



WAUKESHA COUNTY

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY BOARD

Date: July 15, 2026

To: Waukesha County Board of Supervisors

From: James A. Heinrich, County Board Chairman / Acting County Executive

Re: Appointment of Thomas Farley as Interim Waukesha County Executive

Dear Fellow Supervisors,

Pursuant to my statutory responsibility to nominate a successor to fulfill the remainder of the current County Executive term until a special election is held, I am proud to formally recommend Thomas Farley to serve as Interim Waukesha County Executive.

Tom is an esteemed legal mind and dedicated public servant with deep roots in our region. A graduate of Marquette University and Marquette University Law School (1978), Tom practiced law in the Milwaukee area before dedicating over three decades of his professional life to Waukesha County. He joined our corporation counsel office in 1985, rose to Deputy Corporation Counsel in 1988, and was confirmed by the County Board as Corporation Counsel in 1991—a role he held with distinction for 25 years until his retirement in 2016.

During his 31-year tenure with Waukesha County, Tom successfully navigated complex administrative landscapes while serving under four County Board Chairs and three County Executives. In addition to his role as chief legal counsel, Tom served as an integral Cabinet member under the County Executives he worked for, providing high-level administrative leadership and strategic guidance across all county operations. His unmatched background directly aligns with the core criteria required for this interim appointment.

Having spent over three decades advising the executive and legislative branches of Waukesha County, Tom possesses an intricate understanding of county policy, departmental structures, and intergovernmental relationships. Notably, Tom was an integral legal adviser during each of Waukesha County's major structural transitions over the past several decades. He helped guide the county's original transition to the County Executive form of government in 1991, provided steady counsel in 2005 during the county's last interim executive transition following Dan Finley's resignation, and facilitated the smooth leadership transfer from Dan Vrakas to Paul Farrow in 2015. Having been at the table for each of these key milestones, he is uniquely familiar with how to navigate these transition periods smoothly.

Throughout his 25 years as Corporation Counsel, Tom was a principal advisor on budget execution, risk management, and statutory compliance. He has a proven track record of safeguarding taxpayer resources and maintaining disciplined fiscal oversight.

Because Tom is returning from retirement strictly to steer our county through this challenging transition, he carries no long-term political or campaign ambitions for this office. Furthermore, his current service as an alternate on the Waukesha County Ethics Board underscores his commitment to integrity, transparency, and objective oversight. He fully embraces the role of a steady steward whose sole focus is to preserve our established long-term strategic course, protect our current initiatives, and support our talented department heads and staff.

Waukesha County is best served right now by a steady, experienced hand on the wheel. Tom brings the institutional knowledge, legal acumen, and objective neutrality we need to keep the county on track until the people have their say in the special election.