



COUNTY OF KENOSHA COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Jim Kreuser, County Executive

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County Executive Jim Kreuser **State of the County Address**

Good evening Chairman Gentz, Vice Chairman Kubicki, ladies and gentlemen of the County Board, other elected officials, county employees and citizens of Kenosha County.

Isn't it great to be here in Kenosha County? I think it is. I stand before you tonight, as prescribed by law, to deliver the State of our County. I am pleased to be here tonight, to report that Kenosha County is in very good shape.

Working together, our bond rating is one click below AAA, at Aa1, as established by Moody's, and is higher than any other municipality solely within Kenosha County. Standard and Poors states: "Kenosha County maintains strong financial reserves paired with good managerial practices. Kenosha has a moderate overall debt burden with rapid amortization."

As the Finance Committee learned last Thursday, preliminary financial indicators, before audit, shows our General Fund balance is above our 17% General Fund Reserve Policy, which also indicates we are in strong financial shape.

You also learned Thursday that county sales tax collections are at an all-time high at \$10.7 million. It's an indicator that our county's economy is getting stronger.

I appreciate the County Board's continued efforts to add best practices to execute our collective fiduciary responsibilities.

With 70% of our operating funds coming from sources other than the property tax, clear, accurate and timely reporting is critical when we are all making important County decisions.

The lowering of our Other Post Employment Benefits from \$132 million dollars in 2008 to our present day level of \$70 million dollars was also a significant accomplishment that put us on a course of sustainability of good county services. I do not take lightly that discomfort was involved, because I can tell you that our employees deliver high quality services every day to our community.

Every day, services are provided to our veterans, to people who have been downsized or displaced, to people who need a child support check, to ensure immunizations are provided to the

very young, to keep the elderly safe from abuse, to provide justice to individuals through the court system, to record and maintain vital records and ensure financial records are done properly.

KSD patrols our roads and can face great danger on any call. County, State and Federal roads are well maintained and plowed by our Public Works employees for good commerce and public use. County jailers work hard and have allowed the county to gain financially over many years.

The County is the front line delivery for State and Federal services, as you are all very aware of from the reports given to your oversight committees. We are where the rubber meets the road, we are the pipeline for those mandated programs, and I want to publicly acknowledge the top notch efforts our Kenosha County employees do every day.

Employees are a big reason why Kenosha County is in very good shape. We employ many individuals that have excelled to high levels in their given fields. Our employees have been recognized by the County, State and Nationally for their achievements:

First, Sean Ginter received Caregiver of the Year Spotlight Award from the Wisconsin Long Term Care Workforce Alliance. Sean works at Brookside and leads by example every day. Thank you, Sean.

The county's Child Support Agency received an Outstanding Performance Award at the State Child Support conference in 2012. Congratulations to all of them on this very important work!

Ron Rogers, director of Children and Family Services, received National Recognition for his work – the 2012 Commissioner's Award from the Administration, on Children, Youth and Families. Thank you, Ron!

Also, one of our employees has received the CPA of the Year in Government Award, which is a statewide honor, from the Wisconsin Institute of Certified Public Accountants. In two days, Dave is also getting the KABA Volunteer of the Year award. Thank you, Dave. Dave Geertsen, please stand up.

With our outstanding employees and emphasis on long-range planning, and our ability to have ideas percolate from the ground up, or vice versa, has allowed this county not just to plan but to get things done.

Here are some of the things our departments have gotten done in the past year, which shows that, in Kenosha County, we are doing more with less.

- Kenosha County's Aging & Disability Resource Center is reaching the growing number of consumers seeking information on-line, with 30,368 visits to its website.
- Assistance provided by Kenosha County's Benefit Specialists amounted to \$2.5 million in savings for income for elders and persons with disabilities.

- Adult Crisis contacts jumped to almost 8,000 in 2012, an increase from almost 6,000.
- Our Adult Protective Services staff investigated 422 cases of suspected abuse or neglect of Kenosha County elders and persons with disabilities. Important work being done every day.

Brookside Care Center served a record number of Kenosha County residents in 2012 with 356 admissions that included a daily average of almost 34 rehabilitation residents, - a 15% increase over 2011.

The Division of Health received a grant to support and educate first-time mothers from low-income households. This will: Improve pregnancy outcomes, improve child health and development, and improve economic self-sufficiency of the family.

In a typical year, our county receives 3 confirmed case reports for pertussis (Whooping Cough). The Health communicable disease staff investigated 145 confirmed case reports for Pertussis, a contagious bacterial disease that affects the respiratory tract. Left untreated, pertussis is known as the cough of 100 days.

The new Economic Support Program consortium partnership with Racine County responded to more than 212,550 calls during 2012 through a collaborative Call Center.

The Child Support Program continued its aggressive approach to securing child support for families living in this community. In 2012, collections increased by more than three quarters of a million dollars over the 2011 Child Support amount. Child Support collected \$34,845,000 in 2012 to help parents support and raise their children. This increased amount of CS payments occurred in spite of high unemployment rates that were seen throughout 2012.

Our Veterans Department participated in the Stand Down for Homeless Veterans project held this past August in Racine and serviced 99 veterans of which 24 were homeless or at risk of being homeless. In October, 2013 the Stand Down will be held at the Job Center, Kenosha. Also, our Veterans Department will again be bringing the World War II Memorial that was here this past September back to the area. Our Veterans Department is also working closely with various Veterans groups and other organizations to bring The Moving Wall, a week-long event and display honoring Vietnam War Veterans, to our county, Sept. 12-16 at Prairie Springs Park in the Village of Pleasant Prairie.

The Division of Children and Family Services' 2012 Summer Youth Employment Program had continued success:

- 210 at risk youth worked over 22,000 hours at 41 different job sites.
- Through collaboration with Kenosha Unified School District, 121 youth earned a ½ credit towards graduation for participating in the educational component of the program.

- The Kenosha Police Department records continue to show a 34% reduction in juvenile arrests during program months as compared to the same time period prior to Youth Program's implementation.
- Our actions in Human Services are making families stronger and our streets safer.

Here are some 2012 statistics from the Job Center and Human Services:

- 8,067 immunizations/vaccines were given through the Department of Health
- 9,790 people seen through the Nurse of the Day Clinic
- 2,150 Veterans utilized services
- Over 20,000 Economic Support cases were served through Department of Workforce Development
- 8,690 families including children have been served through Department of Children and Family Services
- 11,301 people have been seen through the Department of Aging & Disability Services
- 21,923 Youth were assisted with trainings, workshops and employment
- 9,653.5 hours were spent in the computer lab
- There are 1,022 active employer relationships with Business Services

With our partner, the Kenosha Area Business Alliance, economic development is on the rise. Some highlights of new businesses coming or growing here in Kenosha County:

- Bradshaw Medical, a medical device manufacturer.
- Good Foods Group, LLC
- Handi-Ramp, which makes a variety of accessibility ramps.
- Meijer, a major retailer based in Grand Rapids, MI
- Pacific Sands, a small but growing manufacturer of non-toxic liquid and powder cleaning.
- Aurora Health Care
- Majestic Realty Company, a large privately-owned real estate development company based in California.
- EMCO Chemical Distributors is relocating its headquarters here.
- TaChen, a Taiwanese steel distributor, will construct a new building and move here from Illinois.

KABA is also planning to announce, in coming weeks, the welcoming of three new manufacturing companies to Kenosha County. We also know that Kenosha County is in play for four to six other projects that will mean new jobs for Kenosha County.

Overall economic conditions continue to improve in and around Kenosha County:

- Kenosha County's unemployment rate has fallen nearly 5 percentage points from peak of 12.9% (Feb. 2010) to 8.0% (Sept. 2012).
- Major layoff events have subsided significantly.

- There has been slow and steady improvement in business expansions, investment and hiring.
- The industrial vacancy rate continues to decline, which is now between 5-6%.
- The Downtown Development plan is advancing and Kenosha County is supporting that effort with \$20,000 – that money is coming from the existing amount we give to KABA.

We have had many successes in Kenosha County together, not only in the past year, but in the past almost five years.

Here are just some of the things we have accomplished, together:

Intergovernmental cooperation:

- IGA with City for Joint Services/Public Safety Building
- Health Department Settlement with City
- Resuming Council of Governments meetings
- Listening sessions throughout the county
- State and Federal Government Outreach
- Highways N, G and K reconstruction with jurisdictional transfers to city
- WKRP Income Maintenance Consortium partnership with Racine County

Improving the County's Fiscal Health during tough economic times:

- Zero levy increase in 2013
- Lowest levy increases in 2012 and 2013 in more than 25 years
- OPEB reduction from \$132 Million Dollars to \$70 Million Dollars
- Ended vacation payout (\$145,000 annual savings)
- Ended subsidy to retiree health insurance (a \$760,000 annual savings)
- Replenished General Fund to meet or exceed Reserve Fund Policy of 17%
- Strengthening Brookside Care Center and removing cost from the tax levy
- Health Insurance Restructuring
- Employee Wellness Initiative
- Created a High Impact Fund to attract/retain and grow jobs
- Refinanced \$20 million in debt for a \$2.3 million savings over 7 years
- Golf operations are in the black

Improving County Infrastructure:

- Public Safety Building/9-1-1 Dispatch Center addition, KPD addition
- County-wide Public Safety Broadband and County-wide commercial educational residential Broadband Network (previously not available to 30-percent of the county geographically and population)
- Courthouse and Molinaro Building restoration
- Keeping pace with county highway road repair and repaving

- Migrated to the cloud, saving more than \$1 Million Dollars in IT infrastructure costs
- Kronos upgrade, saving more than \$100,000 in payroll operating costs
- Moved Medical Examiner Autopsy Room to United Hospital Systems (Kenosha Hospital)
- Razed the Old Brookside Care Center Building and two old homes at the Kemper Center campus (saving nearly \$100,000 annually in utility/maintenance costs)

Quality of Place/Quality of Life Improvements:

- Opening of KD Park
 - Building trails and structures
 - Acquiring additional adjacent property
 - Continue planning efforts with the Green Ribbon Committee
- Fox River Disc Golf Course
- Three dog parks built and maintained without taxpayer dollars
- Silver Lake Icehouse Trail
- Paving the Old North Shore Line - North-South Bike Trail
- Hosting annual bike rides: Dairy Air Dairy Breakfast Ride and Fall Wheel Ride
- Building the Academic Trail (bike path from Carthage College to UW-Parkside)
- Petrifying Springs Park restoration and dam removal
 - Pets was voted “Best Hiking/Walking Trail in the Kenosha News for 2012”
- Work on a comprehensive bike plan
- Bringing Pillars of Honor, National World War II Memorial, to county

Youth Services Emphasis

- Summer Youth Employment Program – giving at-risk youth constructive activities & jobs
- Reduced Juvenile Intake costs through aggressive local and less expensive programs
- Hired a Gang Prevention Coordinator

And, a few more accomplishments, but certainly not all of them:

- County Ethics Ordinance approved
- Led by Sheriff David Beth – Re-established the Drug Task Force
- Working cooperatively with the Constitutional County Elected Officials: Sheriff Beth, County Treasurer Teri Jacobson, Clerk of Courts Rebecca Matoska-Mentink, District Attorney Robert Zapf, County Clerk Mary Schuch-Krebs and Register of Deeds JoEllyn Storz.
- Reorganizing Land Records with the ROD and Redistricting was completed
- Smart Growth Plan implemented
- Foreclosure Mediation Program that has received more than 200 applications since launch
- Creation of Special Courts for: Alcohol and Other Drugs, Mental Health and Veterans
- Restructuring of the IT Division

- Launched new, customer-friendly Kenosha County Website

We are and we should be proud of what we've done and we are now in a position to wrap up some major projects, but, we are also nimble enough to move forward with our more effective and efficient government in the coming years.

Kenosha County is in very good shape financially.

Kenosha County is in very good shape with our infrastructure of roads and broadband.

Kenosha County is in very good shape, providing a high quality of life and giving the citizens the ability to inexpensively use our Park System.

Kenosha County is in very good shape in many ways because a lot of hard work by people in this room who continue to put the business of Kenosha County first.

Working together, we are in a position to successfully address the challenges that lie ahead and keep Kenosha County in very good shape.

Thank you and May God Bless you and Kenosha County.

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