

Meet Diana Delaney | Candidate for St. Croix County Board, District 6

My name is **Diana Delaney**, and I am honored to be running to serve as your representative on the St. Croix County Board.

A Legacy of Service

My family has called St. Croix County home for over 100 years. Growing up in New Richmond, I learned the values of hard work and community stewardship that have defined this region for generations. While my path led me to teach English abroad and earn my law degree, my roots have always remained here. I am running because I want to ensure that the county continues to be a place where our children and grandchildren can thrive.

My Professional Perspective

As a practicing **Social Security Disability attorney**, my career is dedicated to helping others navigate the complex, often intimidating bureaucracy of government systems. I help people get the support they are entitled to during their most difficult moments. Whether I am working with the Social Security Administration, my professional mission is to cut through red tape, find clarity, and secure results for those I represent. I want to bring that same dedication and advocacy to the County Board.

My Priorities for District 6

- **A Strong Safety Net:** With potential shifts in federal funding for Health and Human Services, we need leadership that understands how to restructure services to protect our most vulnerable. I will advocate for strengthening volunteer-led programs like **CASA** and the **ADRC** to ensure our seniors and youth receive the support they need.
- **Water for the Future:** Our groundwater is our most vital asset. I am committed to proactive, data-backed solutions to ensure our drinking water is safe and our recreational waters remain clean for everyone to enjoy.
- **Stewarding Our Parks:** Our county parks and infrastructure are the foundation of our quality of life. I will prioritize the sustainable improvement of our parks to ensure they remain inclusive and accessible for every resident in St. Croix County.

My Commitment to You

I have built my career on listening, analyzing, and advocating. If elected, I will be a supervisor who listens to your concerns and works collaboratively to ensure St. Croix County remains a place where we can all live, work, and thrive. I would be honored to earn your vote.

CAFO

While the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) remains the primary regulatory body for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) at the state level, St. Croix County has significantly bolstered its local oversight through the **Manure Storage Facilities Ordinance (Chapter 11)**.

The relationship between state monitoring and local enforcement in St. Croix County follows a "layered" approach:

1. State vs. Local Jurisdiction

- **The DNR's Role:** The DNR issues **Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES)** permits to CAFOs (farms with 1,000+ animal units). They focus on [permitting and large-scale enforcement](#) to ensure these operations do not discharge pollutants into "waters of the state."
- **The County's Role:** St. Croix County uses its ordinance to fill gaps where state law might be less specific. As of **January 2025**, the county [strengthened its measures](#), requiring **written landowner consent** before CAFOs can spread manure on land not owned by the facility.

2. Local Requirements for CAFOs

Even if a CAFO is monitored by the DNR, St. Croix County mandates specific local compliance:

- **Manure Storage Permits:** Any construction, assessment, or closure of a storage facility requires a [County Permit](#) in addition to state approvals.
- **Nutrient Management Plans (NMP):** The county requires updated NMPs to ensure that manure application rates don't exceed what the soil can safely process, specifically to protect [groundwater and private wells](#).
- **Spill Response Coordination:** While the DNR handles the legal repercussions of a major spill, the county has its own [Manure Spill and Brown Water Response Plan](#) to provide immediate local assessment and resident notification.

3. Recent 2025 Ordinance Amendments

The St. Croix County Board of Supervisors recently voted to [codify federal and state regulations](#) at the local level. This allows the county to:

- Apply the same storage and handling standards to all farms, not just those meeting the "CAFO" size threshold.
- Prevent "unauthorized spreading" by ensuring third-party landowners have explicitly agreed to receive animal waste.

WATER

The Current Challenge

"We must be honest about the data. Current studies show that our county faces real challenges regarding water quality:"

- **Nitrate Levels:** Approximately **12% of wells in St. Croix County** exceed the EPA drinking water standard for nitrates (10 mg/L).
- **"Forever Chemicals" (PFAS):** While recent studies of 63 wells did not find levels exceeding current standards, **less than 1% of the 17,000 wells** in our county have been tested for these chemicals. We need more data to ensure long-term safety.
- **Hidden Contaminants:** Many pollutants have no taste, odor, or color. We cannot manage what we do not measure.

My Four-Point Water Action Plan

1. **Expand Testing Accessibility:** I will support the continuation and expansion of [Free Well Water Nitrate Screening Clinics](#) like those held in Baldwin and Roberts. Every resident should have a low-barrier way to know what is in their water.
2. **Data-Driven Solutions:** I will advocate for further PFAS and groundwater studies. With 17,000 private wells in the county, we must move beyond the "1% tested" mark to truly understand the trends in our aquifer.
3. **Support for Homeowners:** I will ensure the county remains a resource for technical guidance—helping residents navigate [State Certified Laboratories](#) and providing education on effective water treatment systems.
4. **Protecting the Source:** Beyond testing, we must work with our [Land & Water Conservation](#) team to tackle the root causes of contamination, protecting our surface waters and the Kinni River watershed from runoff and pollutants.

"St. Croix County is growing, and that growth must be supported by a healthy environment. I will listen to the concerns raised in our [Drinking Water Survey](#) and turn that feedback into policy that protects our most precious resource."

Fiscal Responsibility and Jail Expansion

The Challenge: Safety vs. Solvency

The proposed expansion of the St. Croix County Jail is a decision that will impact our taxpayers for the next 30 years. As your County Board representative, my goal is to ensure that we are not just building for the sake of building, but rather making a targeted investment that solves real problems without creating an unnecessary financial burden.

The Pros: Addressing Immediate Needs

There are clear arguments for modernizing our correctional facilities that we must consider:

- **Addressing Overcrowding:** Relief from overcrowding is essential for the safety of both our staff and the inmates.
- **Specialized Care:** Modern facilities provide dedicated space for **mental health units** and rehabilitation services, which are often more effective at reducing recidivism than standard cells.
- **Operational Efficiency:** A centralized layout and upgraded technology can lead to long-term savings by allowing staff to work more effectively.

The Cons: Fiscal and Social Impact

"However, we must also be clear about the risks involved in an [estimated \\$40+ million bond issue](#):"

- **Taxpayer Burden:** Such a project is funded through property tax increases. We must ensure this is the absolute best use of those funds.
- **The Risk of Over-Incarceration:** Critics rightly point out that 'building it doesn't mean we should fill it.' We must avoid the trap of increasing incarceration rates simply because we have the capacity.
- **Unexpected Operational Costs:** Housing state or federal inmates as a 'revenue source' often brings unforeseen logistical and safety challenges that can [offset the projected income](#).

Why More Data is Necessary

Before I can support a project of this scale, I am calling for a 'deeper dive' into the data. We need to ensure that our expansion plans reflect the most current criminal justice trends in a post-2024 landscape. We must analyze:

1. **Diversion Success Rates:** Are our current [Day Report Center](#) and diversion programs working? If we can safely keep more people out of jail, we may not need as many new beds.

Protecting Health and Social Services

Navigating Fiscal Uncertainty

St. Croix County is currently facing significant pressure due to potential federal funding cuts to programs like Medicaid and SNAP. While we are [waiting on final state funding information](#) to understand the full impact, we cannot afford to wait to take action. As your representative, I am committed to protecting our most vulnerable residents through innovative, community-based solutions.

Strengthening Our Volunteer Safety Net

"When budgets are tight, our community's greatest asset is its people. I will advocate for the expansion and support of critical volunteer programs that provide high-impact services at a fraction of the cost of government bureaucracy:"

- **[CASA \(Court Appointed Special Advocates\)](#)**: These volunteers are the eyes and ears for children in the foster care system. Supporting CASA ensures that our most vulnerable youth have a dedicated advocate without increasing the caseload burden on county social workers.
- **[ADRC \(Aging and Disability Resource Center\)](#)**: Our seniors and neighbors with disabilities rely on the ADRC for navigation and support. By bolstering [volunteer driver programs](#) and meal delivery, we can help residents stay in their homes longer, which is both more dignified for them and more cost-effective for the county.
- **Behavioral Health Restructuring**: I support the [Health and Human Services' strategy](#) to restructure the Behavioral Health Division. By reducing levy-supported positions and leveraging community partnerships, we can protect core mental health services even in a lean budget year.

My Commitment

Budget shortfalls should not mean a shortfall in compassion. I will work to foster a culture of service in St. Croix County, ensuring that our non-profits and volunteer organizations have the 'seat at the table' they need to help us bridge the gap between state funding and local needs.

Planning for a Changing Demographic

The Vision: A Sustainable Future for All Ages

For decades, St. Croix County has been defined by rapid expansion. However, current projections from the [Wisconsin Department of Administration](#) indicate that our growth is slowing—set to drop from 11% in the last decade to roughly 5% in this one. This isn't just a change in numbers; it's a change in who we are. As your representative, I will ensure our county services evolve to meet the needs of both our seniors and the next generation of workers.

Understanding the "Graying" of Our County

"The most significant impact of this shift is the 'graying' of our population. As our median age rises faster than the state average, we face three specific challenges:"

- **Workforce Shortages:** A stagnant working-age population makes it harder for local businesses to find employees. We must make St. Croix County an attractive place for young families to stay and work.
- **Housing Mismatch:** According to the [St. Croix Economic Development Corporation](#), we have a 'housing mismatch.' We lack 'missing middle' housing for young professionals and downsizing options for seniors who wish to stay in their communities.
- **Service Demand:** Our infrastructure must pivot. This means increasing support for specialized transportation, healthcare access, and elder care facilities as the demand for these services is projected to surge by 2032.

My Proactive Response

1. **Economic Resilience:** I will support initiatives from the [Job Center of Wisconsin](#) that focus on healthcare and social assistance occupations—the sectors projected to be our largest employers.
2. **Smart Development:** I will advocate for zoning that allows for diverse housing types, ensuring that as household sizes shrink, our residents aren't forced out by a lack of appropriate options.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility:** With a rising 'dependency ratio' (more retirees per working-age adult), we must be more disciplined than ever with our county budget to ensure we can maintain high-quality services on a shifting tax base.

A changing population doesn't have to mean a declining community. By planning for these shifts now, we can ensure St. Croix County remains a vibrant, multi-generational home where everyone—from retirees to new graduates—can thrive.

Solar Energy

The Reality of State vs. Local Control

I believe in being straight with the voters: under Wisconsin law, the County Board cannot simply 'stop' large-scale solar developments like the **Ten Mile Creek Project**. Because these projects exceed 100 megawatts, the ultimate permitting authority lies with the **Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW)**. However, knowing exactly where our leverage begins and ends is the foundation of an effective strategy to protect our residents.

My Strategy: Maximizing Our Leverage

"While we do not hold the permit, we hold the power to negotiate. My approach to solar development is built on three pillars of local protection:"

1. Strengthening the Joint Development Agreement (JDA)

"The county's most important tool is the [Joint Development Agreement \(JDA\)](#). I will ensure this agreement isn't just a formality, but a binding contract that secures:"

- **Enhanced Setbacks:** Pushing for the [JDA standard of 150 feet](#) from residential structures—drastically better than the 5-foot county minimum.
- **Decommissioning Bonds:** Ensuring that Xcel Energy or any future owner is legally and financially responsible for removing panels and restoring the land at the end of the project's life.
- **Tax Revenue Guarantees:** Ensuring the [over \\$1 million in annual payments](#) are allocated to benefit the towns and school districts directly impacted.

2. Utilizing Intervener Status

"I support the county maintaining **intervener status** during state proceedings. This gives St. Croix County a seat at the table in Madison, allowing us to advocate directly for our residents' interests regarding drainage, road use, and emergency services."

3. Transparency and Public Discourse

Large projects naturally bring high emotions. I believe it is necessary to have **transparent public meetings** where both supporters and opponents can be heard. My role is to ensure you are kept informed throughout the PSCW process, rather than hearing about decisions after they've been made.

We may not have the final vote on the permit, but we have the final word on how this project treats our land and our neighbors. I will support an agreement that protects our rural character and provides a net benefit to St. Croix County.

Public Safety & Jurisdiction

Defining Our Role

A frequent question in our community concerns the relationship between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities. It is important for residents to understand that in St. Croix County, we maintain a clear line between local public safety and federal civil enforcement. As your County Board representative, my primary responsibility will be to ensure that every resident feels safe and that the relationship between our community and the government is built on **transparency and mutual trust**. While the County Board does not direct federal immigration enforcement or the actions of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), we have a moral and civic obligation to advocate for the constitutional rights of everyone who calls our county home.

Local Policy & 287(g)

To ensure our resources remain focused on local needs, the **St. Croix County Sheriff's Office does not participate in the federal 287(g) program**. The sheriff's office does not deputize local officers to perform the duties of federal immigration agents. The deputies are here to enforce Wisconsin law and protect our residents, not to act as an arm of the federal government.

Jail Management and Public Trust

"While the Sheriff manages the county jail and may notify federal authorities (ICE) regarding individuals currently in custody for criminal offenses, there is a formal policy in place to protect the integrity of investigations:

- **Victim & Witness Protection:** It is the official policy of our county **not to report victims or witnesses of crimes** to federal immigration authorities.
- **The Goal of Safety:** The sheriff wants every person in St. Croix County to feel safe calling 911 or testifying in court without fear of federal repercussions. If victims are afraid to speak to us, criminals stay on our streets, and the entire community is less safe.

My Commitment

As your County Board supervisor, I will support these balanced policies. We must respect the rule of law while ensuring that our local law enforcement maintains the trust necessary to keep St. Croix County one of the safest places to live and work.
