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Goals both personal and professional: Public figures share their New Year's resolutions

By Isabella Kostolni - Freeman Staff
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WAUKESHA — For many people, January is a time of reflection, a time to set intentions for the year ahead. Some people want to improve their health, others want to make a career move. A few of Waukesha's public figures have some big goals for 2024, both personal and professional.

Goals of county officials

Former Waukesha Mayor Larry Nelson is one such individual. After serving as mayor from 2006 to 2010, he made the switch to serving his community on a county level. This year is his 12th as the District 18 county supervisor, and he's got three resolutions for the local government and one for himself. His first goal is regarding the county's mission for supporting those dealing with mental health issues.



“One of my county resolutions is to see that the brand new crisis stabilization center for people that are having mental health issues has a successful first year in operation,” he said. “I believe that crisis stabilization center will dovetail with our embedded mental health professional program that’s working with the Waukesha County Sheriff’s Department and city of Waukesha Police Department and the emergency call center.”

After having received the overdose death data for 2023 (Nelson notes that deaths have decreased), the county supervisor also hopes that this year the Waukesha County Heroin Task Force, which he cochairs, can continue to reach out to more individuals to help break the cycle of addiction and provide them with adequate support. Currently, the Task Force works to make Narcan more readily available and facilitates a peer support program.

His last resolution for the county is to continue having one of the lowest tax rates in the state while simultaneously providing high-quality services to residents, and maintain the county’s AAA bond rating.

On a more personal level, Nelson is making it a goal of talking to as many of his constituents as he can, given that he’s up for re-election in April.

“I want to hear what issues are on people’s minds as well as share the successes I’ve had in my 12 years as a Waukesha County supervisor,” he said.

Waukesha County Executive Paul Farrow has some similar aspirations for 2024, sharing a statement with The Freeman in which he outlines some resolutions he also has for the county.

The statement notes that this year, the county is prioritizing funding for public safety. Moreover, the Health & Human Services Department is putting more emphasis on its Fentanyl Awareness Campaign and will provide more Narcan training in the community.



In his statement, Farrow also says that the county will “proactively look for ways to avoid the financial difficulties that have troubled many local governments, as one-time, federal, and state funding sources are not sustainable” and that he’s looking forward to “a new year, new growth, and new ways to make sure our communities continue to thrive.”

Goals of city officials

Waukesha Mayor Shawn Reilly has a number of resolutions as well, including catching the attention of the state government about some prevalent issues.

“The state legislature continually creates policies that economically hamstring municipalities, while state government continues to collect more taxes (and surpluses) every year,” he said in an email to The Freeman. “I emphatically agree that property taxes are too high. Legislators and others need to recognize that property taxes normally are not the main portion of how municipalities are funded in other states. Wisconsin is an outlier among all states by requiring municipalities to fund the majority of its operations mainly on property taxes.”

Reilly notes that he believes the increase in shared revenue is a good start, but the state government needs to continue to provide tools to its municipalities to help them succeed.

“My resolution is to help our state legislators recognize that there are other ways to fund local government other than having property owners pay for the majority of the local services,” the mayor said.

He also hopes that individuals and groups attending the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee this summer will show one another respect and abide by the laws, because, as he puts it, “creating chaos within the community or hurting people is a horrible and counter-productive way to attempt to convince others that your message/position is just.”



In 2024, the mayor also hopes to see the community raise the remaining funds necessary to have the Grede Park Parade Memorial completed by Nov. 21, the third anniversary of the Waukesha Christmas Parade tragedy.

On a more personal level, Reilly also resolves to continue working on his health and happiness. He wants to hike and canoe more this year, as well as take a fun trip with his family.

District 10 Alderman Mike Anderson's goals are pretty similar to that of the mayor. He hopes to "focus on what matters most" in his personal life. For the city, he also would like to see the Grede Park Parade Memorial completed and hopes the community can help meet the fundraising goal. To contribute to the parade memorial fund, visit <https://www.waukeshawi.gov/residents/waukesha-parade-memorial.php>, scroll down, and click on the red "Donate Now" button.

District 14 Alderman Rick Lemke says his goal for the city in 2024 is to increase affordable housing and to serve on his committees to the best of his ability.

District 4 Alderman Joe Pieper's New Year's resolution is to "make more time for the small and simple things in life."

District 13 Alderman Dean Lemke says that his personal goal this year is to be a good father-in-law, since both of his kids will be getting married. In terms of the city, he's looking forward to seeing the strategic plan come together.

District 12 Alderman Frank McElderry says he's also looking forward to seeing the city continue working on the strategic plan and is excited to work with Tony Brown, Waukesha's new city administrator.

"He seems like he's open to new ideas and he's got a good head on his shoulders so far," McElderry said.



The alderman is also glad to continue serving his constituents and making sure they have a voice in local government. He wants to continue maintaining that “small town feeling” in Waukesha and to make sure that the city doesn’t “get lost in huge development plans.” His personal resolutions are to stay physically fit and spend more time with his grandchildren.

Waukesha Water Utility General Manager Dan Duchniak has also made a personal resolution to spend more time with his family. He hopes to institute a better work-life balance and try to hit the golf course a little more to break in his new clubs. In terms of his professional life, Duchniak says he’s got some organizing to do and some staffing challenges to address.

“I need to work on decluttering my office and my email inbox as they have both become a bit disorganized over the last few years while the Great Lakes water project was under construction,” he said.

“I also want to continue to find and implement efficiencies at the Utility to deal with the shrinking workforce challenges the industry is facing. We may want to consider a more regional approach to address this issue as well.”

Goals of other notable figures

Beyond those involved in municipal operations, some other notable people in Waukesha have a few goals to reach in 2024.

Local historian John Schoenknecht resolves to continue his volunteer work at the Waukesha County Historical Society & Museum in order to help educate the public. But he also has a goal for the museum itself this month.

“As a member of the Board of Directors of the Waukesha County Historical Society, I can say that one of our resolutions is to open the Agriculture Display in January and to continue to raise funds to help tell the many stories of our county,” he explained.



Angela Mancuso, executive director of The Women's Center, is also ready to continue serving the community in 2024. This year, TWC is looking to tackle the housing challenges its clients face. "We intend to advocate even harder for safe, affordable housing options and resources for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking," she said. Mancuso reports that another member of their team has been added to focus solely on working with survivors to secure housing and address any associated barriers. Also this year, TWC will finish its indoor and outdoor play spaces for children and youth, as well as expand its volunteer base of on-call advocates to respond to and support victims of sexual assault or domestic violence at area hospitals and clinics. For herself personally, Mancuso wants to get a band going again and play live since she hasn't been able to do so since 2020. Lastly, former Waukesha Mayor Carol Lombardi, who served from 1998 to 2006, says this will be a year for her to continue adjusting to life as a widow after the death of her husband Bob. She also hopes to "continue to be healthy and enjoy the Waukesha community as long as possible." And for the Waukesha community itself, she has one message this new year: "I wish everyone, any day, God's blessings."

