



CITY OF MENOMONIE AD-HOC HOUSING COMMITTEE

MEETING AGENDA

Menomonie City Hall

800 Wilson Avenue

1st Floor, City Council Chambers

5:00 pm

Tuesday – September 30, 2025

1. Roll Call
2. Approval of Minutes
3. Public Comments (agenda items only).
4. New Business
 - a) Discuss implementing a housing inspection program in the City of Menomonie – discussion and possible action.
5. Set Next Meeting Date
6. Adjourn

NOTE: Notice is hereby given that members of the Plan Commission and/or Common Council may be present at the foregoing meeting to gather information about a subject over which they have decision-making responsibility. This constitutes a meeting of the Ad-Hoc Housing Committee and/or Common Council pursuant to State ex. Rel. Badke v. Greendale Village Board, 173 Wis. 2d 553, 494 N.W.2d. 408 (1993), and must be noticed as such, although the Common Council will not take any formal action at this meeting.

NOTE: Upon reasonable notice, efforts will be made to accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities. For additional information or to request the service, contact the City Clerk or the City Administrator at 715-232-2221.

OFFICIAL AD-HOC HOUSING COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

A regular meeting of the Ad-Hoc Housing Committee was held in open session on September 16, 2025, and called to order by Chairperson Brennan at 5:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers. The following members were present: Brennan, Gentz, Solberg, Crowe, and Knaack.

Staff Present: Atkinson, Schofield, and Kowieski

MOTION was made by Knaack and seconded by Gentz to approve the meeting minutes for August 26, 2025.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Jacob (LNU) spoke about the quality of rental conditions in Menomonie and supports the SHIELD ordinance proposed by GROWW. Margo Hecker spoke in favor of the SHIELD ordinance, and thanked the Ad-Hoc Housing Committee for addressing the rental housing problems in Menomonie. Esra Bautista spoke about the poor condition of rental units and supports the SHIELD ordinance.

Dunn County's KT Gallagher and Paul Winter presented information about the Eau Claire County/City housing program. No action was taken.

GROWW representatives Tina Lee, Megan Katcher, Emmy Stemke, Joe Plouff, Andrew Hagen, and Monica Berrier presented information about the proposed SHIELD program and ordinance. Dunn Economic Development Director Adam Accola spoke about the impact housing has on economic development.

Motion was made by Gentz to recommend to the City Council to draft an ordinance based on the SHIELD presentation and was seconded by Crowe. Gentz and Crowe voted yes. Brennan, Knaack, and Solberg voted no. The motion did not carry.

The next meeting date was set for 5:00 pm on Tuesday, September 30, 2025.

MOTION was made by Knaack and seconded by Gentz to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

Recording Secretary: Eric Atkinson

**MEMORANDUM**

Eric M. Atkinson, Administrator
atkinsone@menomonie-wi.gov
715-232-2221 Ext. 1001

TO: Ad-Hoc Housing Committee
FROM: Administrator Atkinson
SUBJECT: Rental Inspection Initiative
DATE: September 27, 2025

ATTACHMENTS:

During the September 16, 2025, Ad-Hoc Housing Committee meeting, there were presentations by GROWW and Dunn County Public Health, along with Human Services, outlining their recommendations for improving housing in the City of Menomonie.

GROWW presented a draft of their Safe Housing, Inspections, Enforcement, and Landlord Development Program (SHIELD) that focuses on rental properties. There were five components of the SHIELD Program. They included proactive rental inspections, Escrow Deposit Programs, Retaliation Protections, Nuisance Properties, and Voluntary Landlord Certification. The SHIELD Program originated from the Racine, WI RENTS Program.

Dunn County introduced a housing program that adopts a public health-oriented approach for both rental and owner-occupied homes. This approach is being exercised in Eau Claire County and the City of Eau Claire, WI. It involves a collaborative partnership among local government agencies—including law enforcement, inspections, fire department, public health, and human services—as well as tenants, landlords, and property owners.

City staff reviewed both proposals and identified the pros and cons of both initiatives.

SHIELD	
Pros	Cons
Creates the opportunity to do additional inspections	Legal repercussions of a tenant or landlord refusing access to the rental.
May identify code violations that would otherwise go unnoticed.	The Council needs to establish clear definitions of habitability violations.
May improve the safety and quality of rental units.	Legal challenges to being labelled or grouped in a Neighborhood Stabilization and Enhancement District.
Could identify properties that provide housing that meets code.	The Council needs to establish clear definitions for qualifications to create a

Neighborhood Stabilization and Enhancement District(s).	
May identify other issues (criminal or otherwise) occurring in rental units.	Based on <i>Wildwood Estate, LLC v. Village of Summit</i> , NSEDs could be considered an issue of zoning requiring proper notice, legal descriptions, Plan Commission review, and public hearings. Amendments to NSEDs would also need to follow that process.
The creation of a prohibiting retaliation ordinance may simplify the remedy versus following the State of Wisconsin process.	Create consistent terminology for identifying entities such as owner, property owner, and landlord.
	Lack of capacity in staffing (both financial and personnel) to manage a significant increase in inspections or manage an escrow program.
	The issue of tracking escrow and possible interest earned while in escrow to ensure compliance with the State of Wisconsin's auditing requirements.
	Legal liability risk of withholding rent from a landlord/property owner.
	Creating an appeals process for escrow through the Board of Zoning Appeals presents challenges in terms of mailing and publishing public hearing notices.
	If a local ordinance were created to prohibit retaliation, the Council would need to be specific in its definitions to prevail in court.
	Additional City prosecutorial fees for retaliation violation would be incurred.
	The City doesn't have the authority to nullify an eviction ordered by the Dunn County Circuit Court.
	A City-managed Certification Program could create unnecessary legal liability and personnel cost, and would be better left to a neutral third party.
	Need to determine how the City would assist displaced tenants if a rental unit was condemned.

The potential financial impact of the SHIELD program could be significant if implemented in its entirety. An additional inspector to manage the additional inspections and code enforcement

would cost approximately \$110,000 (salary, insurance, retirement, FICA, etc.) per year. An additional accounts receivable person would cost roughly \$90,000 (salary, insurance, retirement, FICA, etc.) per year. It is expected that there will be a need to create both physical and digital materials to educate the public about the SHIELD program. That requires personnel to make the media and deliver the product. The City expects that it will cost between \$1,000 and \$5,000 (includes physical publications and human resources). There would also be legal expenses to consider. The city attorneys would be needed to draft the SHIELD ordinance so that it conforms to the City of Menomonie's ordinances. Additionally, there would be legal expenses to prosecute individuals in cases of landlord retaliation violations. There may also be expenses resulting from legal challenges to the ordinances, which could impact the City in terms of direct legal fees and liability insurance. The creation of the ordinance could cost approximately \$1,000 to \$3,000, which includes legal fees and publication.

Public Health	
Pros	Cons
Utilize current City ordinances and State laws.	There will be a need to create an active outreach approach in terms of education and prevention.
Utilizes existing resources already in place within the City and the County.	Relies on tenants and landlords to request inspections.
Requires the City and County to develop streamlined practices to improve coordinated efforts.	Lack of resources available for displaced residents of condemned properties.
The public health approach incorporates both rental and owner-occupied residential spaces in the City.	There is no single database available to all relevant agencies (e.g., law enforcement, fire department, inspections, public health, human services) to share information readily.
Requires collaboration between local government, tenants, and property owners.	There is a human resources cost associated with time, which may lead to either reducing services in a department or adding additional personnel.
May identify other issues (criminal or otherwise) occurring at residential properties.	

The potential financial impact of the public health approach is not as costly as the SHIELD, but it still presents a financial investment. There will be costs associated with developing educational materials. That cost equates to the physical cost of creating pamphlets and digital media, as well as educating the public. The City estimates the expense to be between \$1,000 and \$5,000. The City needs to consider the time it will take to respond to the anticipated increase in inspections and calls for public nuisance investigations. Depending on the number of complaints and time

considerations, it may negatively impact the City departments' ability to address other needs that are required of them. The increased workload may necessitate the need to contract or hire additional staff. Additional staff could include, but may not be limited to, community service officers, inspectors (fire and code), and administrative personnel. It is safe to assume that an additional staff member could cost anywhere between \$75,000 and \$110,000 per year (salary, insurance, retirement, etc.).

Conclusion

There is no one simple solution to the property rental and owner-occupied housing situation facing Menomonie. Every solution presents opportunities and challenges. Additionally, the financial factor is ever-present due to levy restrictions imposed by the Wisconsin Legislature on local governments. This document was created to facilitate discussion about the two options presented to the Ad-Hoc Housing Committee. City staff members will be present for the Ad-Hoc Housing Committee meeting scheduled for September 30, 2025.