

2026



Legislative Reference Bureau

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PORT MILWAUKEE



2026 Proposed Plan and Executive Budget Review

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Budget Hearing: 9:00 am on Friday, October 17, 2025

Port Milwaukee

\$7,060,819

Proposed 2026 Budget

-\$1,431,349

Overall Change from 2025

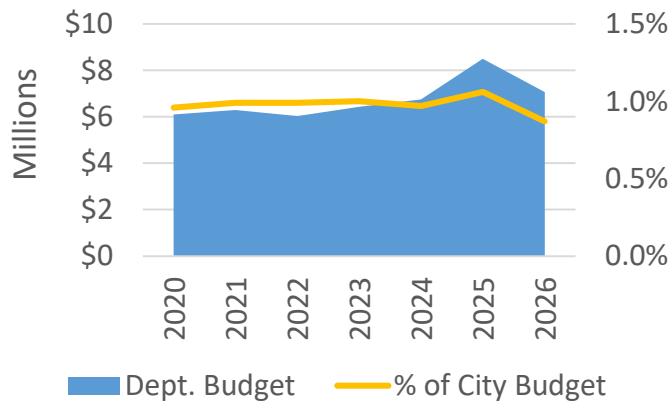
-\$298

Diff. from 2026 Requested

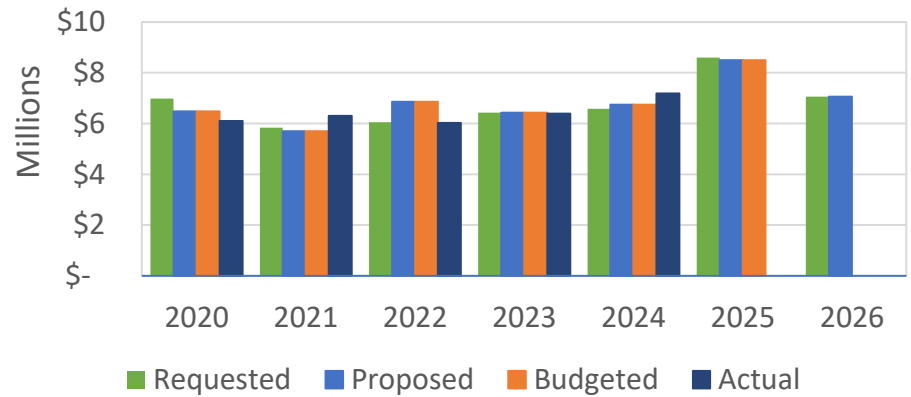
\$7,061,117

Requested 2026 Budget

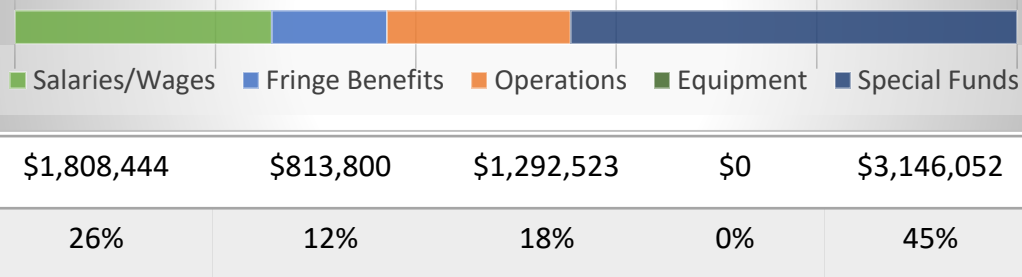
Total Departmental Budget



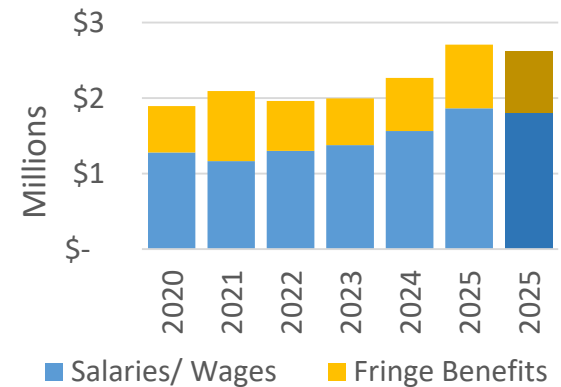
Comparative Funding



Levy Departmental Budget Appropriation by Category



Personnel Budget



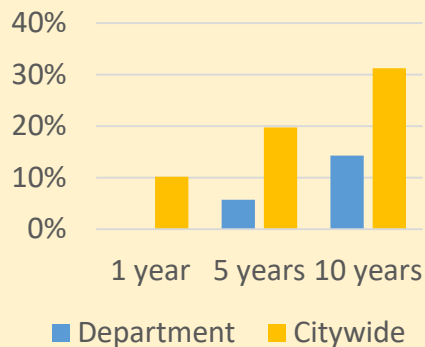
-3.2%

Change in Salaries and Wages
from 2025 Budget.

-\$59,036

Change in Salaries and Wages
from 2025 Budget.

Retirement Eligible



3

Change in Positions

+8.6%

% Change in Positions

3

Current Vacancies

0

Voluntary Separations
In 2025

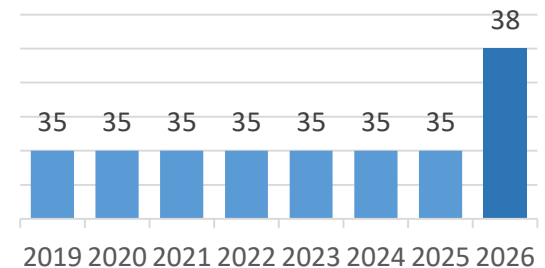
Staffing Vacancies

- Three vacant positions out of 35 authorized positions (8.6% vacancy rate).
- One Administrative Assistant III position has been vacant since June 8, 2025. A reclassification of this position has been requested.
- 2 Port Operations & Maintenance Technician 4 positions (out of 10 positions with this title) are currently vacant, one since August 4, 2023, and the other since March 30, 2025. The department is holding both vacancies open.
- The Port's 2 College Intern positions in the Marketing Section also remain unfilled.

Staffing Update

- The Proposed Budget increases the number of authorized positions by 3, from 35 to 38.
- The 3 new positions are all seasonal Port Operations and Maintenance Technician 2 positions. The Port currently has no positions of this type.
- No funding is provided for the 3 new seasonal positions.
- Port Milwaukee has 3 auxiliary positions. None of these positions have been filled at any time in 2025.

Department Positions



Port Milwaukee

2,200+

Railcars that served the Agricultural Marine Export Facility so far this year, compared to annual average of 2,500 railcars serving all Port tenants combined.

-5.2%

Change in Port's total tonnage handled, 2023 to 2024.

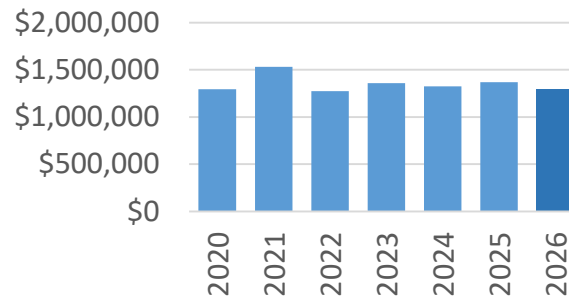
-\$3.45 million

Decrease in capital funding for the Port, primarily due to 2025 funding for the new Cruise Ship Terminal.

9,275

Number of cruise ship passengers visiting Milwaukee so far in 2025, down about 10% from the same time period last year.

Operating Expenditures Budget



Equipment Budget



Revenue

- Port's expenditures are budgeted to match its projected revenues.
- Major revenue sources for 2026:

Rental Income (facilities)	\$2,798,000
Milw. World Festivals Lease	\$1,847,000
Wharfage Charges	\$870,000
Dockage Charges	\$425,000
Water/Sewer charges	\$335,000
Port Thru-Put Charges	\$218,000

Total, All Categories **\$7,126,369**

Capital Programs and Projects

Terminal & Facility Maint.	\$1,000,000
Port Utilities Upgrades	\$600,000
Rail, Track & Service Upgrades	\$500,000
Pier, Berth & Channel Improv.	\$500,000
Cruise Ship Terminal	\$200,000
Roadway Paving	\$100,000
Total	\$2,900,000

Grants

- None identified at this time.

Special Purpose Accounts

- Port Milwaukee administers no special purpose accounts.

\$88,710

Difference between Port revenues and expenditures for 2024, compared to a “surplus” of \$504,188 in 2023.

30.6%

Increase in Port revenue, 2024 to 2025 (through August of each year), due especially to a 35.1% increase in the largest revenue category, facility rent.

\$1,298,635

Total Special Funds appropriation for 2026 (excluding MWF revenue transfer to General Fund), all of which is used for maintaining and improving Port facilities.

372

Total number of commercial vessels that used Port Milwaukee in 2024, a decrease of 22 (-5.6%) from 2023.

Cargo Trends

- 2024 tonnage: 2.233 million metric tons (down 5.2% from 2023).
- 2025 tonnage (through August): 1.153 mill. metric tons (down 6.8% from comparable period in 2024),
- 2025 decrease is primarily the result of a decline in dry bulk shipments (incl. salt) and lower liquid bulk cargo tonnage.

Milwaukee World Festivals, Inc. Lease

For 2026, the City’s lease with Milwaukee World Festivals, Inc., will produce contractual revenues of \$1,847,417. This represents 26% of projected 2026 revenues for Port Milwaukee.

Capital Improvement Project Highlights

- Terminal & Facility Maint. (\$1 million) – funds both routine and unplanned maintenance of Port facilities, many of which date from the 1950s and 1960s.
- Port Utilities Upgrades (\$600,000) – funds hydrant repair/replacement, plumbing and electrical upgrades, and other utility repairs on Jones Island.
- Cruise Ship Terminal (\$200,000) – last piece of funding needed to complete the new South Shore Cruise Dock.

Port Surplus Revenue Transferred to City General Fund

2017	\$835,000	2021	\$376,000
2018	\$488,000	2022	\$1,117,000
2019	\$742,000	2023	\$504,000
2020	\$780,000	2024	\$89,000

Revenue Trends

Through August, Port Milwaukee’s revenue trends in major categories were:

Revenue Category	2024	2025	Pct. Ch.
Facility Rent	\$1,563,180	\$2,112,299	+35.1
Wharfage	526,240	627,836	+19.3
Dockage	255,084	330,024	+29.4
Water Charges	195,246	202,722	+3.8

Cruise Ship Docking Locations 2025

Pier Wisconsin	10 ship visits
Heavy Lift Dock	10 ship visits
South Shore	2 ship visits

Port Milwaukee

Cruise Ships

Port Milwaukee has had another busy year for cruise-ship traffic and passengers. As of September 24, 18 cruise ships had visited Milwaukee this year, bringing with them over 9,200 passengers. A total of 22 cruise-ship visits are expected by the end of the 2025 cruise season.

Based on current bookings, Port Milwaukee anticipates higher numbers for the 2025 cruise season. Currently, the 2026 schedule includes as many as 56 cruise ship visits. American Cruise Lines, which is well known for its cruises on iconic American rivers, will begin offering Great Lakes cruises next year; two of its three Great Lakes itineraries will start and/or end in Milwaukee.

Foreign Trade Zone

Port Milwaukee is the grantee and administrator of Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) 41, which covers all of Wisconsin but focuses on the 12 counties of Southeastern Wisconsin. Participating businesses in an FTZ are able to import and re-export goods duty free, saving them millions of dollars. There are currently 9 approved “zones” (businesses) within FTZ 41, of which 5 are active, including Mercury Marine (Fond du Lac), Broan Nu-Tone (Hartford) and CNH Industrial Americas (Racine).

The 5 active FTZ operators have over 2,700 employees. The Port’s 2024 revenues from the FTZ program were \$33,900; administrative costs totaled \$34,933.

Agricultural Maritime Export Facility (AMEF)

In June, 2023, Port Milwaukee and its partner, The DeLong Company, opened the new, \$40 million Agricultural Maritime Export Facility on Port property along South Carferry Drive. Funding for the facility came from a variety of sources, including state and federal grants, The DeLong Company’s investment, and \$5.7 million from the City/Port (through the issuance of RACM revenue bonds). Related rail improvements on Jones Island were completed later that year.

The new facility is capable of handling and exporting agricultural commodities by truck, rail and marine vessel. DeLong uses the new terminal, which includes a receiving building with a pit for truck and rail access, a storage building and a ship loader, to ship dried distilled grains with solubles (DDGs) to Europe via the St. Lawrence Seaway. This year, through mid-September, 13 vessels have been loaded with commodities at the AMEF.

South Shore Cruise Dock

The 2026 Proposed Budget includes \$200,000 in capital funding for the new South Shore Cruise Dock. The current dock is not large enough to accommodate the largest cruise ships on the Great Lakes (those ships must currently use the Port’s Heavy Lift Dock in the Inner Harbor).

Previously-committed funding for this project includes \$3.5 million from the State of Wisconsin’s ARPA Tourism Capital Grant, a \$500,000 Wisconsin Harbor Assistance Program Grant, \$2.0 million in capital funding in the 2023 Budget, and \$5 million in capital funding in the 2025 Budget.

The new South Shore Cruise Dock will be able to accommodate Seaway-maximum-sized vessels. The project will also provide new utility services that can serve both the cruise ships and future development of the adjacent parcel. Contracts for the new facility have been let, and construction is underway. Project completion is anticipated during the 2026 cruise season.