to the frequency of required insertions. For example, a Class 2 notice must be published once a week for two consecutive weeks and a Class 3 notice must be published once a week for three consecutive weeks. Generally, when multiple insertions are prescribed, the last insertion must occur at least one week before the act or event to which the notice relates.

Description

Assembly Bill 120 allows a municipality the option to publish a summary, instead of publishing any full-text content that may be required under current law, for the second and third insertions that are required for publication of Class 2 and 3 notices, if the summarized notice also indicates that the full-text content may be viewed at the following sources:

1. The newspaper in which the initial insertion of the Class 2 or 3 notice was published.

2. The municipal website.
3. The WNA legal notices website.
4. A physical location maintained by the municipality.

The authority to summarize the content of a notice under the bill does not apply to a legal notice required to be published by a municipality by order of a court.

COMMITTEE AND JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VOTES

The following drafts were recommended by the Study Committee on Publication of Government Documents and Legal Notices to the Joint Legislative Council for introduction in the 2017-18 Session of the Legislature.

STUDY COMMITTEE VOTE

The Study Committee voted by a November 28, 2016 mail ballot, to recommend the following drafts to the Joint Legislative Council for introduction in the 2017-18 Session of the Legislature. The vote on the drafts was as follows:

- LRB-0462/1, relating to method of notification when a legal notice is provided electronically, passed by a vote of Ayes, 10 (Reps. Spiros and Genrich; Sen. Miller; and Public Members Burmaster, Lyke, Rogge, Schlaak, Stodder, and Witzel-Behl); and Noes, 1 (Rep. Jacque).
- LRB-0463/1, relating to information required to be included in class 2 and class 3 legal notices, passed by a vote of Ayes, 8 (Reps. Spiros, Genrich, and Jacque; Sen. Miller; and Public Members Burmaster, Schlaak, and Witzel-Behl); and Noes, 3 (Public Members Lyke, Rogge, and Stodder).

JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VOTE

At its February 15, 2017 meeting, the Joint Legislative Council voted as follows on the recommendations of the Study Committee:

*Sen. Roth moved, seconded by Sen. Marklein, that **LRB-0462/1**, be introduced by the Joint Legislative Council. The motion passed on a roll call vote as follows: Ayes, 21 (Reps. Brooks, August, Barca, Hesselbein, Hintz, Mason, Nygren, Spiros, Steineke, and Vos; and Sens. Roth, Darling, Fitzgerald, Marklein, Miller, Moulton, Petrowski, Risser, Shilling, Taylor, and Wanggaard); Noes, 0; and Excused, 1 (Rep. Ballweg).*

*Sen. Miller moved, seconded by Rep. Vos, that **LRB-0463/1**, be introduced by the Joint Legislative Council. The motion passed on a roll call vote as follows: Ayes, 21 (Reps. Brooks, August, Barca, Hesselbein, Hintz, Mason, Nygren, Spiros, Steineke, and Vos; and Sens. Roth, Darling, Fitzgerald, Marklein, Miller, Moulton, Petrowski, Risser, Shilling, Taylor, and Wanggaard); Noes, 0; and Excused, 1 (Rep. Ballweg).*

JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

<u>SENATE MEMBERS</u>	<u>ASSEMBLY MEMBERS</u>
Roger Roth, Co-Chair Senate President Appleton	Robert Brooks, Co-Chair Assistant Majority Leader Saukville
Alberta Darling JFC Co-Chair River Hills	Tyler August Speaker Pro Tempore Lake Geneva
Scott Fitzgerald Majority Leader Juneau	Joan Ballweg Markesan
Howard Marklein President Pro Tempore Spring Green	Peter Barca Minority Leader Kenosha
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Terry Moulton Chippewa Falls	Gordon Hintz JFC Ranking Minority Oshkosh
Jerry Petrowski Marathon	Cory Mason Racine
Fred A. Risser Madison	John Nygren JFC Co-Chair Marinette
Jennifer Shilling Minority Leader La Crosse	John Spiros Marshfield
Lena Taylor JFC Ranking Minority Milwaukee	Jim Steineke Majority Leader Kaukauna
Van Wanggaard Racine	Robin Vos Speaker Rochester

This 22-member committee consists of the majority and minority party leadership of both houses of the Legislature, the co-chairs and ranking minority members of the Joint Committee on Finance, and 5 Senators and 5 Representatives appointed as are members of standing committees.

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COMMITTEE LIST

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STUDY ASSIGNMENT: The Study Committee is directed to update and recodify chs. 35 and 985, Stats., relating to the publication and distribution of government documents and legal notices, to reflect technological advances and remove obsolete provisions. The committee shall also study whether, and in what circumstances, current law regarding the publication and distribution of government documents and legal notices, including qualifications for official newspapers, should be modified to allow for information to be made available only electronically or through nontraditional media outlets, and the committee shall recommend legislation regarding any such modifications.

11 MEMBERS: 3 Representatives; 1 Senator; and 7 Public Members.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STAFF: Scott Grosz, Principal Attorney, Steve McCarthy, Staff Attorney, and Kelly Mautz, Support Staff.

COMMITTEE MATERIALS LIST

[Copies of documents are available at www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lc]

July 26, 2016 Meeting

- Memo No. 1, Information Regarding Publication of Government Documents and Legal Notices (July 12, 2016)
- Memorandum from Dan Rossmiller, WASB Government Relations Director (July 26, 2016)
- Handout, State and Federal Annual Notice Requirements 2016-17 Parent and Student Notices (Last Revised 5/31/16) distributed by Dan Rossmiller, WASB Government Relations Director (July 26, 2016)
- Testimony of Sandra Wesolowski, Director of Clerk Services/City Clerk, City of Franklin (July 26, 2016)
- Memorandum from Curt Witynski, Assistant Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities (July 26, 2016)
- Testimony by Beth Bennett, Executive Director, Wisconsin Newspaper Association (July 26, 2016)
- Testimony by Gregg Walker, Wisconsin Newspaper Association Board Member and Publisher of Lakeland Publishing, Minocqua (July 26, 2016)
- WNA handout
- Screenshots distributed at the request of Beth Bennett, Executive Director, Wisconsin Newspaper Association
- Presentation, Wisconsin Towns Association, presented by Attorney Carol Nawrocki, Assistant Director, WTA, and Karen Weinschrott, Clerk, Town of Grand Chute (July 26, 2016)
- Letter distributed by Carol Nawrocki, Assistant Director, Wisconsin Towns Association
- Minutes from the July 26, 2016 meeting

August 30, 2016 Meeting

- Department of Administration Rate Setting Document
- "State of the News Media 2016", Pew Research Center (June 2016)
- "State of the News Media 2016, Newspapers: Fact Sheet", Pew Research Center (June 2016)
- "State of the News Media 2016, Digital News Audience: Fact Sheet", Pew Research Center (June 2016)

- Testimony, Cost to Municipalities of Publishing Legal Notices in Newspapers, Curt Witynski, Assistant Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities (July 26, 2016)
- Letter from Beth Bennett, Executive Director, Wisconsin Newspaper Association, to Scott Grosz, Legislative Council Staff (August 3, 2016)
- Letter from Beth Bennett, Executive Director, Wisconsin Newspaper Association, to Scott Grosz, Legislative Council Staff (August 9, 2016)
- Testimony in support of Senate Bill 137 by Senator Howard Marklein distributed at the request of Beth Bennett, Executive Director, Wisconsin Newspaper Association
- "Wisconsin Consumer Media Usage Research Study", Scarborough Research (2013), distributed at the request of Beth Bennett, Executive Director, Wisconsin Newspaper Association
- "Local E-Government: Best Practices Review", Report 14-5, Legislative Audit Bureau (February 2014)
- "The Modern News Consumer", Pew Research Center (July 2016).
- "Publications Survey", Wisconsin Municipal Clerks Association (August 2016).
- Handout by Judy Steffes, Owner, WashingtonCountyInsider.com
- Handout by Judy Steffes, Owner, WashingtonCountyInsider.com
- Minutes from the August 30, 2016 meeting

October 10, 2016 Meeting

- Memo No. 2, Options for Committee Recommendations (October 3, 2016)
- Letter from Mark Stodder, committee member, to Scott Grosz, Principal Attorney, Legislative Council Staff (September 25, 2016)
- Email from Curt Witynski, Assistant Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities (October 3, 2016)
- Minutes from the October 10, 2016 Meeting

November 28, 2016 Mail Ballot

- LRB-0462/1, relating to method of notification when a legal notice is provided electronically
- LRB-0463/1, relating to information required to be included in class 2 and class 3 legal notices
- Mail Ballot of the Study Committee on Publication of Government Documents and Legal Notices
- Results of the November 28, 2016 Mail Ballot

Recommendations to the Joint Legislative Council (February 15, 2017 Meeting)

- LRB-0462/1, relating to method of notification when a legal notice is provided electronically
- LRB-0463/1, relating to information required to be included in class 2 and class 3 legal notices
- Report to the Joint Legislative Council LCR-2017-02 Study Committee on Publication of Government Documents and Legal Notices

Joint Legislative Council Recommendations to the 2017-18 Legislature

- Joint Legislative Council's Report of the Study Committee on Publication of Government Documents and Legal Notices JLCR-2017-02
- 2017 Assembly Bill 119
- 2017 Assembly Bill 120