

## 'Forced to reevaluate': At least two communities cancel their Christmas parades. Others add precautions.

CATHY KOZLOWICZ , HANNAH KIRBY , BOB DOHR , EVAN FRANK | Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Holiday parades are beloved annual traditions for countless communities, but after unthinkable tragedy struck one of the Milwaukee area's first of the year some are reconsidering their plans.

On Monday, Menomonee Falls announced the cancelation of its annual Christmas Parade, scheduled for Nov. 28, in the wake of an SUV plowing into the Waukesha Christmas Parade on Sunday, killing five people and injuring 48 others.

A number of other communities are rethinking their plans and expect to make decisions soon on whether to move forward or make new security precautions.

"It would be very hard to march in the parade, which would normally be a very joyous time, knowing that many people have been seriously injured and five have died," Menomonee Falls Village President Dave Glasgow said. "We stand in solidarity with our Waukesha friends and mourn with them the injured and those who lost their lives."

Residents possibly being too "terrified" to attend the parade also factored into the decision, he said.

Whitefish Bay has also decided not to have its Holiday Stroll Parade, which was scheduled for Friday, according to a Merchants of Whitefish Bay special edition newsletter. The decision was made in coordination with the Village of Whitefish Bay and the Whitefish Bay Police Department.

"The Whitefish Bay Business Improvement District (BID) is deeply saddened by the events in Waukesha and, out of respect for our grieving community, unanimously made this decision," the newsletter said.

The village's tree lighting ceremony and non-parade activities that occur as part of the Holiday Stroll are being postponed.

The newsletter encouraged residents and visitors to visit Silver Spring Drive throughout December for holiday activities and to make a donation to the Waukesha Community Fund.

*The Menomonee Falls Christmas Parade has been  
CANCELED for Sunday, November 28 in light of the recent  
events in the City of Waukesha.*

— Menomonee Falls Police Department (@ProtectTheFalls) November  
22, 2021

## **Communities moving forward with their parades with extra safety precautions**

Franklin has decided to move forward with its Christmas Parade — the first in the city's history, according to a news release. The parade is scheduled to start at 4:15 p.m. Dec. 4.

"We're sensitive to the tragedy in Waukesha and wish to honor the spirit of those who were killed or hurt by participating in the celebration of the Christmas holiday season with a parade, an activity they were participating in," Franklin Mayor Steve Olson said in a news release. "We are aware of the circumstances surrounding the Waukesha tragedy and are confident that we'll provide a safe and enjoyable event for families."

The police department will take extra precautions to make sure that any route to or through the parade "will be secured to prevent any vehicles from entering," Franklin Police Chief Rick Oliva said Monday.

Oliva said there are tentative plans for how they're going to do that, but wouldn't discuss the specifics.

The route starts at Drexel Avenue and Schlueter Parkway, travels toward Legend Drive via Schlueter Parkway, then heads to City Hall, 9229 West Loomis Road, for a 5 p.m. tree lighting ceremony, according to a parade flyer.

"We will be prepared to ensure a safe parade for everybody," Oliva said.

The Grafton Christmas parade — "one of the largest and most highly attended" in southeastern Wisconsin — will also go on, but with added personnel and equipment, according to a Tuesday news release from the Grafton Area Chamber of Commerce, the Village of Grafton Police

Department and the Village of Grafton.

"Given many unfortunate incidents leading up to and including the one we witnessed on Sunday, we are in an era where we must abandon the mentality 'it won't happen here,' " a news release said. "While we have always had a strong safety and traffic mitigation plan in place prior to the recent incident in Waukesha, we were forced to reevaluate our strategy."

They needed time to obtain additional resources from neighboring communities to ensure they had "adequate personnel and equipment to beef up security and lock down the parade route."

"While we will not discuss the details of our mitigation strategies, we do want you to rest assured that you and your loved ones will be safe and protected during the Grafton Christmas Parade," a news release said.

West Allis has "bolstered security protocols" for its Christmas Parade, which is scheduled for Dec. 4, West Allis Police Chief Patrick Mitchell said.

The decision to move forward with the event was made after consultation with the West Allis police and fire departments, West Allis-West Milwaukee Recreation and Community Services Department and City support staff, West Allis Mayor Dan Devine said.

"As a part of the larger Milwaukee community, our hearts have very much been with Waukesha as we weighed our options and decided how to proceed,"

Devine said.

"We do not take the tragedy that transpired lightly, and have thoroughly re-evaluated our approach to all city events as a result. With this in mind, due to increased investment in our resources and the support of multiple groups, we have decided to move forward with the parade and are assured in our ability to hold this event for the community."

To mitigate risk, the city plans to install concrete barriers and place Department of Public Works trucks to block off all parade route side streets and access points, including placing police squads throughout the parade route. They also plan to utilize police vehicles to secure the front end and the back end of the parade route. Police response teams will be placed throughout the parade route and officers on duty will be on heightened alert.

To help support the victims of the Waukesha parade incident, the West Allis Youth Commission will be collecting monetary donations along the parade route.

"We are thankful the community understands we are doing our best to navigate difficult circumstances," Devine said. "Ultimately, the safety and security of our community during events remains our foremost priority."

West Bend will also be putting additional security measures in place for its Nov. 28 Christmas Parade to "ensure all participants and spectators are safe," the West Bend Police Department posted on Facebook Monday.

Parade organizers and police department staff members met Monday to review and discuss security and logistics.

Additional road closures will be in place for the parade, so participants and spectators may not be able to park in spots they have used in the past, the

post said.

Each year, Highway 33 at 7th Avenue is closed to traffic during the parade, the post said, and no vehicles will be allowed to cross 7th Avenue. Detour routes will be marked on Highway 33 eastbound at North 18th Avenue and on Highway 33 westbound on Indiana Avenue.

"Parade organizers and West Bend Police ask all to allow more time to get to the parade, and to be cooperative with police and volunteers that are staffing the intersections and parade route," the post said.



Organizers of the Dec. 4 Oconomowoc Christmas Parade and this week's German Christmas Market have been working with city leadership to review safety and security measures for both events, according to a Tuesday news release from City of Oconomowoc officials.

Increased protection will be put in place to control any vehicles from entering the parade area, and a "secure perimeter" will be installed at the market "to improve the overall safety and security of the event area," a news release said. There will also be an increased presence of law enforcement, fire and EMS personnel at both events.

Parade attendees should "allow additional time to arrive" as street closures, which will be "hard closures," will occur earlier than in the past, the release noted. The market runs Friday through Sunday. The market's entertainment tent will also be open Wednesday night.

One group that normally takes part in the local parades will not be in Oconomowoc this year. Lisa Bear Ireland, who works out of the RE/MAX Realty Center in Oconomowoc said the group was walking in the Waukesha parade and a member of the Re/Max family was narrowly hit by the SUV.

"Out of respect to everyone involved, RE/MAX Realty Center has decided it is best to pull out of both the upcoming Watertown and Oconomowoc parades," Bear Ireland said.

St. Francis still making decision over parade

The City of St. Francis will be evaluating "all aspects" of its upcoming event with its police and fire departments, City Attorney Paul Alexy of Municipal Law & Litigation Group, S.C. said in an email to the Journal Sentinel Monday. The Christmas Parade is scheduled for 3 p.m. Dec. 4 with a Winter Wonderland Celebration to follow at 4:15 p.m. at the St. Francis Fire Department, 3400 E. Howard Ave.

Providing "any advance public notice of specific security measures may frustrate the city's goal to provide a safe environment for both participants and spectators," Alexy said.

**Appleton parade will go on with silent procession to dedicate Waukesha**

Communities outside of the Milwaukee area are also feeling the impact of Sunday's events.

A silent procession "dedicated to the Waukesha community" was set to follow Appleton's downtown Christmas parade Tuesday, Appleton Mayor Jake Woodford said.

"We stand firmly with our friends in Waukesha as they mourn the tragedy in their community," Woodford said Monday. "We're preparing actively to make sure we have a safe and enjoyable event."

The Hometown Christmas Parade in Two Rivers will also go on, but with extra security measures, according to Two Rivers Police Chief Brian Kohlmeier. It's scheduled for Nov. 27.

"The Two Rivers Police Department is well aware of what happened in Waukesha and we certainly wouldn't want to see anything like that happen in this area," Kohlmeier told the Herald Times Reporter Monday. "(We) will do our best to ensure the safety of everyone that attends the event, and we hope that everyone has a good time."

*Chris Mueller of the Appleton Post-Crescent and Alisa M. Schafer of the Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter contributed to this report.*

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