

**EAST BETHEL TOWN HALL MEETING
NOVEMBER 19, 2015**

The East Bethel City Council met on November 19, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. for a Town Hall Meeting at City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Voss Ron Koller
 Tom Ronning Brian Mundle

MEMBERS ABSENT: Tim Harrington

ALSO PRESENT: Jack Davis, City Administrator
 Colleen Winter, Community Development Director
 Craig Jochum, City Engineer
 Nate Ashford, Public Works Manager
 Karen White, Receptionist
 Mark DuCharme, Fire Chief
 Shelly Orlando, Anoka County Sheriff's Commander

1.0 The November 19, 2015, City Council Town Hall Meeting was called to order by Mayor
Call to Order Voss at 6:00 p.m.

2.0 The agenda was adopted as presented.
Adopt
Agenda

3.0 The Council and staff present introduced themselves to those in attendance. Staff reviewed
Introductions the Program Outline for the Town Hall meeting.
and Program
Outline for
the Evening

4.0 It was noted the Council and staff had met with members of the community in the
Community Community Center to hold individual discussions.
Center
Session

5.0 Mayor Voss thanked all of the residents in attendance at the Town Hall meeting. He
Question and introduced himself, the Councilmembers and all staff members present to the audience and
Answer looked forward to their questions. He requested Senator Michelle Benson come forward to
Session with address the Council.
Sen. Benson

and Senator Michelle Benson thanked the residents present for attending the meeting as well
Rep. and noted she has been serving East Bethel since 2012. She reported she has worked a
Hackbarth great deal on MN Sure and health care reformation. She discussed how rate increases were
 adversely impacting Minnesota families. She reported she would continue to work to
 counter balance these increases.

Representative Tom Hackbarth introduced himself to the public and discussed his areas of
expertise at the Capitol. He reported his focus has been on the outdoor recreation, mining,
5.0 and energy. He indicated he was the Chairman of the Mining and Outdoor Recreation

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Committee for the House of Representatives. He discussed how taconite plant closures were impacting the northland and how the legislature was working to address this concern.

Representative Hackbarth provided comment on the upcoming legislative session and anticipated that it would be a short session.

Anoka County Commissioner Julie Braastad introduced herself to the residents present and noted she was elected in 2012. She reported she was enjoying her service to East Bethel tremendously. She then discussed the activity taking place at the County level that impacted the City. She explained she was the Chair of the Public Safety Committee for the County, in addition to the Intergovernmental Relations Committee. She provided comment on the planned restroom and parking lot improvements planned for Coon Lake Park in 2016.

A resident questioned how much the State surplus was at this time. Senator Benson commented the State surplus would be updated on December 3rd. She reported \$1 billion had been left on the books for budgeting purposes for 2016. She anticipated that this number would go up after December 3rd.

A resident asked why the State continues to bond for items when it had a \$1 billion surplus. Senator Benson explained the State bonded for larger assets that would last over 30+ years. Representative Hackbarth anticipated that part of the surplus would be used as cash for some of the capital investment expenditures.

A resident inquired why the new Senate building was not yet occupied. She questioned if the State had too many employees and not enough room. Representative Hackbarth explained that he did not support the new building, nor did Senator Benson. He did not believe that the State needed the new building. He understood that employees would be moving into the building shortly. Further discussion ensued regarding how the new building would be used. Senator Benson reiterated that she did not support the Senate office building and commented the Senate republicans would be moving into this space shortly. She believed that space allocation measures could have been taken and that \$90 million did not have to be spent on the new building.

A resident questioned why so many college students were being offered large amounts of subsidies to attend college. She did not believe this was fair to the remainder of the public that worked in order to earn a degree. Senator Benson discussed the job prep degrees being offered by the two and four year MN-Scue campuses. She believed the Cambridge and Anoka-Ramsey campuses were prepping students efficiently to become a part of the work force. It was her opinion that the dollars the State spent on the campuses were being used efficiently on education. However, she also understood that the University of Minnesota had one of the highest administrative budgets in the nation. She was in favor of holding this administration more accountable while also considering additional tuition reform. Representative Hackbarth provided further comment on the land grant opportunities available to the U of M. He was in agreement that the U of M was in need of reform. He explained that at the time, he and Senator Benson did not have the votes to reform this issue.

A resident discussed the mass transit being provided by the Met Council throughout the south metro and asked how this benefited him in East Bethel. He believed the Met Council needed to be held more accountable for their spending. In addition, he feared that the

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contractor selected for the new Vikings Stadium would have huge overages. Anoka County Commissioner Braastad discussed how the County was working with four other counties to address Met Council reform. She agreed this was a mess that needed to be scrapped and started over. Representative Hackbarth was not in favor of electing Met Council members. He provided comment on the importance of voters being fully informed each and every year.

Another resident suggested the Met Council be held more accountable on the funds they are spending and that it be more equitable between the districts that they serve. Representative Hackbarth agreed the Met Council representatives needed to be held accountable and thanked this resident for their comment.

Anoka County Commissioner Braastad discussed the success of a north metro bus route and reported it was standing highly utilized. She indicated this route was a three year trial. It was noted the funds received for the new bus route were provided by Met Council.

A resident inquired why the airport was not expanded in the north metro given the huge expense that is spent each time an expansion is needed in Bloomington. Senator Benson believed this was a fiscal disparities issue.

A resident commented on the fear he had as a union member to not vote for democratic candidates. Senator Benson reported she has had numerous conversations with teamsters. She discouraged residents from voting based on fear but rather encouraged them to be educated on the issues and invited them to come down to the capital to meet their local representatives.

A resident questioned if the County or State was addressing the slow moving train issues. Anoka County Commissioner Braastad explained the County was working to complete more grade separations at the railroad tracks on Highway 10. She understood that slow moving rail traffic was adversely impacting vehicle traffic and response times for emergency responders. She noted a grade separation would be completed at Armstrong Boulevard in the near future. Representative Hackbarth added that if a pipeline was built, this would reduce a lot of these concerns.

A resident commented on the new DNR groundwater program for the north metro. She asked how this program would be implemented and questioned what the benefits were. Representative Hackbarth indicated the groundwater program was just beginning to be implemented. He stated he tried to put a stop to this program in 2013-14. He did not support the program as is. Further discussion ensued regarding the environmentalists pushing this issue.

Another resident requested further information on how bills were established. Representative Hackbarth explained that all bills were created in the House. He provided further comment on the benefits of having Republican control of the House. He stated that Democratic control of the house leads to increased spending and tax increases.

A resident expressed concern with the tax breaks being proposed and did not believe the breaks were fair. Senator Benson reported the tax bill did not get passed in 2014 and was sitting in a Conference Committee at this time. She anticipated tax breaks would be discussed again in 2016. She believed that as the surplus continued to grow each year, the State would have to consider offering more tax relief. She stated she would be fighting for

Question and Answer broad impact tax relief.

Session with Sen. Benson and Rep. Hackbarth Mayor Voss thanked the representatives for their time and for addressing the questions, comments and concerns from the public.

Question and Answer Mayor Voss turned the discussion over to questions and answers with the City Council.

Session with City Council A resident expressed concern with the fact that his property taxes were proposed to increase by 20%. He questioned how residents living on a fixed income would be able to handle this extra expense. Mayor Voss reported much of the time this had to do with the valuation of a property. He indicated his property was recently reevaluated. He encouraged residents to attend the upcoming Truth In Taxation meeting. Councilmember Ronning discussed the increases on most property tax statements were from the County and School District.

A resident encouraged the City to chip branches instead of hauling them back and forth across the City. She asked if the City would be receiving a Verizon cell tower. City Administrator Davis advised that all documents had been provided to Verizon by the City and the City was waiting to hear back from this vendor.

Another resident discussed a recent emergency event that occurred at Highway 65 and 229th. Anoka County Sheriff Commander Orlando provided further clarification on the event for the residents in attendance.

Diane Jacobsen asked if it was necessary for the County to purchase additional land in downtown Anoka. Anoka County Commissioner Braastad reported this had to do with the need to expand the Anoka County Courthouse. She indicated it would cost less to expand the existing courthouse than to start over at a new location.

A resident questioned if any areas of the City had City water and sewer. She feared the City was charging too much for its water and sewer services. Mayor Voss explained the locations within the City that had City water and sewer. City Administrator Davis reported that the bill in question was from a property that had two families living in the residence and was using a great deal of water for irrigation. The water and sewer costs for the Whispering Aspens neighborhood were further discussed.

A resident asked if there were plans to complete City water and sewer within the corridor. Mayor Voss commented this would be driven by development, but stated the City would not force current residents to hook up to City water and sewer. However, he noted the pipes would be available. He anticipated that rates would be adjusted over time as more users were on the system.

A resident questioned if the City's water system required frequent flushing due to the low number of users. City Administrator Davis indicated the system does require flushing on occasion but noted there were enough users at this time to keep the water fresh. He commented this was primarily a winter activity to keep lines from freezing.

Question and Answer A resident expressed concern with the number of accidents on Highway 65. He inquired if

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anyone acted as a liaison on behalf of the City. Mayor Voss reported City Administrator Davis acted as the City's liaison. City Administrator Davis discussed the State's plan for the corridor noting additional closures were being proposed for access points in order to create an expressway feel and minimize the points of concern. He indicated the closures could only proceed if frontage and backage roads were created. It was the City's hope that MnDOT would assist and participate in the closure expenditures. Mayor Voss provided further comment on the focus the City Council has had on the safety of the Highway 65 corridor.

A resident requested the grass at 221st be mowed on a more routinely basis during the summer months to improve safety and sight lines. Mayor Voss encouraged residents to contact City Hall or Public Works with this concern.

A resident questioned if Klondike could be paved. Mayor Voss understood the City still had 16 miles of gravel roadways. He did not believe Klondike would be paved in the near future.

Another resident expressed concern with the intersection of Highway 65 and Viking Boulevard. Mayor Voss commented this intersection was a concern for both the City and the County. He discussed a culvert that was recently improved and appreciated the additional lighting and restriping that would be completed by the County.

A resident asked if the City was pursuing new businesses such as Family Dollar, a grocery store or Coburn's. City Administrator Davis indicated the City was behind the curve on economic development. He reported that Isanti and St. Francis have established infrastructure, where East Bethel does not. He explained the City Council and staff was working on a business retention and expansion program with the Chamber of Commerce. He stated he would continue to pursue businesses and explain the benefits of locating and investing in the City of East Bethel.

Mayor Voss discussed how the Council was working to lay the groundwork to assist businesses in coming into the community. He understood that retail was a demand from the public.

Councilmember Ronning was interested in bringing a pharmacy, senior housing and a clinic to East Bethel, which would take a great deal of private investment.

Councilmember Mundle explained the Council was open to any size or scale grocery store.

City Administrator Davis discussed the business expansions that have occurred recently in the City, along with the number of jobs that have been brought into the community.

A resident encouraged the Council and its staff to keep it local, such as the printing of the City's newsletter.

A resident asked if the Viking area was considered the City Center and if so, if this area could be used to incubate new businesses through a new strip mall. Councilmember Mundle provided comment on the various types of businesses and the different types of space that each would need. City Administrator Davis reported incubators were very popular at one point in time, however, this would be very capital intensive for the City.

Question and

Mayor Voss indicated for the past year, the Council has been discussing the potential of

Answer becoming a Heart Safe Community. He was proud to announce that at last night's Council Session with meeting, East Bethel was designated a Heart Safe Community. He thanked the Fire City Council Department and staff for their efforts.

East Bethel Firefighter Troy Lachinski discussed the grass roots efforts behind the Heart Safe Program noting it was put in place to make communities more safe for those that would suffer from a sudden cardiac arrest. He reported that 95% of the people that suffer from this type of event die before paramedics can arrive. However, if someone takes action within the first two minutes of a sudden cardiac arrest, the person has an 85% chance of survival. He explained that by becoming a Heart Safe Community, East Bethel would encourage its residents to be the help. The City would be providing awareness on cardiac arrest events along with training on by stander CPR and AED's. He thanked all residents who have already attended CPR training and encouraged local businesses to purchase an AED. He was proud that East Bethel was on the forefront of this initiative. A round of applause was offered by all in attendance.

Mayor Voss asked for any final questions.

A member asked if there were any individuals interested in purchasing the Ice Arena. Mayor Voss reported as a show of community, the St. Francis Youth Hockey Association was active in making improvements. In addition, a \$23,000 donation was made to support the needed improvements at the Arena. He indicated over the past three years, the Arena has been operating in the black.

Another resident questioned if the Arena had public skating time. City Administrator Davis indicated there would be weekly open ice time for the public in addition to time at the outdoor rink. He noted a warming house would be rented for the outdoor rink. It was his hope the outdoor rink would be open mid-December through February.

Mayor Voss thanked the local representatives, staff and all of the residents for their attendance. He appreciated the great discussion held this evening.

6.0 Adjourn

Mayor Voss declared the Town Hall Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Submitted by:
Heidi Guenther
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.