

Risk Factors Comparison 2025-02-28 to 2024-03-06 Form: 10-K

Legend: New Text Removed Text Unchanged Text Moved Text Section

An investment in our securities is subject to risks inherent in our business and the industry in which we operate. Before making an investment decision, you should carefully consider the risks and uncertainties described below and all other information included in this report, as well as other reports we file with the SEC. The risks described below may adversely affect our business, financial condition and operating results. In addition to these risks and the other risks and uncertainties described in Item 1, “ Business- Forward Looking Statements ” and Item 7, “ Management' s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations, ” there may be additional risks and uncertainties that are not currently known to us or that we currently deem to be immaterial that could materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition or operating results. The value or market price of our securities could decline due to any of these identified or other risks. Past financial performance may not be a reliable indicator of future performance, and historical trends should not be used to anticipate results or trends in future periods.

Risks Related to Regulatory Matters We operate in a highly regulated environment and we are subject to supervision, examination and enforcement action by various bank regulatory agencies. We are subject to extensive supervision, regulation, and examination by the WDFI, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the Federal Reserve Board. As a result, we are limited in the manner in which we conduct our business, undertake new investments and activities, and obtain financing. This system of regulation is designed primarily for the protection of the Deposit Insurance Fund and our depositors, and not for the benefit of our stockholders. Under this system of regulation, the regulatory authorities have extensive discretion in connection with their supervisory, enforcement, rulemaking and examination activities and policies, including rules or policies that: establish minimum capital levels; restrict the timing and amount of dividend payments; govern the classification of assets; determine the adequacy of loan loss reserves for regulatory purposes; and establish the timing and amounts of assessments and fees. Moreover, as part of their examination authority, the banking regulators assign numerical ratings to banks and savings institutions relating to capital, asset quality, management, liquidity, earnings and other factors. These ratings are inherently subjective and the receipt of a less than satisfactory rating in one or more categories may result in enforcement action by the banking regulators against a financial institution. A less than satisfactory rating may also prevent a financial institution, such as WaterStone Bank or its holding company, from obtaining necessary regulatory approvals to access the capital markets, paying dividends, acquiring other financial institutions or establishing new branches. In addition, we must comply with significant anti- money laundering and anti- terrorism laws and regulations, Community Reinvestment Act laws and regulations, and fair lending laws and regulations. Government agencies have the authority to impose monetary penalties and other sanctions on institutions that fail to comply with these laws and regulations, which could significantly affect our business activities, including our ability to acquire other financial institutions or expand our branch network. Non- compliance with the USA PATRIOT Act, Bank Secrecy Act, or other laws and regulations could result in fines or sanctions. The USA PATRIOT and Bank Secrecy Acts require financial institutions to develop programs to prevent financial institutions from being used for money laundering and terrorist activities. If such activities are detected, financial institutions are obligated to file suspicious activity reports with the U. S. Treasury' s Office of Financial Crimes Enforcement Network. These rules require financial institutions to establish procedures for identifying and verifying the identity of customers seeking to open new financial accounts. Failure to comply with these regulations could result in fines or sanctions. During the last year, several banking institutions have received large fines for non- compliance with these laws and regulations. While we have developed policies and procedures designed to assist in compliance with these laws and regulations, these policies and procedures may not be effective in preventing violations of these laws and regulations. Monetary policies and regulations of the Federal Reserve Board could adversely affect our business, financial condition and results of operations. In addition to being affected by general economic conditions, our earnings and growth are affected by the policies of the Federal Reserve Board. An important function of the Federal Reserve Board is to regulate the money supply and credit conditions. Among the instruments used by the Federal Reserve Board to implement these objectives are open market purchases and sales of U. S. government securities, adjustments of the discount rate and changes in banks' reserve requirements against bank deposits. These instruments are used in varying combinations to influence overall economic growth and the distribution of credit, bank loans, investments and deposits. Their use also affects interest rates charged on loans or paid on deposits.

- 28- We are subject to the Community Reinvestment Act and fair lending laws, and failure to comply with these laws could lead to material penalties. The Community Reinvestment Act (“ CRA ”), the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, the Fair Housing Act and other fair lending laws and regulations impose nondiscriminatory lending requirements on financial institutions. A successful regulatory challenge to an institution' s performance under the CRA or fair lending laws and regulations could result in a wide variety of sanctions, including the required payment of damages and civil money penalties, injunctive relief, imposition of restrictions on mergers and acquisitions activity and restrictions on expansion. Private parties may also have the ability to challenge an institution' s performance under fair lending laws in private class action litigation. Such actions could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. The Federal Reserve Board may require us to commit capital resources to support WaterStone Bank. Federal law requires that a holding company act as a source of financial and managerial strength to its subsidiary bank and to commit resources to support such subsidiary bank. Under the “ source of strength ” doctrine, the Federal Reserve Board may require a holding company to make capital injections into a troubled subsidiary bank and may charge the holding company with engaging in unsafe and unsound practices for failure to commit resources to a subsidiary bank. A capital injection may be required at times when the holding company may not have the resources to provide it and therefore may be required to borrow the funds or

raise capital. Thus, any borrowing or funds needed to raise capital required to make a capital injection becomes more difficult and expensive and could have an adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. **We may become subject to enforcement actions even though non-compliance was inadvertent or unintentional. The financial services industry is subject to intense scrutiny from bank supervisors in the examination process and aggressive enforcement of federal and state regulations, particularly with respect to mortgage-related practices and other consumer compliance matters, and compliance with anti-money laundering, Bank Secrecy Act and Office of Foreign Assets Control regulations, and economic sanctions against certain foreign countries and nationals. Enforcement actions may be initiated for violations of laws and regulations and unsafe or unsound practices. We maintain systems and procedures designed to ensure that we comply with applicable laws and regulations; however, some legal / regulatory frameworks provide for the imposition of fines or penalties for non-compliance even though the non-compliance was inadvertent or unintentional and even though there was in place at the time systems and procedures designed to ensure compliance. Failure to comply with these and other regulations, and supervisory expectations related thereto, may result in fines, penalties, lawsuits, regulatory sanctions, reputation damage, or restrictions on our business.**

Risks Related to Interest Rates The reversal of the historically low interest rate environment may adversely affect our net interest income and profitability. The Federal Reserve Board decreased benchmark interest rates to near zero in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Federal Reserve Board has reversed its policy of near zero interest rates given its concerns over inflation. Market interest rates have risen significantly in response to the Federal Reserve Board's recent rate increases. As discussed below, the increase in market interest rates has already had and is expected to further have an adverse effect on our net interest income and profitability. Changing interest rates may have a negative effect on our results of operations. Our earnings and cash flows are dependent on our net interest income and income from our mortgage banking operations. Interest rates are highly sensitive to many factors that are beyond our control, including general economic conditions and policies of various governmental and regulatory agencies and, in particular, the Federal Reserve Board. Changes in market interest rates could have an adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations. Decreases in interest rates often result in increased prepayments of loans and mortgage-related securities, as borrowers refinance their loans to reduce borrowings costs. Under these circumstances, we are subject to reinvestment risk to the extent we are unable to reinvest the cash received from such prepayments in loans or other investments that have interest rates that are comparable to the interest rates on existing loans and securities. Changes in interest rates also affect the current fair value of our interest-earning investment securities portfolio. Generally, the value of securities moves inversely with changes in interest rates. At December 31, ~~2023~~ **2024**, the fair value of our investment portfolio totaled \$ ~~204.208~~ **9.5** million. Net unrealized losses on these securities totaled \$ ~~22.24~~ **8.1** million at December 31, ~~2022~~ **2024**. During the year ended December 31, ~~2023~~ **2024**, we incurred other comprehensive ~~gains~~ **losses** of \$ ~~994,000~~ **1.7 million**, net of tax ~~expense~~ **benefit**, related to net changes in unrealized holding losses in the available-for-sale investment securities portfolio. Increases in interest rates can also have an adverse impact on our results of operations, as has happened in recent periods. A portion of our loans have adjustable interest rates. While the higher payment amounts we would receive on these loans in a rising interest rate environment has increased our interest income, some borrowers may be unable to afford the higher payment amounts, which may result in a higher rate of loan delinquencies and defaults, as well as lower loan originations, as borrowers who may qualify for a loan based on certain mortgage repayments, may not be able to afford repayments based on higher interest rates for the same loan amounts. The marketability of the underlying collateral also may be adversely affected in a high interest rate environment. Furthermore, the interest income earned on interest-earning assets has not increased as rapidly as the interest paid on interest-bearing liabilities, which has compressed our interest rate spread and had a negative effect on our profitability. Any increase in market interest rates may further reduce our mortgage banking income. We generate revenues primarily from gains on the sale of mortgage loans to investors, and from the amortization of deferred mortgage servicing rights. **We** ~~Although we had a mortgage banking income decrease~~ **increase** of \$ ~~23.7~~ **9** million during the year ended December 31, ~~2023~~ **2024**, **it remains a challenging environment**. We also earn interest on loans held for sale while awaiting delivery to our investors. In this rising and higher interest rate environment, our mortgage loan originations have decreased, resulting in fewer loans that are available for sale. This resulted in a decrease in interest income and a decrease in revenues from loan sales. In addition, our results of operations are affected by the amount of noninterest expense associated with mortgage banking activities, such as salaries and employee benefits, occupancy, equipment, data processing and other operating costs. During periods of reduced loan demand, our results of operations may continue to be adversely affected to the extent that we are unable to reduce expenses commensurate with the decline in mortgage loan origination activity. In addition, as a result of rising interest rates, we have experienced a shift in deposits from lower-cost (savings, NOW, and money market) accounts to higher-cost certificates of deposit. However, the rates we earn on our loans did not increase as rapidly during the year ended December 31, ~~2023~~ **2024**, as we have a significant amount of fixed-rate residential real estate loans where the interest rates did not increase commensurate with the increase in market interest rates. Although we have implemented asset and liability management strategies designed to reduce the effects of changes in interest rates on our results of operations, any substantial, unexpected, prolonged change in market interest rate could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations. Also, our interest rate models and assumptions likely may not fully predict or capture the impact of actual interest rate changes on our balance sheet. See "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition" and "Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures About Market Risk — Management of Market Risk." 29- Hedging against interest rate exposure may adversely affect our earnings. On occasion we have employed various financial risk methodologies that limit, or "hedge," the adverse effects of rising or decreasing interest rates on our loan portfolios and short-term liabilities. We also engage in hedging strategies with respect to arrangements where our customers swap floating interest rate obligations for fixed interest rate obligations, or vice versa. Our hedging activity varies based on the level and volatility of interest rates and other changing market conditions. There are no perfect hedging strategies, and interest rate hedging may fail to protect us from loss. Moreover,

hedging activities could result in losses if the event against which we hedge does not occur. Additionally, interest rate hedging could fail to protect us or adversely affect us because, among other things: ● available interest rate hedging may not correspond directly with the interest rate risk for which protection is sought; ● the duration of the hedge may not match the duration of the related liability; ● the party owing money in the hedging transaction may default on its obligation to pay; ● the credit quality of the party owing money on the hedge may be downgraded to such an extent that it impairs our ability to sell or assign our side of the hedging transaction; ● the value of derivatives used for hedging may be adjusted from time to time in accordance with accounting rules to reflect changes in fair value; and / or ● downward adjustments, or “ mark- to- market ” losses, would reduce our stockholders’ equity. Risks Related to Economic Matters Changes in economic conditions could adversely affect our earnings, as our borrowers’ ability to repay loans and the value of the collateral securing our loans decline. Economic conditions have an impact, to some extent, on our overall performance. Conditions such as an economic recession, rising unemployment, changes in interest rates, money supply and other factors beyond our control may adversely affect our asset quality, deposit levels and loan demand and, therefore, our earnings. Because a majority of our loans are secured by real estate, decreases in real estate values could adversely affect the value of property used as collateral. Adverse changes in the economy may also have a negative effect on the ability of our borrowers to make timely repayments of their loans, which could have an adverse impact on our earnings. Consequently, declines in the economy in our market area could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations. Because most of our borrowers are located in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin metropolitan area, a prolonged downturn in the local economy, or a decline in local real estate values, could cause an increase in nonperforming loans or a decrease in loan demand, which would reduce our profits. Substantially all of our loans are secured by real estate located in our primary market area. Weakness in our local economy and our local real estate markets could adversely affect the ability of our borrowers to repay their loans and the value of the collateral securing our loans, which could adversely affect our results of operations. Real estate values are affected by various factors, including supply and demand, changes in general or regional economic conditions, interest rates, governmental rules or policies and natural disasters. Weakness in economic conditions also could result in reduced loan demand and a decline in loan originations. In particular, a significant decline in real estate values would likely lead to a decrease in new loan originations and increased delinquencies and defaults by our borrowers, as well as increases in our allowance for credit losses. Inflation can have an adverse impact on our business and on our customers. Inflation risk is the risk that the value of assets or income from investments will be worth less in the future as inflation decreases the value of money. As inflation increases and market interest rates rise the value of our investment securities, particularly those with longer maturities, would decrease, although this effect can be less pronounced for floating rate instruments. In addition, inflation generally increases the cost of goods and services we use in our business operations, such as electricity and other utilities, which increases our non- interest expenses. Furthermore, our customers are also affected by inflation and the rising costs of goods and services used in their households and businesses, which could have a negative impact on their ability to repay their loans with us. ~~Sustained higher interest rates by the Federal Reserve Board to tame persistent inflationary price pressures could also push down asset prices and weaken economic activity.~~ A deterioration in economic conditions in the United States and our markets could result in an increase in loan delinquencies and non- performing assets, decreases in loan collateral values and a decrease in demand for our products and services, all of which, in turn, would adversely affect our business, ~~financial condition and results of operations. Our stock price may be negatively impacted by unrelated bank failures and negative depositor confidence in depository institutions. Further, if we are unable to adequately manage our liquidity, deposits, capital levels and interest rate risk, which have come under greater scrutiny in light of recent bank failures, it may have a material adverse effect on our~~ financial condition and results of operations. On March 9, 2023, Silvergate Bank, La Jolla, California, announced its decision to voluntarily liquidate its assets and wind down operations. On March 10, 2023, Silicon Valley Bank, Santa Clara, California, was closed by the California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation. On March 12, 2023, Signature Bank, New York, New York, was closed by the New York State Department of Financial Services, and on May 1, 2023, First Republic Bank, San Francisco, California, was closed by the California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation. These banks also had elevated levels of uninsured deposits, which may be less likely to remain at the bank over time and less stable as a source of funding than insured deposits. These failures led to volatility and declines in the market for bank stocks and questions about depositor confidence in depository institutions. These events have led to a greater focus by institutions, investors and regulators on the on- balance sheet liquidity of and funding sources for financial institutions, the composition of its deposits, including the amount of uninsured deposits, the amount of accumulated other comprehensive loss, capital levels and interest rate risk management. If we are unable to adequately manage our liquidity, deposits, capital levels and interest rate risk, it may have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations.- 30- Risks Related to Lending Matters We intend to increase our commercial business lending, and we intend to continue our commercial real estate and multi- family residential real estate lending, which may expose us to increased lending risks and have a negative effect on our results of operations. We continue to focus on originating commercial business, commercial real estate and multi- family residential real estate loans. These types of loans generally have a higher risk of loss compared to our one- to four- family residential real estate loans. Commercial business loans may expose us to greater credit risk than loans secured by residential real estate because the collateral securing these loans may not be sold as easily as residential real estate. In addition, commercial business and commercial real estate loans may also involve relatively large loan balances to individual borrowers or groups of borrowers. These loans also have greater credit risk than residential real estate loans as repayment is generally dependent upon the successful operation of the borrower’ s business. Also, the collateral underlying commercial business loans may fluctuate in value. Some of our commercial business loans are collateralized by equipment, inventory, accounts receivable or other business assets, and the liquidation of collateral in the event of default is often an insufficient source of repayment because accounts receivable may be uncollectible and inventories may be obsolete or of limited use. Multi- family residential real estate and commercial real estate loans involve increased risk because repayment is dependent

on income being generated in amounts sufficient to cover property maintenance and debt service. In addition, if loans that are collateralized by real estate become troubled and the value of the real estate has been significantly impaired, then we may not be able to recover the full contractual amount of principal and interest that we anticipated at the time we originated the loan, which could cause us to increase our provision for loan losses and adversely affect our financial condition and results of operations. In addition, if we foreclose on these loans, our holding period for the collateral may be longer than for a single- family residential property if there are fewer potential purchasers of the collateral. Our allowance for credit losses may prove to be insufficient to absorb life- time losses in our loan portfolio, which may adversely affect our business, financial condition and results of operations. Under the current expected credit loss model, the allowance for credit losses on loans is a valuation allowance estimated at each balance sheet date in accordance with GAAP that is deducted from the loans' amortized cost basis to present the net amount expected to be collected on the loans. We estimate the ACL on loans based on the underlying assets' amortized cost basis, which is the amount at which the financing receivable is originated or acquired, adjusted for applicable accretion or amortization of premium, discount, and net deferred fees or costs, collection of cash, and charge- offs. Expected credit losses are reflected in the allowance for credit losses through a charge to credit loss expense. When we deem all or a portion of a financial asset to be uncollectible the appropriate amount is written off and the ACL is reduced by the same amount. We apply judgment to determine when a financial asset is deemed uncollectible; however, generally speaking, an asset will be considered uncollectible no later than when all efforts at collection have been exhausted. Subsequent recoveries, if any, are credited to the ACL when received. We measure expected credit losses of financial assets on a collective (pool) basis, when the financial assets share similar risk characteristics. Depending on the nature of the pool of financial assets with similar risk characteristics, we use loss- rate methods to estimate expected credit losses. Our methodologies for estimating the ACL consider available relevant information about past events, current conditions, and reasonable and supportable forecasts. The methodologies apply historical loss information, adjusted for asset- specific characteristics, economic conditions at the measurement date, and forecasts about future economic conditions expected to exist through the contractual lives of the financial assets that are reasonable and supportable, to the identified pools of financial assets with similar risk characteristics for which the historical loss experience was observed. Loans that do not share risk characteristics are evaluated on an individual basis. For collateral dependent financial assets where we have determined that foreclosure of the collateral is probable, or where the borrower is experiencing financial difficulty and we expect repayment of the financial asset to be from the sale of the collateral, expected credit losses are calculated as the amount by which the amortized costs basis of the financial asset exceeds the fair value of the underlying collateral less estimated cost to sell. The ACL may be zero if the fair value of the collateral at the measurement date exceeds the amortized cost basis of the financial asset.

Uncertainties associated with increased originations of commercial business loans, as well as continued originations of commercial real estate and multi- family residential real estate loans may result in errors in judging collectability, which may lead to additional provisions for credit losses or charge- offs, which would negatively affect our operations. Our recent and intended increases in the level of our commercial lending (including commercial business loans, commercial real estate loans and multi- family residential real estate loans) have required and would likely require us to lend to borrowers with which we have limited or no experience. Recently originated loans are unseasoned and we do not have a significant payment history pattern with which to judge future collectability. Further, newly originated loans have not been subjected to unfavorable economic conditions. As a result, it may be difficult to predict the future performance of newly originated loans. These loans may have delinquency or charge- off levels above our recent historical experience, which could adversely affect our future performance. Further, these types of loans generally have larger balances and involve a greater risk than one- to four- family residential mortgage loans. Accordingly, if we make any errors in judgment in the collectability of these loans, any resulting charge- offs may be larger on a per loan basis than those incurred historically with our single- family residential mortgage loans.

We are subject to environmental liability risk associated with lending activities. A significant portion of our loan portfolio is secured by real estate, and we could become subject to environmental liabilities with respect to one or more of these properties. During the ordinary course of business, we may foreclose on and take title to properties securing defaulted loans. In doing so, there is a risk that hazardous or toxic substances could be found on these properties. If hazardous conditions or toxic substances are found on these properties, we may be liable for remediation costs, as well as for personal injury and property damage, civil fines and criminal penalties regardless of when the hazardous conditions or toxic substances first affected any particular property. Environmental laws may require us to incur substantial expenses to address unknown liabilities and may materially reduce the affected property' s value or limit our ability to use or sell the affected property. In addition, future laws or regulations, or more stringent interpretations or enforcement policies with respect to existing laws and regulations may increase our exposure to environmental liability, and heightened pressure from investors and other stakeholders may require us to incur additional expenses with respect to environmental matters. Although we have policies and procedures to perform an environmental review before initiating any foreclosure action on nonresidential real property, these reviews may not be sufficient to detect all potential environmental hazards. The remediation costs and any other financial liabilities associated with an environmental hazard could have a material adverse effect on us.

- 31- Risks Related to Operational Matters We rely heavily on certificates of deposit, which has increased our cost of funds and could continue to do so in the future. Our reliance on certificates of deposit to fund our operations has resulted in a higher cost of funds than would otherwise be the case if we had a higher percentage of demand deposits, savings deposits and money market accounts. In addition, if our certificates of deposit do not remain with us, we may be required to access other sources of funds, including loan sales, other types of deposits, including replacement certificates of deposit, securities sold under agreements to repurchase, advances from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago and other borrowings. Depending on market conditions, we may be required to pay higher rates on such deposits or other borrowings than we currently pay on our certificates of deposit. We may not be able to attract and retain skilled people. Our success depends, in large part, on our ability to attract and retain skilled people. Competition for the best people in most

activities engaged in by us can be intense, and we may not be able to hire sufficiently skilled people or to retain them. The unexpected loss of services of one or more of our key personnel could have a material adverse impact on our business because of their skills, knowledge of our markets, years of industry experience, and the difficulty of promptly finding qualified replacement personnel. Loss of key employees may disrupt relationships with certain customers. Our business is primarily relationship-driven in that many of our key employees have extensive customer relationships. Loss of a key employee with such customer relationships may lead to the loss of business if the customers were to follow that employee to a competitor. While we believe our relationship with our key personnel is good, we cannot guarantee that all of our key personnel will remain with our organization. Loss of such key personnel, should they enter into an employment relationship with one of our competitors, could result in the loss of some of our customers. Because the nature of the financial services business involves a high volume of transactions, we face significant operational risks. We operate in diverse markets and rely on the ability of our employees and systems to process a high number of transactions. Operational risk is the risk of loss resulting from our operations, including but not limited to, the risk of fraud by employees or persons outside our company, the execution of unauthorized transactions by employees, errors relating to transaction processing and technology, breaches of the internal control system and compliance requirements, and business continuation and disaster recovery. Insurance coverage may not be available for such losses, or where available, such losses may exceed insurance limits. This risk of loss also includes the potential legal actions that could arise as a result of an operational deficiency or as a result of noncompliance with applicable regulatory standards, adverse business decisions or their implementation, and customer attrition due to potential negative publicity. In the event of a breakdown in the internal control system, improper operation of systems or improper employee actions, we could suffer financial loss, face regulatory action, and suffer damage to our reputation. Risks associated with system failures, interruptions, or breaches of cybersecurity could negatively affect our earnings. Information technology systems are critical to our business. We use various technology systems to manage our customer relationships, general ledger, securities investments, deposits and loans. We have established policies and procedures to prevent or limit the effect of system failures, interruptions, and security breaches, but such events may still occur or may not be adequately addressed if they do occur. Although we take numerous protective measures and otherwise endeavor to protect and maintain the privacy and security of confidential data, these systems may be vulnerable to unauthorized access, computer viruses, other malicious code, cyber- attacks, cyber- theft and other events that could have a security impact. If one or more of such events were to occur, this potentially could jeopardize confidential and other information processed and stored in, and transmitted through, our systems or otherwise cause interruptions or malfunctions in our or our customers' operations. In addition, we outsource a majority of our data processing to certain third- party providers. If these third- party providers encounter difficulties, or if we have difficulty communicating with them, our ability to adequately process and account for transactions could be affected, and our business operations could be adversely affected. Threats to information security also exist in the processing of customer information through various other vendors and their personnel. The occurrence of any system failures, interruption, or breach of security could damage our reputation and result in a loss of customers and business, subject us to additional regulatory scrutiny, or expose us to litigation and possible financial liability. We may be required to expend significant additional resources to modify our protective measures or to investigate and remediate vulnerabilities or other exposures, and we may be subject to litigation and financial losses that are not fully covered by our insurance. Any of these events could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations. Our risk management framework may not be effective in mitigating risk and reducing the potential for significant losses. Our risk management framework is designed to minimize risk and loss to us. We seek to identify, measure, monitor, report and control our exposure to risk, including strategic, market, liquidity, compliance and operational risks. While we use a broad and diversified set of risk monitoring and mitigation techniques, these techniques are inherently limited because they cannot anticipate the existence or future development of currently unanticipated or unknown risks. Recent economic conditions and heightened legislative and regulatory scrutiny of the financial services industry, among other developments, have increased our level of risk. Accordingly, we could suffer losses as a result of our failure to properly anticipate and manage these risks. ~~-32-~~ Our business may be adversely affected by an increasing prevalence of fraud and other financial crimes. Our loans to businesses and individuals and our deposit relationships and related transactions are subject to exposure to the risk of loss due to fraud and other financial crimes. We have experienced losses due to apparent fraud and other financial crimes. While we have policies and procedures designed to prevent such losses, losses may still occur. Our board of directors relies to a large degree on management and outside consultants in overseeing cybersecurity risk management. The Bank has an Information Technology Committee, consisting of the President, Chief Retail Officer, Chief Information Officer, Chief Financial Officer and staff from other departments within our organization. The committee meets quarterly, or more frequently if needed, and reports to the board of directors after each meeting through committee minutes. We also engage outside consultants to support its cybersecurity efforts. Our directors do not have significant experience in cybersecurity risk management in other business entities comparable to the Bank and rely on the President and Chief Information Officer for cybersecurity guidance. ~~-32-~~ Our funding sources may prove insufficient to replace deposits at maturity and support our future growth. We must maintain sufficient funds to respond to the needs of depositors and borrowers. As a part of our liquidity management, we use a number of funding sources in addition to core deposit growth and repayments and maturities of loans and investments. As we continue to grow, we are likely to become more dependent on these sources, which may include Federal Home Loan Bank advances, proceeds from the sale of loans, federal funds purchased and brokered certificates of deposit. Adverse operating results or changes in industry conditions could lead to difficulty or an inability to access these additional funding sources. Our financial flexibility will be severely constrained if we are unable to maintain our access to funding or if adequate financing is not available to accommodate future growth at acceptable interest rates. If we are required to rely more heavily on more expensive funding sources to support future growth, our revenues may not increase proportionately to cover our costs. In this case, our operating margins and profitability would be adversely affected. **The soundness of other financial institutions could**

adversely affect us. Our ability to engage in routine funding transactions could be adversely affected by the actions and commercial soundness of other financial institutions. Financial services institutions are interrelated as a result of trading, clearing, counterparty and other relationships. We have exposure to many different counterparties, and we routinely execute transactions with counterparties in the financial industry, including brokers and dealers, other commercial banks, investment banks, mutual and hedge funds, and other financial institutions. As a result, defaults by, or even rumors or questions about, one or more financial services institutions, or the financial services industry generally, could lead to market-wide liquidity problems and losses or defaults by us or by other institutions and organizations. Many of these transactions expose us to credit risk in the event of default of our counterparty or client. In addition, our credit risk may be exacerbated when the collateral held by us cannot be liquidated or is liquidated at prices not sufficient to recover the full amount of the financial instrument exposure due to us. Any such losses could materially and adversely affect our results of operations. Recently we have held larger levels of certificates of deposit, which has increased our cost of funds and could continue to do so in the future. At December 31, 2024, certificates of deposit comprised 66.6 % of our total deposits as compared to 61.3 % at December 31, 2023. Our increased levels of certificates of deposit have resulted in a higher cost of funds than would otherwise be the case if we had a higher percentage of demand deposits and savings deposits. In addition, if our certificates of deposit do not remain with us, we may be required to access other sources of funds, including loan sales, other types of deposits, FHLB advances and other borrowings. Depending on market conditions, we may be required to pay higher rates on such deposits or borrowings than we currently pay on our certificates of deposit. Interruption of our customers' supply chains and federal funding could negatively impact their business and operations and impact their ability to repay their loans. Any material interruption in our customers' supply chains, such as a material interruption of the resources required to conduct their business, such as those resulting from interruptions in service by third-party providers, trade restrictions, such as increased tariffs or quotas, embargoes or customs restrictions, reductions in federal subsidies or grants, social or labor unrest, natural disasters, epidemics or pandemics or political disputes and military conflicts, that cause a material disruption in our customers' supply chains, could have a negative impact on their business and ability to repay their borrowings with us. In the event of disruptions in our customers' supply chains, the labor and materials they rely on in the ordinary course of business may not be available at reasonable rates or at all. Additionally, changes in distribution of federal funds or freezing of federal funds, including reductions in federal workforce causing unemployment, could have an adverse effect on the ability of consumers and businesses to pay debts and / or affect the demand for loans and deposits. Changes in U. S. trade policies, including the imposition of tariffs and retaliatory tariffs, may adversely impact our business, financial condition, and results of operations. Tariffs and trade restrictions may cause the prices of our customers' products to increase, which could reduce demand for such products, or reduce our customers' margins, and adversely impact their revenues, financial results, and ability to service debt. This in turn could adversely affect our financial condition and results of operations. In addition, to the extent changes in the political environment have a negative impact on us or on the markets in which we operate our business, our results of operations and financial condition could be materially and adversely impacted in the future.

Risks Related to Competitive Matters Consumers may decide to use alternative options to complete financial transactions. Technology is allowing parties to complete financial transactions through alternative methods that historically have involved banks. Consumers can now easily access historically banking needs through online banking accounts, brokerage accounts, mutual funds or general-purpose reloadable prepaid cards. Consumers can also complete certain transactions without the assistance of banks. The removal of banking with financial transactions could result in the loss of customer loans, customer deposits, and the related fee income generated from those loans and deposits. The loss of these revenue streams and the lower cost of deposits as a source of funds could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations. Strong competition within our market areas may limit our growth and profitability. Competition in the banking and financial services industry is intense. In our market areas, we compete with commercial banks, savings institutions, mortgage brokerage firms, credit unions, finance companies, mutual funds, money market funds, insurance companies, and brokerage firms operating locally and elsewhere. Some of our competitors have greater name recognition and market presence and offer certain services that we do not or cannot provide, all of which benefit them in attracting business. In addition, larger competitors may be able to price loans and deposits more aggressively than we do. Competitive factors driven by consumer sentiment or otherwise can also reduce our ability to generate fee income, such as through overdraft fees. - 33-

Risks Related to Mortgage Banking Operations Secondary mortgage market conditions could have a material impact on our financial condition and results of operations. Our mortgage banking operations provide a significant portion of our non-interest income. In addition to being affected by interest rates, the secondary mortgage markets are also subject to investor demand for residential mortgage loans and increased investor yield requirements for these loans. These conditions may fluctuate or worsen in the future. In light of current conditions, there is greater risk in retaining mortgage loans pending their sale to investors. We believe our ability to retain fixed-rate residential mortgage loans is limited. As a result, a prolonged period of secondary market illiquidity may reduce our loan production volumes and could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations. Changes in the programs offered by secondary market purchasers or our ability to qualify for their programs may reduce our mortgage banking revenues, which would negatively impact our non-interest income. We generate mortgage revenues primarily from gains on the sale of single-family mortgage loans pursuant to programs currently offered by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Ginnie Mae and non-GSE investors. These entities account for a substantial portion of the secondary market in residential mortgage loans. Any future changes in these programs, our eligibility to participate in such programs, the criteria for loans to be accepted or laws that significantly affect the activity of such entities could, in turn, materially adversely affect our results of operations. If we are required to repurchase mortgage loans that we have previously sold, it could negatively affect our earnings. One of our primary business operations is our mortgage banking, which involves originating

residential mortgage loans for sale in the secondary market under agreements that contain representations and warranties related to, among other things, the origination and characteristics of the mortgage loans. We may be required to repurchase mortgage loans that we have sold in cases of borrower default or breaches of these representations and warranties. If we are required to repurchase mortgage loans or provide indemnification or other recourse, this could increase our costs and thereby affect our future earnings.

~~33~~—Risks Related to Environmental and Other Global Matters Societal responses to climate change could adversely affect our business and performance, including indirectly through impacts on our customers. Concerns over the long-term impacts of climate change have led and will continue to lead to governmental efforts around the world to mitigate those impacts. Consumers and businesses also may change their behavior on their own as a result of these concerns. We and our customers will need to respond to new laws and regulations as well as consumer and business preferences resulting from climate change concerns. We and our customers may face cost increases, asset value reductions, operating process changes and other issues. The impact on our customers will likely vary depending on their specific attributes, including reliance on and role in carbon intensive activities. Among the impacts to us could be a drop in demand for our products and services, particularly in certain sectors. In addition, we could face reductions in creditworthiness on the part of some customers or in the value of asset securing loans. Our efforts to take these risks into account in making lending and other decisions, including by increasing our business with climate- friendly companies, may not be effective in protecting us from the negative impact of new laws and regulations or changes in consumer or business behavior. Our business, financial condition, and results of operations could be adversely affected by natural disasters, health epidemics, and other catastrophic events. We could be adversely affected if key personnel or a significant number of employees were to become unavailable due to a pandemic, natural disaster, war, act of terrorism, accident, or other reason. Any of these events could result in the temporary reduction of operations, employees, and customers, which could limit our ability to provide services. Additionally, many of our borrowers may suffer property damage, experience interruption of their businesses or lose their jobs after such events. Those borrowers might not be able to repay their loans, and the collateral for such loans may decline significantly in value. Risks Related to Accounting Matters Changes in our accounting policies or in accounting standards could materially affect how we report our financial condition and results of operations. Our accounting policies are essential to understanding our financial condition and results of operations. Some of these policies require the use of estimates and assumptions that may affect the value of our assets or liabilities and financial results. Some of our accounting policies are critical because they require management to make difficult, subjective, and complex judgments about matters that are inherently uncertain, and because it is likely that materially different amounts would be reported under different conditions or using different assumptions. If such estimates or assumptions underlying our financial statements are incorrect, we may experience material losses. From time to time, the Financial Accounting Standards Board and the Securities and Exchange Commission change the financial accounting and reporting standards or the interpretation of those standards that govern the preparation of our consolidated financial statements. These changes are beyond our control, can be hard to predict and could materially affect how we report our consolidated financial condition and consolidated results of operations. We could also be required to apply a new or revised standard retroactively, which may result in our restating our prior period consolidated financial statements. The need to account for certain assets at estimated fair value may adversely affect our results of operations. We report certain assets, such as loans held for sale, at estimated fair value. Generally, for assets that are reported at fair value, we use quoted market prices or valuation models that utilize observable market inputs to estimate fair value. Because we carry these assets on our books at their estimated fair value, we may incur losses even if the asset in question presents minimal credit risk.

~~34~~—Other Risks Related to Our Business Legal and regulatory proceedings and related matters could adversely affect us or the financial services industry in general. We, and other participants in the financial services industry upon whom we rely to operate, have been and may in the future become involved in legal and regulatory proceedings. Most of the proceedings we consider to be in the normal course of our business or typical for the industry; however, it is inherently difficult to assess the outcome of these matters, and other participants in the financial services industry or we may not prevail in any proceeding or litigation. Any litigation or regulatory proceeding could entail substantial costs and divert management' s attention away from our operations, and any adverse determination could have a materially adverse effect on our business, brand or image, or our financial condition and results of our operations. Changes in the valuation of our securities portfolio could adversely affect our profits. Our securities portfolio may be impacted by fluctuations in fair value, potentially reducing accumulated other comprehensive income (loss) and / or earnings. Fluctuations in fair value may be caused by changes in market interest rates, lower market prices for securities and limited investor demand. Management evaluates securities for credit impairment on a monthly basis, with more frequent evaluation for selected issues. In analyzing a debt issuer' s financial condition, management considers whether the securities are issued by the federal government or its agencies, whether downgrades by bond rating agencies have occurred, industry analysts' reports and, to a lesser extent given the relatively insignificant levels of depreciation in our debt portfolio, spread differentials between the effective rates on instruments in the portfolio compared to risk- free rates. In analyzing an equity issuer' s financial condition, management considers industry analysts' reports, financial performance and projected target prices of investment analysts within a one- year time frame. If this evaluation shows impairment to the actual or projected cash flows associated with one or more securities, a potential loss to earnings may occur. Changes in interest rates can also have an adverse effect on our financial condition, as our available- for- sale securities are reported at their estimated fair value, and therefore are impacted by fluctuations in interest rates. We increase or decrease our stockholders' equity by the amount of change in the estimated fair value of the available- for- sale securities, net of taxes. The declines in fair value could result in a material adverse effect on our capital levels. New lines of business or new products and services may subject us to additional risks. From time to time, we may implement new lines of business or offer new products and services within existing lines of business. In addition, we will continue to make investments in research, development, and marketing for new products and services. There are substantial risks and uncertainties associated with these efforts, particularly in instances where the markets are not fully developed. In developing and marketing new lines of business

and / or new products and services we may invest significant time and resources. Initial timetables for the development and introduction of new lines of business and / or new products or services may not be achieved and price and profitability targets may not prove feasible. Furthermore, if customers do not perceive our new offerings as providing significant value, they may fail to accept our new products and services. External factors, such as compliance with regulations, competitive alternatives, and shifting market preferences, may also impact the successful implementation of a new line of business or a new product or service. Furthermore, the burden on management and our information technology of introducing any new line of business and / or new product or service could have a significant impact on the effectiveness of our system of internal controls. Failure to successfully manage these risks in the development and implementation of new lines of business or new products or services could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. A lack of liquidity could adversely affect our financial condition and results of operations. Liquidity is essential to our business. We rely on our ability to generate deposits and effectively manage the repayment of our liabilities to ensure that there is adequate liquidity to fund operations. An inability to raise funds through deposits, borrowings, the sale and maturities of loans and securities and other sources could have a substantial negative effect on liquidity. Our most important source of funds is our deposits. Deposit balances can decrease when customers perceive alternative investments as providing a better risk adjusted return, which are strongly influenced by such external factors as the direction of interest rates, local and national economic conditions and the availability and attractiveness of alternative investments. Further, the demand for deposits may be reduced due to a variety of factors such as negative trends in the banking sector, the level of and / or composition of our uninsured deposits, demographic patterns, changes in customer preferences, reductions in consumers' disposable income, the monetary policy of the FRB or regulatory actions that decrease customer access to particular products. If customers move money out of bank deposits and into other investments such as money market funds, we would lose a relatively low- cost source of funds, which would increase our funding costs and reduce net interest income. Any changes made to the rates offered on deposits to remain competitive with other financial institutions may also adversely affect profitability and liquidity. Other primary sources of funds consist of cash flows from operations, maturities and sales of investment securities and / or loans, brokered deposits, borrowings from the FHLB and / or FRB discount window, and unsecured borrowings. We also may borrow funds from third- party lenders, such as other financial institutions. Our access to funding sources in amounts adequate to finance or capitalize our activities, or on terms that are acceptable, could be impaired by factors that affect us directly or the financial services industry or economy in general, such as disruptions in the financial markets or negative views and expectations about the prospects for the financial services industry, a decrease in the level of our business activity as a result of a downturn in markets or by one or more adverse regulatory actions against us or the financial sector in general. Any decline in available funding could adversely impact our ability to originate loans, invest in securities, meet expenses, or to fulfill obligations such as meeting deposit withdrawal demands, any of which could have a material adverse impact on our liquidity, business, financial condition and results of operations. Increasing scrutiny and evolving expectations from customers, regulators, investors, and other stakeholders with respect to our environmental, social and governance practices may impose additional costs on us or expose us to new or additional risks. Companies are facing increasing scrutiny from customers, regulators, investors, and other stakeholders related to their environmental, social and governance (" ESG ") practices and disclosure. Investor advocacy groups, investment funds and influential investors are also increasingly focused on these practices, especially as they relate to the environment, health and safety, diversity, labor conditions and human rights. Increased ESG related compliance costs could result in increases to our overall operational costs. Failure to adapt to or comply with regulatory requirements or investor or stakeholder expectations and standards could negatively impact our reputation, ability to do business with certain partners, and our stock price. New government regulations could also result in new or more stringent forms of ESG oversight and expanding mandatory and voluntary reporting, diligence, and disclosure.

35- Acquisitions may disrupt our business and dilute stockholder value. We regularly evaluate merger and acquisition opportunities with other financial institutions and financial services companies. As a result, negotiations may take place and future mergers or acquisitions involving cash, debt, or equity securities may occur at any time. We would seek acquisition partners that offer us either significant market presence or the potential to expand our market footprint and improve profitability through economies of scale or expanded services. Acquiring other banks, businesses, or branches may have an adverse effect on our financial results and may involve various other risks commonly associated with acquisitions, including, among other things:

- difficulty in estimating the value of the target company;
- payment of a premium over book and market values that may dilute our tangible book value and earnings per share in the short and long term;
- potential exposure to unknown or contingent tax or other liabilities of the target company;
- exposure to potential asset quality problems of the target company;
- potential volatility in reported income associated with goodwill impairment losses;
- difficulty and expense of integrating the operations and personnel of the target company;
- inability to realize the expected revenue increases, cost savings, increases in geographic or product presence, and / or other projected benefits;
- potential disruption to our business;
- potential diversion of our management' s time and attention;
- the possible loss of key employees and customers of the target company; and
- potential changes in banking or tax laws or regulations that may affect the target company.

Various factors may make takeover attempts more difficult to achieve. Our articles of incorporation and bylaws, federal regulations, Maryland law, shares of restricted stock and stock options that we have granted or may grant to employees and directors and stock ownership by our management and directors, and various other factors may make it more difficult for companies or persons to acquire control of Waterstone Financial without the consent of our board of directors. A shareholder may want a takeover attempt to succeed because, for example, a potential acquiror could offer a premium over the then prevailing price of our common stock. Potential downgrades of U. S. government securities by one or more of the credit ratings agencies could have a material adverse effect on our operations, earnings and financial condition. A possible future downgrade of the sovereign credit ratings of the U. S. government and a decline in the perceived creditworthiness of U. S. government-related obligations could impact our ability to obtain funding that is collateralized by affected instruments, as well as affect the

pricing of that funding when it is available. A downgrade may also adversely affect the market value of such instruments. We cannot predict if, when or how any changes to the credit ratings or perceived creditworthiness of these organizations will affect economic conditions. Such ratings actions could result in a significant adverse impact on us. Among other things, a downgrade in the U. S. government' s credit rating could adversely impact the value of our securities portfolio and may trigger requirements that we post additional collateral for trades relative to these securities. A downgrade of the sovereign credit ratings of the U. S. government or the credit ratings of related institutions, agencies or instruments would significantly exacerbate the other risks to which we are subject and any related adverse effects on the business, financial condition and results of operations.