



*Office of the Mayor*

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DEAN R. KAUFERT

*Mayor*

## State of the City 2018:

Honorable Council President Stevenson, Distinguished Members of the Common Council, Department Heads, guests in the chambers and you the citizens of this great city we live in, Neenah. Thanks for allowing me time to give you my 4th State of the City message.

The State of our great City continues to be positive with citizens sharing confidence and optimism for the future of our community and future generations that will enjoy living and working here. I have met many folks throughout our city that praise the direction and path the City Government leaders have taken with the issues of today and big picture initiatives.

Recent decisions by major companies and employers in our community have been both positive and concerning. Theda Care's decision to stay in Neenah and upgrade the current facility into a premier healthcare facility, providing access to a quality healthcare while maintaining a Level II Trauma Center, was welcome news. While Kimberly Clark's announcement of the potential closing of two facilities within our community and region left us with concern and angst. However, the State, Kimberly-Clark and labor teams are still at the table talking and trying to find ways to keep operations here and save those jobs. I will continue to be involved and advocate for finding ways to have the state help this industry survive.

We continue to see the hours of hard work and dedication by the Council, department heads and employees pay off and help put us in a great position to prepare for the future. This Common Council continues to be forthright in their responsibility to the community and works hard to be good stewards of your tax dollars.

My reelection recently and tonight's swearing in ceremony is indeed an honor and privilege. The opportunity to lead this community forward with goals of continued economic development opportunities, fiscal responsibility and ensuring the wonderful quality of life we have here is humbling.

I had the good fortune to have begun my journey in public service way back in 1985 at the age of 28 representing the Hoover School area as an alderman. I have 24 years learning government spending and economic development. This includes my constituent services in Madison, as a State Representative, and the four years as your Mayor have given me the tools to be part of a dynamic team moving Neenah forward. People like Senator Mike Ellis, Director Finance Bob Lang, Council President Todd Stevenson and the many colleagues in both the state house and city hall have all contributed to our successes. Assisted by my ability to work with groups and staff to try to find a way to get to a "yes" when hard decisions need to be made. It is hard to believe that 33 years of my life have been in public service, over half of my life. My wife Renee, children Casey

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and Kari and grandchildren have always been there for me and I appreciate the love and support. My family, as well as yours, gives up a lot for us to do what we do and we thank them for that.

At a restaurant a few weeks back someone asked me why I do it? I can give many reasons but four of them were here tonight. The next generation, my grandchildren and yours will be the ones that reap the benefits of what we do today and also pay the bills we create for the future.

People have commented that good things are happening in Neenah. Creating a quality of life second to none is what citizens are looking for. Good roads, jobs, core services, recreational activities, the arts and taxes that keep the homeowners ability to pay in mind are just a few. I encourage you and staff to continue to present ideas and concepts that will make positive impacts on all of our lives.

I have spoken many times about doing the little things and how they can make a difference. All of our employees strive to deliver the best customer service they can. We also have a quality staff that understands we work for you, the taxpayers and that customer service is job one. I have shared many personal notes from citizens regarding going the extra mile for someone. Overall we meet the challenges daily, top down throughout city government.

The recent budget continued to hold the line on tax increases for our citizens while making sure the core services that people need are of high quality and affordable. Our yearly \$24.6 million dollar operating budget (\$58 million all funds) and average \$8.2 million Capital Improvement Program budget continue to show our commitment to excellence while espousing our frugality with how we spend taxpayer dollars.

Our debt continues to be well below allowable state limits and our latest Standard and Poor's bond rating is AA/Stable. For a city of our size this is excellent news and a reflection of our current practices by the Council and Finance Department led by Director Easker. If you page through the bond agency summary you will read terms in bold that state Neenah: Adequate Economy, Strong Management, Strong Budgetary Performance, Very Strong Budget Flexibility with a Fund Balance of \$4.1 mil which is 18% of operating expenditures, and Very Strong Liquidity. They also state that our debt and contingent liability profile is weak. 87% of our current debt is scheduled to be repaid within 10 years.

With our successes come future challenges:

We will begin working on the 2018-2022 CIP next week which will begin to show the need for potential additional resources to keep up with an aging infrastructure. The outlying years projections for projects show an increased level of borrowing which will be challenging to meet. While we all understand this document is a 5 year plan and requests sometimes fall into the wants not needs category, it shows that meeting the future needs will be a challenge. I fully expect changes to be made in the future working with the Council to prioritize projects and spending within our means.

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Our aging infrastructure including roads, sanitary and water needs continues to grow. I implore the Governor and legislature to come up with a transportation package that gets more dollars into the local municipalities budgets for local projects. We continue to delay and defer road improvements that only lead to higher costs down the road. In a few weeks I intend to finally bring forward an alternative plan for Council to debate on how residents should pay for road reconstruction throughout the city. There is also a plan on the Council Directives.

The four year Washington Park upgrade is underway. Dollars are allocated for the start of improvements to Arrowhead Park and the Loop the Lake Trail. The river crossings will be a regional attraction bringing people to our community and downtown. Mark your calendars for June 23, for the Cut n Run event to kick off the official opening. Tourism Secretary Stephanie Klett will be there and we are still waiting to hear from the Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch.

We have a public works and street department that prides itself on doing a job that people can be proud of. This weekend was a prime example of the dedication by these individuals in making sure the streets were plowed and people could travel safely after snowstorm Evelyn.

Police, Fire, Library, Community Development, and Finance, Clerks Office and Legal Department and the Mayor's office are all stepping up our game to improve the level of customer service and commitment to the taxpayer. Our Social Media platform headed up by my Administrative Staff person Joni Heinz has taken us to new heights with Facebook, Twitter and our website. The public has many opportunities to stay informed.

So rest assured that throughout city government our employees are excelling in providing the customer, you our taxpayer with quality services that help provide a great quality of life here.

Our TIF Districts are financially strong and are poised to become wonderful financial and economic success stories adding to our tax base in the future and creating jobs now. The new 184 unit Pendleton Apartment Complex in TIF 11 with an estimated value when completed of \$14 million dollars is open with some new residents already moved in.

While cautioning us that future needs will force us to look at available funding sources we will soon be looking at other projects in outlying years as well.

For 2018 and 2019 you will see some more initiatives around the community with potential development projects including talks with developers about higher end housing in the downtown area. We are laying the groundwork to extend our borders to the west and discussions are underway about possibilities on the South Commercial Street corridor, our Industrial Park II land and other development opportunities.

I will to continue with initiatives like: Mayors Open Door Policy, WHBY Radio Show (3<sup>rd</sup> Monday every month 11 am), Office Hours, visibility throughout the community, and 24/7 access.

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Once again this summer I will continue the Working with the Staff Program which helps me better understand the needs of our departments and how to improve services. It has proved to be an educational and fun experience that gets me out of the office where I gain a better grasp the day to day operations within city government.

I along with this council as the elected representatives will strive each and every day to improve the way government provides services to our residents. If you have suggestions to help us do our jobs better, please go to our City of Neenah website where you can find contact information for your alderman or myself. We do love to hear from you and promise to listen to your concerns. We cannot do this alone and need your input and insight.

We as your representatives will continue to do what we can to continue to make Neenah a great place to live, work and play and move Neenah Forward.

Thank you for listening and I'm very proud of the direction this council, staff and community is headed, I hope you agree.

“Neenah, There's no place I'd rather be”

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dean R. Kaufert". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Dean R. Kaufert  
Neenah Mayor