

TO: Fellow City Councilors

Comments, opinions & concerns: These are comments, opinions and concerns I have from our last council meeting and other related items. I have real problems with the accuracy of information from citizens and from their trying to distract us from the topic. Knowing the accurate information is the responsibility of being a Councilor.

Funding EDA Partners – what a travesty. I sure hope we don't want to be like the federal or state government where we hide issues within the resolutions to pass them. A citizen commented about S.M.I.F (Southeast Minnesota Initiative Foundation) which we get more money from them than we contribute. It is a great organization but is not relative to the real issue which is the NDDC.

The NDDC asked for funding to help them get started. It seemed like a good idea at the time and that was in 2001. They envisioned having financial assistance for about 5 years and then would be able to function on their own or with very little help. The funding for some of their projects comes from the Downtown Master Development TIF District which expires in 2013. The city will have cut another million to 1 ½ million from our budget. I doubt there will be money to continue the projects. The Chamber of Commerce has about the same mission as the NDDC. They could have a group of their downtown members focus on the same downtown projects. In my opinion the council acted as if we now are the EDA and that decision has not been made.

In my opinion, the City Council was acting as a business or developer looking for a 4.2 acre plot for the Safety Center. There are lessons to be learned from our search. There are not very many plots available and some of the plots have issues with MNDOT: (they operate at a snail's pace), or there are flood plain and soil issues, all this adds to the expense of development. Local businesses and developers looking to expand face these issues. I thought we wanted to retain our local businesses; some have expressed an interest in expanding but need larger plots than are now available. We have had businesses expand their operations in other communities. Why don't we want that here? We do need a Business Park Management Plan. I have heard some comments that it will never happen. If we don't plan for it – it can't happen and that's regressive. To pull us off task the dollar figures keep going up which is a scare tactic to get us to do nothing.

In my opinion, Our Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code are more directed to infill redevelopment, neighborhood commercial, and mixed use. It is much less oriented to large development and large industry. It is not a very user friendly document and some Chamber of Commerce members and some local developers are saying the same thing.

In my opinion, we say the Safety Center is our highest priority. As I recall, only one councilor spoke against the most reasonable site without all the extra costs. How did we do this with only one "no"? The Safety Center has larger implications about how we deal with development issues when attracting future business. If we delay we may miss our Safety Center opportunity. The Safety Center Task Force toured the New Prague Fire & Ambulance Facility. We did not look with much interest at the Ambulance Part when we were there. Things may have changed; the hospital has expressed some interest in having ambulance service in our new facility. The New Prague Facility has looked very

attractive to us. As we move forward, if we add ambulance to our facility, the square footage will increase by a fair amount.

At one of our last council work-sessions we talked about the Business Park Master Plan. When Jeff McMeninen from Hoysington Koegler talked of 3,000 to 5,000 people new to our community, the silence was deafening. In my opinion, that is no growth and we need to address that. We did pass the Welcoming Center funding. Who are we welcoming if we don't seem to want our population to grow? If we do grow our population could be 20,000 to 21,000 and possibly as high as 23,000. When we compare ourselves to other communities they are usually of these sizes. This would mean more business, more people in our downtown, more industrial taxpayers and more density.

If sustainable and environmental issues keep us from growing then our planning for them is missing the mark.

Bullying is a big focus among young people now. I don't think it's a council we are doing a very good job in this area. We have bordered on bullying at some of our meetings. We call it disrespect and we are setting an example for our young people. This is my opinion.