



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Jim Kreuser, County Executive

1010 – 56th Street, Third Floor

Kenosha, Wisconsin 53140

(262) 653-2600

Fax: (262) 653-2817

June 8, 2020

News release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jennie Tunkieicz

262-653-2831

Kreuser's State of the County address to call for action on racism as a public health crisis

KENOSHA — Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser's upcoming State of the County address will include a call for the County Board to adopt a resolution declaring racism to be a public health crisis.

County Board Supervisor Laura Belsky and the Kenosha County Division of Health are also championing this resolution, which is in the process of being developed.

Kreuser will present the State of the County via video conference at the start of the County Board meeting that begins at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 16. The speech will be streamed at that time at www.facebook.com/kenoshacountygovt and on the Kenosha County YouTube channel.

A statement by Kreuser, released in advance of the speech, follows:

“I love Kenosha County. I believe this is a great place to live, work and raise a family, and that this is a place where we help and support our neighbors.

“We must face the truth that we need to do better, however, because not everyone in our community is supported, or feeling welcome. As Adelene Greene, the county's retired Workforce Development Director, so succinctly put it in a recent Kenosha News editorial, we must face the Pandemic of Racism in our county, our country and our world.

“The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis has, understandably, ignited protests as a result of frustration and anger because so little has changed for so long for people of color.

“In our own county, my heart breaks at hearing the story of Gus Harris, a black man, who no longer feels safe exercising at Petrifying Springs Park. A woman called 9-1-1 after seeing Mr. Harris, a downtown Kenosha business owner, in the park because of the color of his skin.

“Adelene Greene has been part of a number of organizations that have been bringing people together for years – the Coalition for Dismantling Racism and the Courageous Community Conversations. It has to be exhausting to have these conversations and feel like no one is listening.

“Although society has made progress, we, as a community, still have a lot more work to do. Together, we need to work on better benchmarks, outcomes and with an ongoing annual review.

“It is well past time that we not only listen, but that we actually hear, empathize, ask questions, understand and take action.

“While recognizing there are many things that need to be done, Kenosha County can immediately take the action of recognizing Racism as a Public Health Crisis. The Wisconsin Population Health Institute started this initiative about a year ago. The Kenosha County Division of Health has signed on to this effort. I have signed on as an individual and encourage others to do the same here: <https://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/match/match-wisconsin-healthiest-state-initiative/racism-is-a-public-health-crisis-in-wisconsin/#declaration-racism-is-a-public-health-crisis-in-wisconsin>.

“This action acknowledges, among other things, that our ‘responsibilities to address racism include reshaping our discourse and agenda so that we all actively engage in racial justice work.’

“I also join Supervisor Laura Belsky, chairwoman of the Human Services Committee, in calling for the full County Board to approve a Racism as a Public Health Crisis resolution, which will commit us to take actions toward addressing and remediating the health impacts of systemic racism. The resolution is being developed and should be available for full review soon. Thank you to Supervisor Belsky and the Health Division for taking the lead on this resolution.

“I pledge my personal commitment to listen, empathize, ask questions, understand, and take action to address the Pandemic of Racism in our community and world.”

###