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**Jonas Peterson to Step Down as CEO of Southwest Michigan First**  
*Search for successor to begin immediately; President Carla Sones to serve as interim CEO*

**KALAMAZOO, Mich.** – Southwest Michigan First announced today that Jonas Peterson will step down as CEO effective March 26, 2026, to pursue another leadership opportunity. President Carla Sones will serve as interim CEO while the organization conducts a search for its next chief executive.

As CEO of Southwest Michigan First, including its affiliated organizations, Consultant Connect and the Southwest Michigan First Chamber, Peterson led a period of historic growth and measurable impact. During his tenure, the organization doubled its operating budget while delivering record performance across every focus area, including increased regional engagement and capital investment.

The Southwest Michigan First Chamber became one of the fastest-growing chambers in Michigan, and Consultant Connect expanded to provide innovative consulting services to clients in more than 40 states and multiple countries. Throughout his leadership, Peterson championed regional collaboration as the driving force behind Southwest Michigan's progress, aligning partners across seven counties around shared priorities and data-driven strategies.

Greg Dobson, chairman of Southwest Michigan First and chief operating officer and principal of AVB, reflected on Peterson's impact. "The impact Jonas Peterson has had on the Southwest Michigan region cannot be overstated. His leadership helped advance transformational projects, such as the Kalamazoo Event Center, and his commitment to regionalism and shared goals has positioned our region for continued success. We are grateful for his service and confident Southwest Michigan is well positioned for long-term growth."

In 2023, Peterson introduced The Path to Regional Prosperity, a three-year strategic action plan focused on uniting seven counties around shared economic priorities. Earlier this month, he unveiled The Road to Regional Prosperity, a data-driven initiative designed to accelerate investment and expand economic opportunity across Southwest Michigan.

Reflecting on his time in Southwest Michigan, Peterson said, "The contagious generosity and collaborative spirit of Southwest Michigan have made this one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional career. I could not be more proud of the impact we have made together, and I am confident the best days for this region are still ahead."

Peterson will assume a new executive leadership role in April. Southwest Michigan First is forming a search committee to guide the transition and will share additional details about the process in the coming weeks.

### **About Southwest Michigan First**

Southwest Michigan First is a privately funded, 501(c)(3), community and economic development organization whose mission is to increase economic prosperity for all in Southwest Michigan. Founded in 1999 on the principle that *the greatest force for change is a job*, the organization works across all industries to advance economic, workforce and community development initiatives throughout the seven counties that make up the Southwest Michigan region.

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