MEMO

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

To:	Board of Public Works
From:	Jake Carrel, Fire Chief & Jake Van Gompel, Street Superintendent
Date:	November 16, 2026
Re:	Wisconsin Disaster Fund (WDF) Reimbursement

Background information:
In the second week of March 2026, City Public Works and emergency operations braced for a historic winter weather event (Blizzard Elsa). The event started Saturday, March 14, and finally subsided on Monday afternoon, March 16. The National Weather Service recorded 27.0 inches at its Appleton weather station over the three days, a new three-day record. Green Bay recorded 26.6 inches, its second-largest snowstorm on record. The Governor declared a State of Emergency (Executive Order #286) on March 14, and the City proactively declared its own Class III Snow Emergency on March 13.

Kaukauna Public Works crews had 100% turnout for the three days of initial impact. There were 23 pieces of equipment sent out, and the City mechanic stayed in-house to respond to the numerous breakdowns.

Due to the significant costs the City incurred responding to the storm, City staff pursued reimbursement through the Wisconsin Disaster Fund, a state program that helps local governments recover from major disasters when federal assistance is not available. If a community's disaster-related costs exceed a per-capita threshold (for Kaukauna, 17,089 residents × $4.72 = $80,660), the program reimburses 70% of all eligible costs. Overtime labor and use of City-owned equipment were eligible within a single 48-hour period. Staff chose the period that captured the most eligible expenses: 3:45 a.m. Sunday, March 15, through 3:45 a.m. Tuesday, March 17.

Fire Department and Public Works staff built the claim from payroll records and priced equipment at the published Wisconsin DOT equipment rates. On November 11, 2026, Wisconsin Emergency Management notified the City that the State had verified $98,218.59 in eligible recovery costs, found the City's documentation satisfactory, and released the City's 70% reimbursement of $68,753.01 via direct deposit.

Strategic Plan:
Staff's work to document and pursue this claim supports the Financial Responsibility foundation of the City's Strategic Plan, recovering $68,753.01 in storm costs that the budget would have otherwise absorbed. The storm response itself supports the objective to Create a Community of Choice: crews kept streets open for emergency vehicles and residents throughout this record-setting storm.

Budget:
The City will receive $68,753.01 from the Wisconsin Disaster Fund.

Recommended action:
Informational only; no recommended action.