

REEC Meeting November 16, 2023

Research Update from County Board Supervisor Brian Thomas

- **Law Enforcement**
- **Education**
- **Housing**
- **Health Department – Human Services**
- **City of Kenosha Action Road Map to Inclusion, Equality, and Equity**
- **Kenosha County 2024 Approved – Recommendation that were not included**

Kenosha County Law Enforcement Areas & Reach

Sheriff's Department

- *Hiring
- *Staff
- *Arrest Data
- *Internal Affairs
- *County Ordinance
- *Policies, Training and Practices
- *Community Involvement

Corporate Counsel

- *Legal matters relevant to law enforcement

Human Services

- *Gang Intervention
- *Youth Justice Report
- *Habitual Truancy

Human Resources

- *EEOC issues related to law enforcement

Juvenile Court Intake

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Data-Statistics

- *Kenosha County Sheriff's Department
- *DOJ WI
- *DOJ Nationally
- *Type of Arrests
- *Juvenile and Adult
- *Race-Ethnicity
- *Age
- *City of Kenosha, Pleasant Prairie, Twin Lakes and Parkside

Hiring Staffing Recruitment Sheriff's Department

911 Call Information

Census Data

Current Articles on Arrest Data

Statistics the Standout

***2010 Kenosha County population 166,423**

***2020 Kenosha County population 169,151 White 74.1% Hispanic 14.4% Black 7.6% Two or More Races 2.9% Asian 1.9% Native American .8%**

***2021 Kenosha County estimated population 168,732**

***County Population Actively Policed by Kenosha County Sheriff's Department 41,650**

***Added 12,215 new jobs 2010-2020**

***54% of those arrested for traffic related by Sheriff's Department do not live in Kenosha County**

***39% of those arrested for non traffic by Sheriff's Department do not live in Kenosha County**

***Kenosha County Juvenile Intake Services has 2024 budget amount of \$1.1 million**

***National Stats January 2021 for (% of National Population) Nonfatal violent crimes/nonfatal violent crimes excluding other assault committed by: Whites(60.4%) 45.9%/38.7% Blacks(12.55) 33%/36.1 Hispanic(18.3) 17.6%/21.4% American Indian(.7%) 1.9%/1.9% Asian(5.7%) 1.3/1.5% Two of more Races (2.2%) - /-**

***Kenosha County Sheriff's Department is third largest in the State**

REEC Education Report – October 2023

Findings and Recommendations for schools throughout Kenosha County with a focus on Grades k-12.

Findings

Between 2010 and 2020, Kenosha County experienced very little population growth with a population growth rate of 1.7%; about 25% of the national average and 50% of the statewide average. In direct contrast, during this same period we experienced significant economic growth and roughly 10,000 new jobs were created.

Kenosha County through the Kenosha County Human Services Department actively works with families to assist with habitual truancy and delinquency issues and receives grant money from KUSD to assist with these ongoing programs. Kenosha County produces an annual *Youth in Justice Report*, this documents habitual truancy and delinquency statistics in regards to the referrals to Juvenile Court and youth waived to adult court.

Additionally, Kenosha County oversees the Juvenile court and through the Kenosha County Human Services Department oversees Kenosha DCFS, foster care, as well as, youth placement in and out of state. Additional youth services through Kenosha County include: a Youth Gang Intervention Specialist, the Officer Friendly Program at KSD and a Summer Youth Employment Program.

Recommendations

1. The County website and other information available from the county should include more data on **all schools** in Kenosha County.

The listing of each school should include the type of school (Private, Parochial, Charter, Public, Head Start, etc.), grades served, address, website, link to the school WI DPI grade card. Additionally, if the school is a *Wisconsin Parental Choice Program School* a link to Wisconsin Parental Choice should be provided.

2. The County should encourage (or contribute additional funding towards) KABA-Kenosha Area Business Alliance, the local Chamber of Commerce, to establish a leadership program for students in local high schools similar to *Leadership Kenosha*.

The *Leadership Kenosha* program works with local adults and those employed by local organizations. The County provides funding to KABA in the amount \$250,000 annually to assist in expanding economic development and growth. Identifying and uplifting youth who are prepared to take Kenosha to the next level should be a top priority.

3. Kenosha County must develop a closer relationship with **all schools** serving children in Kindergarten to Grade 12.

To address issues such as: habitual truancy, delinquency, drug use, chronic absenteeism.

As well as creating opportunities for youth in civic service through summer employment, post graduation employment, the Youth In Governance Program as well as developing Teen led summer programs utilizing the County Park System.

4. The county should establish a Summer Truancy Prevention Program.

From June to September targeting chronically truant students and families. This program would not have the same punitive sanctions as the traditional truancy program, but would provide families with individualized solutions to aid in attendance; connecting families with programs and helping them establish healthy routines for the regular school year.

5. Kenosha County should expand the Youth Employment Program utilizing undesignated funds from the Parkland Development Fund.

The Parkland Development fund currently has over \$500,000 which is undesignated. The County should work with local organizations to train and hire young people to deliver programs and services through the county parks and offices.

6. Kenosha County in conjunction with local service providers, such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club, should establish more youth programs in county parks.

An example program is *First Tee* which works to introduce children to golf; there are other similar programs that introduce nontraditional sports to children. Racine has the summer *Registered Playground Program* which provides "creative fun and innovative learning experiences through organized games, field trips, free play and weekly special events. Each site is supervised by two college students extensively trained as playground leaders."

These programs could be funded utilizing undesignated funds from the Parkland Development Fund.

7. Kenosha County should work with and support **all schools**.

The county should work with the State to develop an enhanced funding program for the school transportation programs; the current State Statutes do not encourage attendance. Transportation to and from school is a barrier that too many children face in Kenosha County, **especially within the City of Kenosha**. KUSD provides transportation to approximately 28% of students. School districts (public schools) west of I94 almost universally provide transportation services through the district. Transportation to **all** preschool, HeadStart Programs and K-12 schools should be the goal.

Kenosha County Habitual Truancy Report
 Researched and Written by: Brian Thomas – Kenosha County Board Supervisor

This is a brief overview of habitual truancy in different school districts in Kenosha County. If our next report we will review chronic absenteeism at Kenosha County School Districts.

It is beyond question the current state statute relating to reimbursement for transportation to school districts has a negative impact on attendance, chronic absenteeism, and habitual truancy. The hardest hit areas are Wisconsin's urban school districts, Kenosha, Racine, Milwaukee, Green Bay and Madison. Within these school districts the most effected population and overrepresented by percentage are Black, Hispanic and Two Race+ students in which many are also from lower income homes.

Comparing Middle Schools one School District in the County and two KUSD

School/rank to comparable schools	Enrollment/ Truancy %	White Students/ Truancy%	Hispanic Students/ Truancy%	Black Students/ Truancy%	2+ Races Students/ Truancy%
Paris Elementary k-8 transportation 37/1076	280/ 0%	0	0	0	0
Mahone MS (KUSD) Transportation 235/620	922/6.61%	27/ 4.56%	22/8%	14/12.28%	8/12.12%
Washington MS(KUSD) No transportation 571/620	433/25.14	30/20.13	38/20%	53/37.85%	10/26.31

Comparing High Schools One in the County and two in KUSD

School/rank to comparable schools	Enrollment/ Truancy %	White Students/ Truancy%	Hispanic Students/ Truancy%	Black Students/ Truancy%	2+ Races Students/ Truancy%
Westosha Central HS/ Rank Transportation 69/391	1182/9.46%	86/8.73%	13/12.4%	0	7/21.21%
Indian Trail HS/rank Transportation 312/391 (KUSD)	1981/16.89%	126/10.4%	142/22.53%	88/29.33	16/17.97%
Bradford HS/rank Very limited transportation 365/391 (KUSD)	1315/26.9	129/17.89%	135/29.54	134/42%	17/47.22

Comparing k-5 schools One in the County and three in KUSD

School/rank to comparable schools	Enrollment/ Truancy %	White Students/ Truancy%	Hispanic Students/ Truancy%	Black Students/ Truancy%	2+ Races Students/ Truancy%
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Salem Elementary k-8/Rank Transportation 479/1076	1012/1.65%	9/1.08%	6/6.45%	0	0
Somers Elementary /Rank Transportation 393/1076 (KUSD)	440/5.5%	6/2.58%	10/7.4%	7/11.47%	3/8.1%
Grewenow Elementary/Rank No transportation 908/1076 (KUSD)	327/16.80	21/10.88%	19/18.81%	13/27.65%	9/32.14%
Brass Community School/Rank No Transportation 1013/1076 (KUSD)	368/26.03	13/22.03	33/18.03	58/37.17	9/25%

Habitual Truancy data from WI DPI for latest year available
School Ranking for SchoolDigger.com 2021/22 school year

The relationship too providing transportation and not providing transportation is very clear. The habitual truancy are certainly not all attributable to busing, but a significant reduction occurs when comparing KUSD schools where transportation is provided.

There are numerous other factors that contribute to Habitual Truancy such as: parent(s) struggling with personal issues (mental health & addiction), homelessness, personal transportation, etc... and having to perhaps walk up to two miles to get to school.

Consequences for not providing transportation: low test scores, not able to do grade level work, social promotion to next grade & falling farther beyond, juvenile delinquency issues, juvenile court system, for too many once they become adults they are not prepared and fall into the state correction system. These all come with an assortment of financial costs to society.

This child was perhaps given an equal opportunity for an education, but certainly not equal access. This child will have to overcome huge challenges and, in many cases, will never realize his/her potential or experience education as intended in their School District and WI DPI. The human cost is beyond measure.

Please note: KUSD only has half day of school every Friday, this is the worst attendance of the week.

What other costs are there for School Districts and the Communities they serve:

1. People move to strong public school districts- Weak public schools lose students to School Choice & Open Enrollment
2. Businesses are attracted to strong work forces and strong schools.
3. Weak Schools will attract new private schools to open and creating additional competition further weakening public schools.
4. Habitual Truant Students drop out at a higher rate, weakening public schools.
5. Juvenile Crime increases, Law Enforcement, Court System, Juvenile Detention & Placement out of state in some cases.

Three Recommendations for the State to consider:

1. Provide proper financial support for transportation, within KUSD the current expense is about \$50,000 per year per bus and currently 4-6 buses for a k-5

school. That is 50-60 students per bus. High School students are bused currently in two ways, "Yellow Bus" and City of Kenosha Public Transit.

2. Half days one day per week throughout the school year should be limited to only occasionally once every two months for example.
3. Assist with any necessary funding for afterschool programing that is run by each individual school and overseen by volunteer organizers/coaches. Starting with k-5 through high school. Art, theatre, sports, e-sports, etc... all sports and any activity which typically involved tryouts should at all levels "NO CUT". Children/students that are involved will attend school, give them all a chance to explore their talents, grow in confidence and develop as a more balanced children.

There are numerous other recommendations but lets start with these three.

Our next report will address Chronic Absenteeism, but you can expect very similar percentage with Hispanics and Blacks being overrepresented by percentage. That report will have much detail in many areas.

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REEC Housing Research

- **Chapter 21 Kenosha County Housing Fair Housing Ordinance**

- A. **Preliminary Considerations**

- 21.01-2 Purpose

- It is the purpose of this ordinance to endorse and recognize the concepts of fair housing for all persons in order to promote the health, safety, human rights, prosperity and general welfare of the people of Kenosha County, Wisconsin.

- 21.01-3 Intent

- The intent of this ordinance is to prevent and prohibit unlawful discrimination in housing and to provide that all persons shall have an equal opportunity for housing, regardless of sex, race, color, sexual orientation as defined in section 111.32(13m) of the Wisconsin State Statutes, handicap, religion, national origin, marital status of the person maintaining a household, lawful source of income, age or ancestry.

Last updated (4/20/2010)

Kenosha County Housing Authority

County Website is outdated: Listing members with expired terms, last meeting 2/28/17, one meeting in 2016 and two meetings in 2015.

Question – What does the Kenosha Housing Authority actually oversee?

Reviewing the website they administer:

Kenosha County Homestead Opportunity Loan Program

Kenosha County Owner-Occupied housing Rehabilitation Program

Kenosha County Home Loan Program

Kenosha County Rental-Unit housing Rehabilitation Program

Kenosha County Rental Unit Repair Program

Directly from the website:

History & Purpose

Kenosha County Board of Supervisors Resolution #53, (February 17, 1981), established the Kenosha County Housing Authority, in accordance with Section 59.53(22) and Section 66.1201 through 66.1211 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

The Kenosha County Housing Authority (KCHA), with staff assistance from the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), operates in an effort to conserve, rehabilitate, and improve property owned or occupied by low and moderate-income residents in Kenosha County, outside of the City of Kenosha.

The KCHA has secured funding, and continues to seek out new funding, from a variety of Federal and State sources to offer the following programs:

- Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program (home improvement program)
- Rental-Unit Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program (home improvement program)
- Homestead Opportunity Loan Program (homebuyers program)
- Fox River Flood Mitigation Program (floodplain buyout program)

**There 2024 Approved Operating and Capital Budget
\$0**

What does the Kenosha County Housing Authority actually do or have done or will do to improve the housing status of those in need?

Home Loan Programs

- Colombia Savings & Loan Association
- Home Buyers Seminar

Kenosha County Planning & Development: Housing Program

On County website addresses 27 areas

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program

Kenosha Action Roadmap to Inclusion, Equality and Equity

City of Kenosha Report addressing the following topics:

- *Strengthening Community Police Relations
- *Developing Future Leaders
- *Creating an Equal Criminal Justice System
- *Creating Equal Employment Opportunities
- *Creating Quality Education for All
- *Strengthening the Mental Health System
- *Creating Equal Affordable Housing Access

Updated 10/15/23 2024 Budget Recommendations

Our County - Our Children – Our Foundation for the Future

Submitted by: County Board Supervisor Brian Thomas

Kenosha County Executive Kerkman 2024 Budget Highlights and Vision & Accomplishments

Number one both documents is Public Safety is mentioned first which is almost exclusively focused on Law Enforcement. Infrastructure and Making necessary and quality of life investments in our infrastructure. While we have added nine positions from 2020-2023 and 2024 budget adds three positions for the Sheriff's Department we are not seeing less crime or a reduction in our Juvenile Court Intakes. While we take about Infrastructure, it is only in our physical assets such as roads and our most critical and important Infrastructure is our Citizens, especially our youngest as they are our future. The infrastructure that will allow them to thrive with our focused efforts and partnerships with like minded public and private entities.

The following recommendations are an outcome of over a year of research in different areas to determine how we can best serve the foundation and future of our County, Our Children.

Kenosha County lags behind the rest of the State and Country in population growth from 2010 to 2020, with population growth rate of 1.7%, State grew at 3.5% and Nationally over 7%. This is despite the fact, that our economic growth grew at over 10,000 jobs during the same time period.

Single family housing growth has not kept up with demands, older individuals & couples are remaining in their houses long after all their children have left and prices have soared beyond the inflation rate.

At the same time, the birth rate is declining and has been declining for years. The largest school district is not serving the needs of the public and opening the door to new private schools opening. Failed referendums in other school districts have led to teacher layoffs and additional cuts. The reducing number of students enrolled in public schools is also a result of competition, declining birth rates and the County not keeping up with National population growth rate. This will put pressure on School Districts, which will lead to future school cuts and school closings.

The public schools and more specifically inner city KUSD schools are very affected by habitual truancy(HT) and chronic absenteeism(CA), over 40% and 60% at some schools for some minority groups. The HT and CA, have a huge human cost as well as a financial cost to the county in the short, intermediate and long term.

Financial costs start in different areas of Human Services, Gang Intervention Specialist, Sheriff's Department, Juvenile Intake Services, child placement, court system, corrections just to mention a few.

The final outcomes result in young adults not being ready from an educational, skill set or trade for the next step after school. With some students having children, some end up needing the support of social services & Section 8 and other related services, some chose alternative income sources through illegal activity, some will be stuck in low paying jobs, etc.....

We need to better fund, enhance programs that work, be creative with new programs and make saving and preparing Our Children-Our Foundation for the Future our Priority.

The following recommendations are being submitted with this in mind.

Public Works

The current trail maintenance position should be converted into a Parks Programming Director which would be a 12 month position, with the exclusive focus on ages 5-17.

This position would identify opportunities to work with other municipalities, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Public & Private Schools and general public to create program(s) that utilizes the County Parks and available space (indoor & outdoor). Coordination with UW Extension Programming Staff would also be recommended. This position would be paid through tax levy dollars. We also have youth from the Juvenile Court Intake that need to pay restitution as part of the JCIS program.

Golf Director should start a First Tee Program or similar. Can be coordinated with the assistance of the Parks Programming Director. Reaching out to the Gold Coaching Community and other interested in working with youth(volunteers) and introducing golf to them. We could also coordinate with City of Kenosha and use Washington Park Golf Course. The First Tee Program or similar would be paid for from the Park Development Fund up to \$40,000

Outdoor basketball court(s), one at Petrifying Springs County and Kemper County Park. These courts would be used for the general public, but to also host basketball camps and seasonal leagues. Working with area basketball coaches(volunteers) and coordinated with Parks Programming Director. Basketball Courts to be paid for with Parkland Development Funds up to \$100,000.

Expanding the Summer Park Employment Youth Program to 9-10 months out of the year. Weekend work hours and special events, find traditional jobs and be creative finding appropriate work for them that benefits the youth and County. The additional expense for the expanded Park Youth Employment Program could be paid for from the Parkland Development Fund up to the amount of \$50,000. We could and should develop working relationship with private entities that operate out of the Parks to employ Kenosha County Youth.

Human Resources and Human Services

The current Diversity Position should be converted into Habitual Truancy/Chronic Absenteeism Reduction Specialist. This position would coordinate with the Public Schools, at Risk Families as identified through DCFS staff, Juvenile Court Judges, Juvenile Court Intake and returning students that were HT and CA in the previous year. This newly created position would oversee the three grant funded positions that focus on grades 6-12, the current tax levy funded position that focuses on k-5 and two newly funded (tax levy or partially funded by shifting \$105,000 from Kemper Center Inc utilities)that focus on grade k-5.

The HT and CA is overrepresented in the minority and lower income community, which gives the County the best opportunity to positively influence Our Children -Our Foundation for the Future. Our heightened focused on these families and children will ideally reduce our log term cost associated in Sheriff's Department, Juvenile Court Intake and other related services. But most importantly, will can at an early age assist the child and family of having the opportunity for a much better education, family life, employment, etc....

We have thousands of children in our County that are HT and CA, resulting in too many being socially promoted without being able to do grade level work. Resulting in test scores that are lower than State Average, most noticeably in KUSD, which ranks in the bottom 27% of all School Districts in the State.

As a County we need to assist our Public School Children and families to the best of our ability. Educate them on Wisconsin Parental School Choice through Human Services, list on our County website all the public and private school choices throughout Kenosha County.

This investment in our Children not only provides them with a better opportunity for their future, but also a better future for Kenosha County to reduce expenses long term and also to grow more productively as a County.

I believe by being resourceful and working closing with County Schools, we can in addition to making Kenosha County an Economic Powerhouse, we can assist all Kenosha County Schools be the choice, help grow our status in one more area and be secure in Our Future.

County Board Supervisor Brian Thomas
April Considerations for 2024 Budget

Over the past year I have reviewed select areas mostly focused on youth related issues, I would like to recommend the following:

The current trail maintenance position should be re-imagined to part time year round position for County Parks Recreation Position. The trail position is too narrowly focused and the trails prior to his employment with the County were being managed. Most County Governments of our size have a recreation program position. This investment can in the long term positively impact the youth of our County and introduce them to County Government in an additional way.

The recreation position will allow the County to engage the community in a new and proactive way. Focusing on youth and creating opportunities to become involved in different ways. Also develop a run/walk/hobble series in the County Parks. Youth focus: Being active in the parks. Using the Kemper Center to host art and other related indoor activities.

Partnership with KUSD on the Truancy and Liaison Program needs to be re-evaluated. The grant from KUSD should be used to focus on K-5 and not of 6-8 and 9-12. This would be a much more proactive preventative step. Current Levy dollars pay for the County's k-5 person, but was not filled much of 2022. Have 3-4 Social Workers on the k-5, will prevent larger numbers in 6-12 in the years to come. Will be a great investment for the future of these children, their families and for the County taxpayers. Investing more dollars in our k-5, I believe will reduce our expenses in the juvenile justice and delinquency aspects of County Government, Juvenile Court System, Juvenile Placement, DCFS and adult corrections. Ultimately lead to a better outcome for our some of our youngest County residents.

Parks are lacking Basketball courts, amazing that not a single basketball court in any County Park. Start with Kemper and Pets. Could be paid for from the Waste Management annual donation and cost the County taxpayers nothing.

lease in regards to paying for utilities and similar expenses. The County should no longer be paying for these expenses and \$100,000.00, could be better used in the DCFS to hire or increase the pay for Social Workers to additional the mounting challenges our County faces for its youth. With a focus on families with young children to enhance their educational opportunities.

Submitted: April 17th, 2023

Brian Thomas