



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

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Contact: Jennie Tunkieicz

262-653-2831

Kreuser's final State of the County celebrates county's accomplishments, looks toward future

KENOSHA — Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser delivered his final State of the County address to the County Board tonight, providing an overview of the county's accomplishments during his nearly 14 years in office.

While looking back, Kreuser also called on the board and the new administration to continue the momentum going forward.

“We’ve done so many great things together over the last 14 years,” Kreuser said. “And it’s my hope that you will all continue to pull together for the good of the county, setting aside partisan politics, working in the best interests of the most people for the long haul.”

Kreuser, who announced his retirement last year and will serve his last day in office on April 18, arrived in the County Executive’s Office in June 2008, at the onset of the Great Recession.

Among the challenges in county government at that time, Kreuser noted, were long-deferred maintenance in county facilities, an underutilized parks system, a space crisis in the Public Safety Building that affected 911 dispatch among other functions, Brookside Care Center losing money, and antiquated information technology systems.

“And now, look at where we are today,” Kreuser said. “We have addressed all of these issues and made so many more improvements that will serve the people of Kenosha County for generations to come.”

Included in the accomplishments Kreuser listed to the board:

- Restorations to the historic Courthouse and county Administration Building.
- An expansion of the Public Safety Building that now houses 911 dispatch, a state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Center, the Sheriff’s Department Detective Bureau and the county’s Division of Information Technology.

- A revival and reimagination of the Kenosha County Parks system, including many new amenities, activities and events, as well as the development of the Kenosha County Veterans Memorial Park.
- The renovation and expansion of Brookside Care Center and a turnaround of its finances.
- A restructuring of the Division of Information Technology into a state-of-the-art operation that enabled quick pivots to remote work for many county employees during recent times of crisis.
- The county's recent attainment of a AAA bond rating, the highest rating possible.

“Triple-A was another one of those goals that we had for a long time,” Kreuser said. “And now we’re there — one of just seven counties out of the 72 counties in the state.”

Among the accomplishments that led to the AAA rating, Kreuser said, were:

- The county's general fund balance is currently at its highest level in history, ensuring liquidity to provide for county obligations.
- Kenosha County's equalized value is also at an all-time high, up 64 percent over the last eight years.
- The county's property tax rate has decreased for eight consecutive years and is now equal to the rate from 10 years ago.
- County taxes per \$100,000 of the value of a home have decreased by \$4.25 over the last four years.
- The county's total long-term obligations are \$25 million lower than in 2008.

Kreuser said the county has made strategic, significant investments in its infrastructure over the last 14 years, aimed toward generating economic development.

“You’ve probably heard me say, ‘Infrastructure leads to economic development, which leads to jobs,’ and it’s true,” Kreuser said. “Kenosha County’s job growth from 2015 to 2020 was 11.1 percent — the highest in Wisconsin.”

Some of the more significant infrastructure improvements since 2008 that Kreuser listed include:

- The earlier expansion of Highway K to four lanes to the Union Pacific Railroad Tracks west of Indian Trail High School, and the further expansion to be completed this year out to 94th Court.
- The expansion of 30th Avenue on the City of Kenosha's north side, and the subsequent transfer of the road to the city.
- The expansion of Highway N (now 38th Street) east of Interstate 94 to facilitate the Gordon Food Service development.
- The reconfiguration of Highway F in Randall and Twin Lakes, straightening out dangerous curves and improving intersection sightlines.
- The recent expansion of Highway S from Highway 31 to Interstate 94, the largest county trunk highway project in Kenosha County's history.

- Repaving of nearly 80 percent of the 253 total miles of county trunk highways since 2008.

Kreuser encouraged the incoming County Board and County Executive-elect Samantha Kerkman's administration to continue to advance ongoing projects that the current County Board has supported.

These include:

- The relocation of the county's Human Services functions from the Job Center on Sheridan Road to a new, more centrally located facility on 52nd Street — a public-private partnership project that received a \$9.8 million award from Gov. Tony Evers last month.
- Bringing broadband internet access to areas of the county that remain underserved.
- Protecting the eroding lakefront on the Kemper Center grounds.
- Completing the South Branch Pike River restoration, the first phase of which is receiving nearly \$10 million in support from the Army Corps of Engineers.
- Supporting the mission of the county's Racial and Ethnic Equity Commission, which was created in 2021.
- Further buildout of amenities at the Kenosha County Veterans Memorial Park.

Kreuser told the board the transition process with County Executive-elect Kerkman began Wednesday morning and was off to a strong start, and he wished Kerkman well in the job.

He concluded his address by urging the board not to let political polarization get in the way, but rather to continue to work together for the advancement of the county.

“As someone who loves this county, who cares deeply about it and always will,” Kreuser said, “it is my sincere hope that you choose to continue to move Kenosha County forward.”

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