

KENOSHA NEWS

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'I WANTED TO INVEST IN KENOSHA'

BREWING HIS OWN SUCCESS STORY



ROSE ANDROWICH PHOTOS, KENOSHA NEWS

Russ Collier, the owner of Southport Tea is excited to brew up success in his tea shop. Because of his familiarity with Downtown Kenosha, he purchased the former S.J. Crystal's site, 5701 Sixth Ave.

Specialty tea shop open at former S.J. Crystals site

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KENOSHA — Russ Collier wasn't a tea connoisseur until he stepped into a specialty tea shop, which first planted the seed for his own business.

It led him to found Southport Tea, which has grown from initial offerings sold at Kenosha Public Market to now his own storefront in Downtown Kenosha.

Collier has lived in Kenosha for 10 years with his wife and kids, and he grew up nearby in Winthrop Harbor, Illinois Growing up, his family often shopped and visited Kenosha.



Several varieties and blends of tea, each hand-selected, tasted and prepared by owner Russ Collier and his wife, are available at Southport Tea in Downtown Kenosha.

Please see TEA SHOP, Page A4

KUSD board plans for November referendum

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KENOSHA — The Kenosha Unified School Board has decided to continue planning for a November operational referendum.

The board weighed Tuesday whether to pursue a referendum in April 2027 instead of November. The board ultimately moved forward with planning a November referendum, citing the potential for higher voter turnout and urgency to address the district's structural deficit.

KUSD faces a projected deficit ranging from about \$10.6 million to \$17.5 million for the 2026-27 school year, depending on if the district approves salary increases.

The projected deficit grew after the Wisconsin State Senate rejected a bipartisan deal May 13 that would have provided KUSD with about \$4.3 million in additional special education reimbursement for the 2026-27 school year.

The deal posed "an opportunity to give a little bit of relief" that could have made April a better option for a referendum, allowing the district more planning time, KUSD Board Clerk Todd Price said at the meeting.

"I think that if we move in the November direction, you're going to have the will of the voters to force them to make the right decision, which I think is to give us some more funds for our school district," Price said.

The November ballot will include the upcoming gubernatorial race and midterm elections.

Board Member Rebecca Stevens said that with greater voter turnout expected in November, "it's a chance that we can't afford to pass up."

"There is more urgency about this now, more than ever," Stevens said.

The disadvantages of planning a November referendum include "a compressed timeline and messaging challenges, less time to survey the community and uncertainty with the state budget," Superintendent Jeff Weiss said.



Price



Stevens



Weiss

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AMERICA 250 | WISCONSIN ORIGINALS

Three Miss Americas have been from Wisconsin

BY DANIEL LAVENDER
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As America celebrates its 250th anniversary, we're recognizing Wisconsinites who have made unique contributions to the nation.

Contestants from Wisconsin have won the sash and tiara at the Miss America pageant on three separate occasions.

Terry Meeuwsen, a De Pere native, became the first Miss Wisconsin to be named Miss America in 1973. Meeuwsen went from



Meeuwsen

being Miss America to a regular on television. She worked in news with WTMJ-TV in Milwaukee from 1978-86. After making regular appearances as a guest-host on "The 700 Club" Meeuwsen became a permanent co-host in 1993 — a role that she continues.

Laura Kaeppler, a Kenosha native, was crowned Miss



Kaeppler

America 2012. During Kaeppler's time as Miss America she met with the then-president Barack Obama, serving as the National Goodwill Ambassador for the Children's Miracle Network. Kaeppler currently co-hosts the podcast "Health Interrupted" with celebrity fitness trainer Gina Lombardi.

Grace Stanke, a Wausau native,



Stanke

is the most recent Miss Wisconsin to be named Miss America — being crowned for 2023. Stanke's "Miss America World Tour" included travel to sites such as Fukushima and the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai. She is currently a nuclear engineer and nuclear energy advocate at Constellation Energy.



America at 250:
The story still unfolding

This story is part of an ongoing series exploring the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026. Visit our website to read other stories in the series and share your own.

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