

Application Form

Profile

Vera

First Name

C

Middle
Initial

Westphal

Last Name

Email Address

Home Address

Suite or Apt

City

State

Postal Code

What district do you live in? *

☒ District 4

Primary Phone

Alternate Phone

Milwaukee County Zoo

Employer

Deputy Zoo Director

Job Title

Please look at the vacancy page before applying. Some Boards, Committees and Commissions have requirements that they are looking for in an applicant, such as specific skills or member types such as Adult or Student.

The Vacancy page can be found here:

[VACANCIES](#)

Which Boards would you like to apply for?

Civic Celebration Commission: Submitted

Why are interested in joining this Board, Committee or Commission?

[Westphal.Vera.Resume_2026_Civic_Celebration_Commission.docx](#)

Upload a Resume

If you have issues uploading your resume, email it to Misty Richey at mrichey@wauwatosa.net

If you need to send your resume separately, complete the remainder of the application, save it, and we will submit both the application and resume for you.

Please tell us about yourself and why you want to serve.

I have dedicated more than 40 years of my career to public service and have been a proud resident of Wauwatosa since 1988. I currently serve on two community boards, the Wauwatosa West Allis Chamber of Commerce and the Wauwatosa Distinguished Citizen Council Award Board, where I support initiatives that strengthen civic engagement and community pride. I have a deep appreciation for the City of Wauwatosa and all it offers to residents, businesses, and visitors. I am particularly interested in serving on the Civic Celebration Commission because of its important role in honoring Memorial Day, Independence Day, and other civic observances that reinforce our shared values and community identity. I would be honored to contribute my experience, time, and commitment to ensuring these celebrations remain meaningful, well-organized, and welcoming to all Wauwatosa residents.

Demographics

 _____
Date of Birth

Once you submit your application, check [here](#) for the Common Council agenda that has your appointment or reappointment. It may be possible that it will be on future agendas and not on the next upcoming meeting date agenda. This will be how you know if you have been appointed or reappointed.



APPLICATION FOR CITY OF WAUWATOSA – CIVIC CELEBRATION COMMISSION

SUMMARY

Engaged Wauwatosa resident with a strong commitment to civic life, public service, and community traditions. Brings experience working with public-sector organizations, a collaborative approach to volunteer service, and a deep appreciation for events that honor national history, community pride, and inclusive civic participation.

COMMUNITY & CIVIC EXPERIENCE

Community Volunteer & Civic Participant

Wauwatosa, WI

- Actively engaged in local civic issues and public-sector initiatives
- Support community-focused efforts that promote transparency, public trust, and resident engagement
- Strong interest in preserving and enhancing community traditions that bring residents together across generations

Public-Sector & Policy Engagement

- Professional experience working with government-related organizations and public finance topics
 - Recognized by the **Wisconsin Policy Forum** for individual excellence, reflecting a commitment to high standards in public service and civic responsibility
 - Comfortable working within formal governance structures, meeting schedules, and public accountability expectations
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RELEVANT SKILLS & STRENGTHS

- Civic event planning support and coordination
- Collaboration with volunteers, staff, and elected officials
- Attention to detail and follow-through on commitments

- Respect for traditions, protocols, and ceremonial practices
 - Clear communication and teamwork
 - Dependable participation in meetings and events
-

INTEREST IN THE CIVIC CELEBRATION COMMISSION

I am particularly interested in serving on the Civic Celebration Commission because of its role in honoring Memorial Day, Independence Day, and other civic observances that strengthen community identity and shared values. I would be honored to contribute my time and skills to ensure these events remain meaningful, well-organized, and welcoming to all Wauwatosa residents.

AVAILABILITY

- Willing and able to serve a **four-year term**
- Available to attend meetings, planning sessions, and community events as required
- Open to supporting leadership roles, including committee work, as needed

VERA WESTPHAL

EXPERIENCE

Milwaukee County Zoo

May 2005 – Present

Deputy Zoo Director (Administration, Finance and Operations)

Responsibilities include:

- Proposing, formulating, developing, planning, directing and leading organization strategy, policy making and managing the fiscal and administrative activities of the Zoo and operations
- Responsible for the oversight of accounting, budgeting, IT, human resources, procurement, accounts payable/ receivable, communications, capital budget development, cash management, program and audience evaluation and research services, Zoo-wide performance measures and goals and visitor services including the operations of the admission gate, rides, special exhibits, safety and security programs and revenue generating contracts and leases
- Additional duties include annual budget preparation and monitoring over \$24 million budget including \$20 million in revenues with 166 full-time positions and up to 300 seasonal employees, programmable budget development and implementation, representation of the department in all fiscal and administrative matters
- Serving as second in command, when Executive Zoo Director is unavailable, which includes participation in the County Executive's Cabinet
- Zoo representative at County Committee meetings and participation in Countywide planning activities and inter-departmental work groups; represent the Zoo at the Zoological Society of Milwaukee board meetings
- Monitors and reviews trends in Zoo operations and management issues; researches and recommends operational, procedural and policy improvements

Highlights include:

- Led the Zoo to reopen and remain open safely after being closed for three months in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic. This provided a respite for family and friends as most of the Country was shut down.

- Successfully secured \$6.8 million in Shuttered Venue Operators Grant from the Small Business Administration to offset revenue losses due to the pandemic
- Visionary for Process Improvements – customer feedback portal, guest injury log, uniform policy, seasonal employee training and orientation, school field trip registration (increased revenues over \$200K in the first year)
- Key player of the 2022/2023 Strategic Planning Executive Leadership Team (mission, vision, key objectives and refresh of the 2013 Master Plan and Business Plan)
- Created and led Quarterly Zoo-wide management team meetings and instrumental in bringing back Zoo-wide meetings and preparing meeting presentations
- Developed Zoo-wide goals and priorities for the organization that cascaded down to individual performance goals
- Oversaw a project that reviewed over 84 job descriptions to ensure the roles and responsibilities met the current needs of the organization.
- Researched and issued a Request for Proposal to outsource the Zoo's concessions and novelty operations and successful implementation of a lease with Service Systems Associates, which included \$4.2 million in facility improvements
- Key player in re-negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee (Zoo non-profit support partner) resulting in 50% of membership sales (\$3 million + annually)
- Under my leadership of the Green Committee, received the 2016 Ideal of Education award from Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful, the Governor's 2018 Tourism Stewardship Award for ongoing sustainability and conservation efforts and received the 2018 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Recycling Excellence Honorable Mention for outstanding recycling and waste minimization services
- Creation of Mission related programs - Responsible for creating the Zoo's Conservation, Research and Sustainability Coordinator to enhance the Zoo's mission of wildlife conservation and public education
- Staff succession planning
- Participation and development of Zoo's 10 Year Master Plan in 2013; participation in the development of the Zoo's new west entrance and parking lot; member of the design team for a new rhino and penguin habitats ensuring there is a guest experience opportunity to generate additional revenues

- Study and analyze Zoo Governance options
- Member of Milwaukee County's Leadership Committee for Employee Engagement; instrumental in developing a Zoo-wide communications plan after receiving feedback from the employee engagement survey; implementation of conservation, research and sustainability position and tracking program to advance the mission of zoos and aquariums
- Instrumental in creating the Zoo's Wild Connections program and a new Wild Lights program to bring in new revenues
- Expanded the Zoo's audience/program evaluation studies to gain better insight on guest experience, empathy for wild life and how to best use language to use to connect our guests to conservation and wildlife
- Oversee the management of the Operations Division beginning in 2017 which includes all revenue generating venues such as admissions, rides, special exhibit and experiences
- Participation in three Association of Zoos and Aquarium (AZA) accreditation inspections resulting in accreditation each time
- Development of the Zoo's Accessibility Program
- Development including approval by the County Board of Supervisors of a dynamic pricing strategy for admission fees to generate additional revenues
- Created a guest round-up program that has generated over \$600,000 for conservation programs since 2015
- Participated in AZA Advocacy Day in Washington DC by meeting with staff from four House Representatives and two Senators for support of zoo and aquarium legislation
- Part of the executive leadership team that supported the Zoological Society of Milwaukee \$27 million Adventure Africa capital campaign

Accomplishments during Interim assignment included:

- Successfully handled the roles and responsibilities of the Zoo Executive Director while also fulfilling the role of Deputy Zoo Director
- Continued to lead the organization through the impacts of the COVID Pandemic
- Fostered greater collaboration between the senior leadership team
- Resolved a long running unaddressed personnel situation involving a senior leader – unfortunately, this resulted in termination for that person but it was necessary for the organization to thrive
- Regularly meet with the President of the Zoological Society of Milwaukee Executive Director and presented at Society Board meetings.

Milwaukee County

January 1994 – May 2005

Department of Administrative Services

Senior Fiscal and Management Analyst &

BRASS System Administrator (1999 to May 2005)

Responsibilities included:

- Administered the County-wide budgeting system (Budget of \$1 billion)
- Developed a number of County-wide fiscal reports, including fiscal impact of position reclasses and reallocations, County-wide salary cost projections, budget development fiscal status reports, projected labor agreement cost analyses and County-wide retirement and sick leave payout reports
- Conducted financial and policy analyses
- Prepared department budget requests for the Zoo and other departments
- Reviewed departmental financial statements to monitor and develop systems for budget compliance
- Assisted in interpreting County, State, and Federal budget procedures and administrative rules
- Performed programmatic and fiscal reviews of local, state and federal legislation
- Analyzed the need for new positions and submitted reports and recommendations

- Monitored and attended on a monthly basis Milwaukee County Board standing committee meetings
- Assisted in the development of Memoranda of Understanding with the Milwaukee Art Museum/War Memorial Center, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts and for the multi-jurisdictional Justice Assistance Grant with Cities of Milwaukee, West Allis, and Wauwatosa; administered the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant
- Analyzed and made recommendations on budget requests for County departments and outside agencies for the County Executive's Budget (Office of the Sheriff, House of Correction, District Attorney, DAS-Human Resources, DAS-Risk Management, DAS-Procurement, Corporation Counsel, Employee Fringe Benefits, Zoo, UW Extension, Combined Court Related Operations, County Health Related Programs, County Treasurer, War Memorial Center, Villa Terrace Museum & Charles Allis Museum, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, Historical Society, Fund for the Arts, Greater Milwaukee Convention and Visitors Bureau, Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful, various county-wide non-departmental budgets); assisted in the development and implementation of improved budget procedures

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Awarded the 2022 Norman N. Gill Award for Individual Excellence from the Wisconsin Policy Forum. [Wisconsin Policy Forum | 2022 Salute to Local Government Award Winners \(wispolicyforum.org\)](https://wispolicyforum.org/2022-salute-to-local-government-award-winners)

Professional Fellow – Association of Zoos & Aquariums; Active member of the AZA CFO, & Business Operations group

Wauwatosa West Allis Chamber of Commerce – Executive Committee, Board Member and past President

Wauwatosa Distinguished Citizen Council Member – 2018 to present

Milwaukee County Pension Board Member – Elected by Pension System Members; Chair of Audit Committee; November 2012 to February 2017 – accomplishments -- instrumental in lowering investment return assumption rate to a more realistic one and reducing liability amortization period from 30 years to 20 years; as Audit Committee Chair, lead to greater accountability from Pension staff.

Tempo Milwaukee Member since 2015 and member of the Program Committee (largest professional women's group in Milwaukee), which empowers women to achieve and sustain leadership roles.

Certificate from the University of Pennsylvania The Wharton School Aresty Institute of
Executive Education in International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans: Portfolio Concepts
and Management Program

Species360 Board of Trustees, Beginning January 2026

EDUCATION

Bachelors of Arts - Business Management and Communications

Honors: Magna Cum Laude

Concordia University
