
CITY COUNCIL

Good Evening,

Residents, councilors and city staff, lend me your ears. Tonight I want to take you on a journey; buckle your seat belts and let the imagination of your mind go back in time. A time where it all began, the early 1800s when settlers discovered and named this great city BELOIT. Now, I would love to take you back to that time and walk year by year to 2018 but I feel that may take more than the 3 minutes allowed. So in the interest of time, let's fast forward to where we are now. Just like the individuals who discovered Beloit, they were determined and committed to making this a great city. Nearly 200 years later, Beloit is still full of individuals who are determined and committed to making this a great city.

In Beloit, we have a partnership made up of residents, city councilors, city staff and the business and educational community. Each year, the president of the City Council presents results and goals for the city. 2018 is a new year for the city; we have already witnessed continued growth and success. We could only accomplish this by working together to make our city and community a place where anyone would be proud to call home. Not for a few years but for a lifetime.

One of the big challenges for any city is to provide a great quality of life for their residents. I am proud to say that the council, staff and residents continue to work together to make Beloit a safer community with increased trust in our leadership. Through this partnership we have attracted new businesses, new jobs and new residents. How did we get here? I am glad you ask. Two years ago the council and city manager established six key objectives as our guiding principles. We continue to monitor our progress as it relates to these objectives. Although we have made great strides, we still have a lot of work to do. In short, we will get there. I encourage city staff to continue to celebrate our many successes while keeping focus on our challenges.

In developing these guiding principles we asked one simple question "What would the residents want?" I must be quick to remind everyone that as councilors this is one of our many tasks. Making sure our citizen's voices are heard. I would like to take a moment to provide an update on the six objectives.

Objective 1 - Create and Sustain Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods

The residents demanded a safe community and the city responded. I am happy to report we have gone over one year without a gun-related homicide, and we are approaching one year without a single homicide. Violent crimes were reduced by 14%, we had 29% fewer shootings and shots fired were reduced by 65%. Our police department has cleared 70% of its violent crime reports, far exceeding communities of comparable size. Thank you to the police chief and every officer who has shown bravery and dedication to help make our community safe for all residents. Thank you for taking on the attitude that crime will never be tolerated here. We celebrate the successes while continuing to address the challenges.

Our fire department has been working diligently to provide fire and emergency care for our residents with a 7% increase in calls for service. They have transported 90 more individuals to the

hospital in 2017 than they did in 2016, they responded to 98 fires which is 8 more than they did in 2016. This may not seem like much but the amount of work it takes to fight fires and assist people is huge. Our firefighters continue to work the community and school district on fire protection initiatives. The compassion shown by these men and women does not go unnoticed – whether it has been finding resources for dozens of people displaced from their homes due to a dangerously malfunctioning furnace on a bitterly cold winter night or doing everything they can to save a life. We know the community is in safe hands due to our firefighters. They are often called to assist other cities in their times of need. Thank you to each and every one of you in the fire department for what you do each day. We celebrate our successes while continuing to address the challenges.

What can the city do to improve housing on the Westside? Why doesn't the city improve housing on the Westside with all of these rundown homes? This is a cry we heard from our residents. And the city responded. We targeted Westside areas to revitalize. Average home sales are 102% higher than they were in 2016 and the assessed home values in the targeted area grew by 2.8%. We continue to look for ways to improve all of our neighborhoods. Hats off to Community Development Director Julie Christensen and her team for keeping their eye on the goal.

Objective 2 - Create and Sustain a High-Performing Organization

Our city staff, under City Manager Lori Luther's leadership and with the full support of the City Council, have expanded their external hire searches to create opportunities for men and women of all backgrounds to start a career with the City of Beloit. We've enacted changes to our police and fire recruitment practices that will attract more minority candidates. We know our diverse community wants to be served by people who reflect all demographics, races, and genders, and we are working toward that goal. 26% of Beloit Police Department new hires in 2016-17 were minority or female, 44% of Beloit Fire Department new hires in 2018 were minority or female. 26% of seasonal employees were minorities in 2017.

We will continue to enhance our hiring practices to ensure that qualified candidates from all backgrounds are given the opportunity to work for the residents of Beloit. Thank you to City Manager Lori Luther, Human Resources Director Marianne Marshall and all city staff who continue to strive toward this goal.

Other highlights from 2016-2017 include increased focus on ongoing training, especially in our police, fire and public works departments, and recent changes to the city's workers' compensation policy that changed in 2017. Our workers' comp changes resulted in a 44% reduction in workplace injuries, saving \$425,161 in workers' compensation claims compared to 2016. Thanks to Finance Director Eric Miller and Risk Manager David Niedfeldt and anyone else who assisted with this task.

The residents spoke and the city listened.

Objective 3 - Create and Sustain Economic and Residential Growth

It's exciting to see new construction, renovations and remodels happening throughout the city. We're looking forward to seeing the following businesses and organizations expand or locate to Beloit in 2018 and beyond:

- First National Bank and Trust Company's new operations center in the IronWorks campus (summer 2018)

- Hotel Goodwin (summer 2018)
- Beloit College's Powerhouse project (2019 completion)
- G5 Brewing Company (spring 2018)
- Holiday Inn Express (spring 2018 construction)
- Hilton Home 2 Suites (under construction)
- Additional houses, condos and apartments

New developments located in our community have led to 600 jobs created in 2016 and 2017, with many more expected in 2018. We are hopeful that other companies, such as NorthStar, who just received federal approval to create a drug that will aid in cancer screenings, will experience success this year that will allow them to invest in the community through capital improvements and job creation.

Growth continues in the Gateway Business Park, which is currently valued at \$159 million. The Gateway Business Park is home to 10 companies with 1,750 employees, as well as 292 multi-family units and 54 single family residences. The business park has almost 2 million square feet in industrial/warehouse distribution. Coming soon: 58 more multi-family units in the Hawks Ridge Apartment complex. Thanks to Economic Development Director Andrew Janke for his diligence in trying to get businesses here.

Objective 4 - Create and Sustain a High Quality of Life

From Street Dance, Music at Harry's to Beloit Snappers games and from the Beloit Farmers' Market to summer playground programs, our community has plenty of recreational activities for people of all ages, which helps create a vibrant community. Our library is seeing thousands of digital materials checked out. Our senior population has found many opportunities to learn and build a community at Grinnell Senior Center, which has partnered with the Rock County Council on Aging to distribute 151 farmers' market vouchers to seniors, hold two health classes, and serve 5,061 meals at the county's only senior dining center. Grinnell introduced Rock Steady boxing in 2018 to help fight against Parkinson's disease.

Our families and community members are enjoying our parks and programs. Over 3,500 kids were served with summer playground programs, 757 kids participated in the Beloit Dirty Dash, 350-400 people came to Riverside Park for the "Touch a Truck" event, and 13,167 people used Krueger Municipal Pool for open swim. Nearly 400 residents rented a picnic shelter, and over 500 people used our boat launch. And that's just a few highlights of our parks and recreation programs.

Our quality of life is not just enhanced through our many activities, sports and recreation programs. We're also removing ash trees throughout the city - we've removed about 1,000 ash trees and stumps over the last two years due to emerald ash borer - and have about 33% left to go compared to 55% in 2016. And we all dislike winter, but our Public Works department has found ways to fully clear our main roads during major snow events a full hour faster in 2017 than in 2016. While we can't escape the snow, we have many hard working public works crews who have been working long hours to keep our streets clear of snow so we can all get to work and school each day. Thank you to Downtown Beloit Association Executive Director Shauna El-Amin, the entire Department of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Beloit Public Library staff, Visit Beloit, and any other organization or department that helps maintain and enhance the quality of life in Beloit. Once again, the residents wanted something to do, and the city responded.

Objective 5 - Create and Sustain High Quality Infrastructure and Connectivity

An important project for city operations is near completion. An extended fiber optics network will be completed by July 2018. This project will result in a more reliable phone and data connection, eliminate downtime, increase security and provide backup redundancies. Thanks Information Systems Director Ray Gorsline and team. We will soon be starting street improvements and water and sewer projects that will help us sustain quality infrastructure over the next few decades. Thank you to the Department of Public Works staff for your work on these projects. We also look forward to seeing how the contributions of our new Public Works Director Laura Pigatti Williamson will positively impact these results in the future.

Objective 6 - Create and Sustain a Positive Image, Enhance Communications, and Engage the Community

We are seeing new ways to engage our residents through the use of social media, our website, surveys, and more. We want to hear from you - whether it's through social media, the city's website, emails, or phone calls - we want you to know that your voices are heard.

From sharing snow emergency information to increased tips to the Beloit Police Department via Facebook and from fire department ceremony videos to the opening of the golf course, we work best when we are able to have community conversations with you. If you haven't already liked the city's social media pages, take a look and follow them for important information and community updates.

We look forward to finding new ways to engage our community and enhance our community's image over the next few months.

While we've made progress, we have a way to go. We hope to extend this nearly 12-month streak of no homicides through 2018, 2019 and beyond. We want to see property values increase not only in our Westside Target Area but throughout the entire community. We will continue to work toward attracting new businesses - and focus on training our community for existing and future jobs. We will continue to make sound financial decisions so we can enjoy high-quality infrastructure and recreation activities. We will continue to find new ways to engage our community as we share with the rest of Wisconsin and Illinois just how great Beloit is. We will continue to keep our focus on addressing our challenges; such as our homeless population, how to invest in our youth and explore how we make sure our residents are career-ready for companies that want to locate or expand here. It is imperative that we start now training our residents for the many jobs that the casino will bring.

Thank you to all city residents and business members who have helped make Beloit a great community. Thank you to my fellow city councilors who have worked together in pursuit of a stronger community. Thank you to City Manager Lori Luther for her leadership over the past few years. And thank you to each and every city staff member who have dedicated their career to serving the community of Beloit. I would be remiss if I did not personally thank Sarah Millard, director of strategic communications, for her assistance. As president of the council there are times when you need information. In my case it always seems to be at the last minute, so I want to sincerely thank Pam Lathrop, executive assistant to the city manager City Attorney Elizabeth Krueger, and Clerk-Treasurer Lori Stottler and her team for being there when I call and for the

immediate assistance you all provide. To Lori Luther, thanks for your partnership and your willingness to work to address issues that arise in the city. Knowing that I can pick up the phone and call when there is an issue and confidently knowing the issue will be handled is huge.

Residents, councilors, city staff, lend me your ears. Together, let's continue this growth and progress as we make Beloit a community anyone would be proud to call home for a lifetime!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin D. Leavy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "K".

Kevin D. Leavy
Beloit City Council President