



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

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2014 State of the County Address

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

I am pleased to stand before you tonight and confirm what you already know from reading the various newspapers, driving around the area and talking to residents: The State of Kenosha County is strong!

Exciting things are happening all over Kenosha County. This board established the high impact fund, which is being used to create jobs. We are committed to infrastructure, which leads to economic development which leads to jobs. We are seeing the results of putting that infrastructure in place.

It is finally spring!

As you can see, work on this building, the Administration Building, is underway. The exterior work will preserve it historically and ensure its use by the public for decades to come. We expect the work to be completed by October/November.

The ground is being broken for development and crops. The Kenosha County Dairy Breakfast and the DairyAir Bike Ride are coming up. Farmers markets are starting; 4-H Youth are already busy preparing for the County Fair. Kenosha County is a growing, vibrant, family-friendly place to be.

Those are among the things that developers and new residents say attracted them here – a good place to do business, strong infrastructure, quality of life and quality of place. We are strong because, in Kenosha County government, we have a collective vision to drive performance, to plan for our future and to be fiscally responsible.

This is not usually a place where things happen to us – this is a place where we make things happen and improve every day.

This community really came together in 1988, when Chrysler shut down and a transition team started to move this county and community forward with economic development planning. We didn't have a benefactor, we had to pull together to help the community, we had legislative commitment with Utility Holding Company Bill and Hwy 165 was built. Corn fields grew in to

nearly 10,000 jobs today at LakeView Corporate Park. Now, 26 years later, Kenosha County is the economic development hot spot in the region, the state and the nation.

At a presentation before hundreds, Mike Mooney, a principal with MLG Capital, which has ties to the LaSage Group, stated that “Kenosha County is in a world of its own” regarding industrial development. He said that Kenosha County has been experiencing a greater rate of economic development than most of the State of Wisconsin and we’re poised to have an even greater rate of development in the future.

With our economic development partners, the Kenosha Area Business Alliance, approximately 3,000 jobs, over \$500 million of Capital Investment, and roughly 4 million square feet of new development or absorption has occurred in the past 18 months. That was in the past 18 months.

We set the table in 2008 when we rebuilt County Truck N – on its own – was a good investment – for Gordon Foods. They now employ 270 people and is putting on a second shift of 50 people. They have also been very generous to the Shalom Center and the Sharing Center.

We knew County Highway N would attract more development, but, who would have thought that company like Amazon would have broken ground on its massive new fulfillment center there. They will employ more than 1,600 full-time associates once fully operational. We set up the infrastructure and the private sector made the business decisions.

The state of Kenosha County’s Business Environment is very good.

Other recent development highlights:

- Kenall Manufacturing, which designs and produces LED lighting systems, will soon begin constructing a new state-of-the-art facility in Kenosha, and
- Niagara Bottling, LLC, the largest private label water bottling company in the United States, will be coming to Pleasant Prairie.

Hats off to Pleasant Prairie. They have carried the much of the load.

Mr. Mooney also said “when you look in the dictionary under location, location, location, you see a picture of Kenosha County.”

But, location alone does not tell Kenosha County’s story – that’s just part of it.

If you don’t plan strategically, If you don’t do the right things and keep doing the right things and work with agencies like the South Eastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, if you do not have strong infrastructure, if you do not have good public policy, location will only get you so far.

Recently, a big part of Kenosha County planning strategically is the county's high impact fund. It has been critical for attracting and retaining businesses here in Kenosha County. This program has proved invaluable as an ultra-flexible deal closing fund.

The \$1.5 Million high impact fund appropriated thus far was used for 3 manufacturing projects:

- \$250K for Bradshaw Medical Expansion
- \$250K for Hanna Cylinders
- \$1 Million for Kenall

The high impact fund has resulted in more than 800 new jobs with an average salary exceeding \$52,000 a year. There are also pending projects, some big announcements coming. One will be announced this month. Let me assure you that the development activity and project pipeline continue to be very robust.

And we should not rest on our laurels. John Steinbrink always says: Make hay while the sun shines.

Todd Battle and his team are economic development rock stars. We are working with them, to not just be ready to meet the needs of new and incoming businesses, but to strategize, plan ahead and do what is necessary to continue to attract developments countywide.

We need to be ready with infrastructure and more shovel-ready sites in our county. We will be working on a plan to maximize our resources to get the best outcomes for all of Kenosha County, regardless of which municipalities it lies in.

As a result of the influx of new jobs, the unemployment rate is down. Kenosha County's unemployment rate has fallen 5.5 percentage points from a peak of 12.9% in February 2010 to 7.3% in April 2014. Even with that drop, we all know there are people who continue to struggle. We have the unemployed and the underemployed who are just hanging on. We must and we will continue to hold the line on taxes. This board and this administration take that issue seriously.

We have a proven track record of fiscal responsibility – the tax levies for 2014, 2013 – which was a 0 in that year – and 2012, were the lowest in 25 years.

The State of Kenosha County's fund balance is solid. We have made some tough decisions, but in 2012, we met the County fund balance reserve goal of 17% -- that goal hadn't been hit for many years. The County continued to improve its financial condition in 2013 when the fund balance increased by over \$1 million to 19.7%. After the declines of the great recession, the County developed a recovery strategy that would put us on a path toward achieving financial stability. The County wisely followed this strategy and was able to recover from the recession and achieve financial stability without imposing drastic reductions in service to our citizens.

Our department and division leaders, along with their employees, work every day to ensure top notch service for the public.

Here's one example: (points to snow plowing photo)

It was a tough winter, no doubt about that, but we were among one of the few counties that did NOT run out of salt. That is due to good planning and preparation by Highway Commissioner Gary Sipsma. And, many thanks to the men and women in our highway department who worked tirelessly to keep our 258 miles of county trunk highways, 94 miles of state highway, and 12 miles of interstate safe this winter. Thank you.

And, now they'll get to work on those pot holes. We have already received a trailer full of crack filling material for our roads.

Thank you, too, to Sheriff Beth and the entire Sheriff's Department for keeping Kenosha County safe.

- Dec. 4 standoff
- KPD & KCSD keep us safe!

Keeping juvenile crime down is our Summer Youth Employment Program, overseen by our Children and Family Services Division and administered by the Boys & Girls Club.

Kenosha Police Chief John Morissey has said this is one of the best crime prevention investments this county could make.

Crime is down 23% in the city since 2008 while the population has grown – he attributes that reduction, in part, to the Summer Youth Employment Program. We see the results in lower juvenile placements. We have seen a true reduction in juvenile crime as a result. It's a program we worked on together; it's a program that works well.

Also keeping our community safe is our Health Division. That great work was recognized this past November / when they achieved accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board, becoming one of the first health departments in the nation to achieve national standards that foster effectiveness and promote continuous quality improvement. Congratulations!

Speaking of health, our county employees are getting healthier! Our wellness initiative with Humana Vitality has resulted in 4% lower health claim costs overall, and 12.5% lower claims for chronic conditions for a two year period for those participating. Our net savings on claims and indirect costs have been nearly ½ million dollars in 2013 over 2012.

Our Aging and Disabilities Services Division is reaching more people – they had an 8% increase in contacts in 2013 from 2012, more than 1,000 people a month! That's a good thing!

Its Crisis Intervention Training, the intensive 4-day training for law enforcement to diffuse crisis situations involving people with mental illness, has trained 110 people to date. We need to continue to work hard and smart in the area of mental health.

The specialized treatment courts are continuing to show good results. The Drug Court had 42 referrals and 12 of those were accepted in 2013. The new Behavioral Treatment Court, launched this past August, ended the year with 11 participants.

Our County nursing home, Brookside Care Center, a Five Star Facility and, was again voted the Best Nursing Home in Kenosha County. You here MADE that happen by adopting the needed changes within our nursing home. Brookside employees work at making the lives of residents better every day. In 2013, 488 Kenosha County citizens were admitted and served by Brookside, many in the rehabilitation area. That's outstanding. If our nursing home is going to remain the best of the best for our residents, and remain in the black, we must plan for the future. The rehabilitation area needs to be expanded. We are exploring all of the possible options and I promise you will see some information in coming months. Chairman Kubicki has been very supportive of doing this analysis.

Our IT division has been a critical partner at the table for our discussions about how to improve and streamline county services. Investment in IT has and will continue to show great returns in efficiency, cost-effectiveness and accountability.

During the past year, we have completed many different technology related projects including but not limited to:

- Upgrades to critical County services such as medical services at Brookside.
- For the District Attorney's office, implemented automated notification system providing court date reminders.
- Completed the scanning of over one-half million documents for the Register of Deeds office for online access.
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In the remainder of the year, future initiatives include:

- Improving physical security in County buildings by installing security cameras.
- Adding important resident services such as free public WiFi in some of our county parks.
- Streamlining benefit enrollment for County employees with a web-based, self-service tool.

We know that technology enables business, technology enables education and technology enhances public safety. We in Kenosha County are investing in these technologies to secure the present and plan for the future.

As we plan strategically as a county, we are also working with United Way of Kenosha County and KABA to continue our Foresight 20/20 Community Conversation, an ongoing community conversation dedicated to the creation of a collective vision for our county.

A follow-up meeting will be held in June with leaders from business, government, education and the non-profit community to continue this purposeful dialogue about how we can enhance collaboration to address complex issues and help Kenosha County to realize more of its untapped potential.

If there is one thing that all of us in this room can agree on: this county special. It is unique. And, it is a special time for this county. Business developers see it. New residents know it.

We are the biggest small town in Wisconsin and where people want to be. We need to continue to plan for Kenosha County's very bright future; continue to be visionaries to ensure that this is the place where people want to live and businesses want to call home.

We will continue work together on that goal.

We will do it the smart way through good strategic planning.

We will do it the fiscally responsible way by using resources wisely and being aware of the return on our investments.

- The future of Kenosha County looks bright,
- The state of our county is strong,
- The state of our fund balance is solid
- The state of our economic development is robust.

I look forward to us working together on making Kenosha County even better.

God Bless America and God Bless Kenosha County.

Thank you!