

JAN/FEB 2024

MINNESOTA CITIES

A PUBLICATION OF THE LEAGUE of MINNESOTA CITIES

What to Watch for During the **2024** Legislative Session

PAGE 8

Wellness in Action

How the League partnered with three communities to improve public safety wellness. PAGE 15

AI Applications

Explore the potential and risks of using AI applications in city government. PAGE 19





2024 ELECTED LEADERS INSTITUTE



Foundational Program

Designed for new elected city officials who have served for less than two years.

Learn the basics of governing a city. This blended learning program explores the fundamentals of city government — from Open Meeting Law to city budgets and beyond! You'll complete self-paced on-demand courses in our online learning platform as well as attend a two-day in-person event taught by subject matter experts.

Dates below are for the in-person event. Online courses open Jan. 22.

DATE & LOCATION:

Feb. 9-10, 2024
Plymouth



Advanced Program

Designed for experienced elected city officials who have served for two or more years.

Take your leadership skills to the next level! This program gives experienced elected officials a chance to come together to learn higher level leadership skills and network with other elected leaders from across the state. Topics will focus on honing negotiation skills, considering what belonging looks like in your city, and how to lead through a crisis.

DATES & LOCATIONS:

Feb. 9-10, 2024
Plymouth

Feb. 23-24, 2024
Alexandria

**Build your skills and connect with fellow elected officials!
Find out more: lmc.org/ELI24**



Features

- 8** What to Watch for During the 2024 Legislative Session
- 13** LMC's 2024 Legislative Priorities
- 15** Wellness in Action
- 19** Exploring AI Applications in City Government: The Promise and the Risks

Departments

- 3 Director's Message**
Make Your Voices Heard at the Legislature This Session
- 4 Bits & Briefs**
Cold Spring uses bacteria to battle nitrates, Minnesota cities gain representation at the national level, work continues to help communities meet housing needs, and more
- 7 Two-Way Street**
What Regulations Does Your City Have Regarding the Use of Special Vehicles in City Limits?
- 21 Focus on Small Cities**
Howard Lake Set to Open State's First Net-Zero Library
- 30 Ideas in Action**
Door Knocking Campaign Provides Voice for Brooklyn Park Renters
- Legal Ease**
- 23 Letter of the Law**
Legal Changes Affecting Employee Compensation and Leave Time
- 24 From the Bench**
Court Finds City's Park Dedication Fee Complied With Subdivision Statute
- Up for Discussion**
- 27 Ask LMC**
What Is the Process for Rezoning?
- 29 Message Matters**
Create One-Pagers to Share Your Message With Legislators

ON THE WEB

Check out *Minnesota Cities* online at mncities.org.

The League's MemberLearn platform allows you to access engaging educational courses on your computer, tablet, or phone anytime and anywhere.

Custom Learning for City Officials.



FREE COURSES INCLUDE:

Calculating Property Tax

Explore the foundations of property tax calculation and its significance in promoting the economic stability and growth in Minnesota cities.

Duration: 25 minutes.



How to Close a Meeting

Learn to determine the circumstances required to close a meeting, as well as procedures for doing so.

Duration: 15 minutes.



Acknowledging Bias

Learn to recognize explicit and implicit bias, and identify how bias informs our everyday decision making.

Duration: 10 minutes.

Find out more: lmc.org/memberlearn



A LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA CITIES PROGRAM

MINNESOTA CITIES

Volume 109, Issue 1



PUBLISHED BY

League of Minnesota Cities

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Luke Fischer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023-2024

PRESIDENT

Jenny Max | City Administrator, Nisswa

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Justin Miller | City Administrator, Lakeville

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

Wendy Berry | Council Member, West St. Paul

PAST PRESIDENT

Ron Johnson | Council Member, Bemidji

Mary Gaasch | Mayor, Lauderdale

Sharon Hanson | City Administrator, Marshall

Courtney Johnson | Mayor, Carver

Phil Kern | City Administrator, Delano

Scott Neal | City Manager, Edina

Audrey Nelsen | Council Member, Willmar

Larry Odebrecht | Council Member, Stillwater

Clinton Rogers | City Administrator, Janesville

Evan Vogel | City Administrator, Cambridge

Chris Volkert | City Administrator, Oakdale

CGMC REPRESENTATIVE

Brian Holmer | Mayor, Thief River Falls

METRO CITIES REPRESENTATIVE

Jay Stroebel | City Administrator, Brooklyn Park

MAOSC REPRESENTATIVE

Brian Heck | City Administrator, Montgomery

MINNESOTACITIES

MNCITIES.ORG

EDITORIAL

Rachel Kats | Editor | rkats@lmc.org

Erica Norris Perlman | Freelance Editor

DESIGN

Kathryn Forss | DaisyMaeDesign

REPRINTS Contact Rachel Kats at (651) 215-4032 or rkats@lmc.org to request permission to reprint articles. *Minnesota Cities* (ISSN-0148-8546) is published bimonthly for \$30 per year, \$5 per single copy, by League of Minnesota Cities, 145 University Avenue West, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55103. Telephone: (651) 281-1200. Website: lmc.org. Periodicals postage paid at Eagan, Minnesota, and other mailing offices. Publication number 351960. © 2024 League of Minnesota Cities. All Rights Reserved.

POSTMASTER Send address changes to *Minnesota Cities*, 145 University Avenue West, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55103-2044.

ON THE WEB

For upcoming Board meetings and minutes, visit lmc.org/board.

Make Your Voices Heard at the Legislature This Session

BY LUKE FISCHER

As cities plan and prepare for a new state legislative session in 2024, we present you with the League's annual legislative preview issue of *Minnesota Cities* magazine. Within these pages you will find articles on League legislative priorities, and on communicating effectively with legislators. There is also a piece that features looking-ahead interviews with some of the best — our Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) team. I'm proud of our work at the Capitol, and hope that you find these articles useful in the coming year.

For those who routinely keep score in state legislative activity, you will likely recall that the 2023 session saw a record number of bill introductions and moved at a fast pace that often resulted in limited opportunities for constituent input. In some cases, the breakneck speed and volume of activity resulted in significant progress for issues of importance to city government. In others, it meant that important voices were not heard, and some stakeholders were not at the table.

As a result, the 2023 session was a mixed bag for cities. There was a bevy of funding for projects and programs that directly address local needs. We've seen city officials statewide lean into these programs and continue to make investments that improve the quality of life for residents. At a practical level, increases in public safety aid have helped police and fire departments address critical needs. New funding for housing has meant that local projects have been able to come out of the ground in communities needing them the most.

But the Legislature also handed down more than its share of unsolved puzzles to local decision makers. Our city officials are faced with navigating complex questions about how the city-school relationship should proceed when it comes to the use of school resource officers, how earned sick and safe time requirements impact vital city services like snowplowing, and what a regulated legalized marijuana market might look

like with limited guidance and rulemaking from the new Office of Cannabis Management (just to name a few!).

This year's legislative session is slated to convene Feb. 12. Some are approach-

folks representing you at the state level. While at it, make clear that your priority is community over partisanship.

- ▶ **Contextualize proposed legislation.** Legislators hear from many organized

This year's legislative session is slated to convene Feb. 12. Some are approaching the session with hope that momentum will continue from the prior year, while others are longing for a more tempered pace with more opportunity for input — and maybe even a little more compromise.

ing the session with hope that momentum will continue from the prior year, while others are longing for a more tempered pace with more opportunity for input — and maybe even a little more compromise. Whatever happens is going to happen quickly, and the League staff is poised to contribute and respond. And, as always, we need your involvement to be successful. What else can city officials do? Here are a few suggestions:

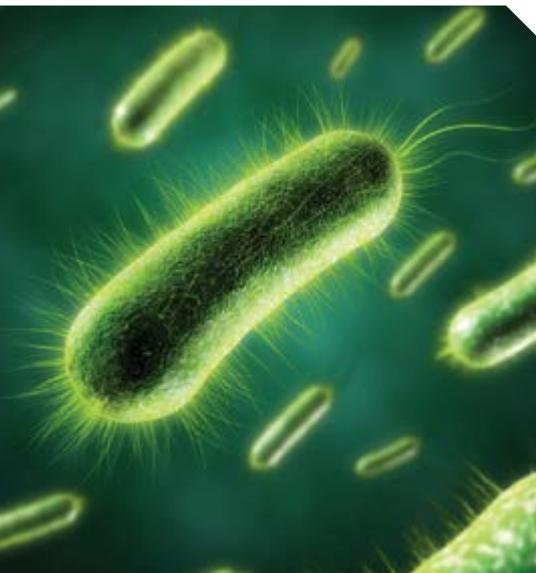
- ▶ **Work with legislators on both sides of the political aisle.** As local officials, you are not bound by partisan expectations that sometimes influence the decisions of lawmakers. You have an opportunity to put community ahead of politics.
- ▶ **Watch what's happening constantly.** The sheer volume of bills introduced in 2023 was overwhelming for everyone — even lawmakers responsible for the introductions. It's important to monitor legislative activity that could impact your community. You can do that by subscribing to the League's weekly *Cities Bulletin* newsletter at lmc.org/bulletinsubscribe.
- ▶ **Personally connect with your legislators.** This is a common refrain you've heard from the League for a long time — but it's critical to have a good relationship with your lawmakers. As nonpartisan leaders in your community, you're viewed as trusted resources once you've established solid relationships and rapport. Reach out at the beginning of the session to the

advocacy groups with many specific interests when they consider bills. It's essential that local leaders consider the real-world impacts of proposed legislation on their own cities, and the community of cities in our state. Your city often supplies the framing that influences discussions in legislative committees and floor votes.

- ▶ **Be positive with your legislators.** Just like city council members, state legislators don't always hear from folks when they get things right. It's important to find opportunities to build amiable and productive relationships with lawmakers that acknowledge the tough decisions they sometimes face. Express gratitude when your legislator supports policies that benefit Minnesota cities.
- ▶ **Use the League of Minnesota Cities as a valued resource.** Our IGR staff members are the go-to folks for all things legislative at all times of the year. The League's website is chock-full of toolkits, issue papers, advocacy tips, magazine and news articles, legislator contact information, and much more. Tap into these resources frequently — that's why we're here. 📧



Luke Fischer is executive director of the League of Minnesota Cities. Contact: lfischer@lmc.org or (651) 281-1279.



Cold Spring Uses Bacteria to Battle Nitrates

Cold Spring unveiled Minnesota’s first drinking water treatment facility that uses bacteria to control harmful levels of toxic nitrate.

Unsafe levels of nitrate are commonly found in agricultural communities where field runoff contaminates the local water supply. Cold Spring — population 4,000 and growing — has battled rising nitrate levels for several years.

In 2020, Cold Spring was awarded a Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development grant,

allowing the city to break ground on a \$6.5 million nitrate reduction facility. The treatment plant houses two vats brimming with naturally occurring bacteria. These microorganisms consume and eliminate nitrates from ground water. From there, all drinking water undergoes standard chemical disinfection, killing off any remaining bacteria.

While a first for Minnesota, biological nitrogen reduction is becoming more popular in the U.S. and is already a standard practice in Europe.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SHAKOPEE MDEWAKANTON SIOUX COMMUNITY



SMSC Secretary/Treasurer Rebecca Crooks-Stratton, Prior Lake Mayor Kirt Briggs, and tribal and city staff in front of the SMSC flag presented to the city in May 2023.



Minnesota Cities Gain Representation at the National Level

Minnesota cities are gaining increased influence at the national level following the recent election and appointments of three League member city officials to the National League of Cities (NLC) Board of Directors and Federal Advocacy Committees.

Rosemount Mayor Jeff Weisensel was elected to the NLC Board of Directors. Apple Valley Council Member Ruth Grendahl was appointed chair of the NLC Energy, Environment & Natural Resources Committee, and Burnsville Council Member Dan Kealey was appointed chair of the Transportation & Infrastructure Services Committee. Thank you for representing Minnesota cities at the national level!



City and Tribe Exchange Flags as Symbol of Partnership

Two neighboring governments in Scott County — the City of Prior Lake and the Shakopee Mdwakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) — celebrated their longstanding relationship through a flag exchange last year. The SMSC is a sovereign tribal nation located in Prior Lake and Shakopee. The tribe presented its flag to be flown in the City Council chambers and the city shared its flag to be displayed in the tribal government office.

The city and tribe have built a strong relationship over the years by coming together around shared priorities. In 2019, the two governments opened a joint water treatment facility that serves both communities and has saved a combined \$8 million. They also have several agreements related to public safety, natural resources, and infrastructure.

Work Continues to Help Communities Meet Housing Needs

As Minnesota's housing challenges continue, cities across the state are making strides through locally led efforts. They continue to work toward preserving and producing more housing stock across the spectrum to support population growth.

In 2023, Richfield and St. Paul approved zoning changes to support greater housing density. Rochester opened its Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Pilot Program, which provides property owners up to \$20,000 in reimbursements for costs related to the development of an ADU. The Grand Rapids and Leech Lake communities



are partnering with Greater Minnesota Housing Fund to build or preserve over 400 housing units.

While these housing initiatives may be successful for their specific communities, it is imperative to remember one size does not fit all when it comes to housing policy.

Although the Legislature passed a historic \$1 billion housing bill in 2023, our work is not complete. The League will continue to advocate for solutions that address the entire housing spectrum and support local leaders in identifying housing policies that best fit their communities' needs.

Make League FAQ Webpages Your Go-To Resource

The League of Minnesota Cities website has a plethora of information and resources for Minnesota cities. LMC's various frequently asked questions (FAQs) pages are resources for city staff and leaders on everything from adult-use cannabis, the earned sick and safe time law, public safety duty disability, and so much more. FAQ pages are organized with links or dropdowns so members can efficiently find answers to sometimes complicated questions. To find the FAQ sections, visit lmc.org/cannabisFAQ, lmc.org/ESSTfaq, and lmc.org/PTSDfaq.



LMC LEARNING & EVENTS

Elected Leaders Institute — Foundational Program

Feb. 9-10, 2024 — Plymouth

Elected Leaders Institute — Advanced Program

Feb. 9-10, 2024 — Plymouth

Feb. 23-24, 2024 — Alexandria

City Day on the Hill

March 7 — St. Paul

Safety and Loss Control Workshops

Various locations, March-April

LMC Annual Conference

June 26-28, 2024 — Rochester

ON THE WEB

Learn more about these and other events at lmc.org/events.



CONGRESSIONAL CITY CONFERENCE

MARCH 11-13 2024

NLC's Congressional City Conference

The National League of Cities Congressional City Conference is set for March 11-13 in Washington, D.C. City officials who attend this annual event can connect with the Minnesota congressional delegation, learn about new federal programs, meet other city officials from across the country, and polish their advocacy skills. Learn more at ccc.nlc.org.

Building ^{Minnesota} Communities

It's what we do!



Financial Management Planning
Economic Development & Redevelopment • Debt Planning & Issuance
Investments & Treasury Management • Arbitrage Consulting
Paying Agent Services • Continuing Disclosures



 ehlers-inc.com

 (800) 552-1171

The information does not create or imply a fiduciary relationship. It is solely for the purposes of marketing our services to you. Ehlers is the joint marketing name for all its affiliated businesses. Please visit www.ehlers-inc.com/disclosures for more information.

CONNECTING MN CITIES & COUNTIES

- + Fiber
- + Ethernet (Point-to-Point)
- + Dedicated Internet Access
- + Wavelength
- + Managed IT Services
- + Hosted PBX
- + Fiber Construction
- + Locating and Maintenance
- + And More!

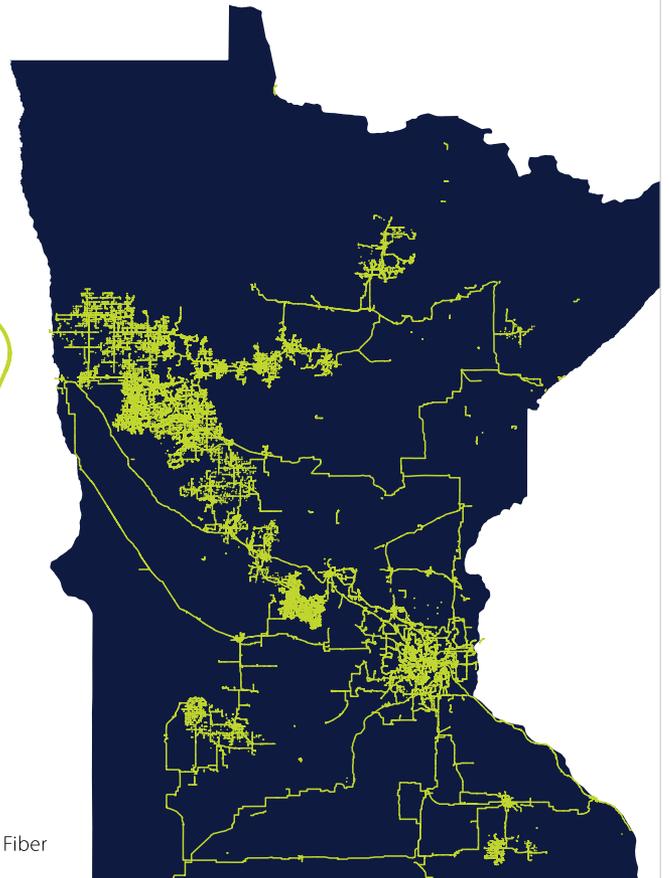


888.992.7844

arvig.com



— Denotes Arvig Fiber





What Regulations Does Your City Have Regarding the Use of Special Vehicles in City Limits?



KEVIN McCANN

CITY ADMINISTRATOR
NORTH MANKATO (14,448)

What prompted your city to enact an ordinance to address the usage of special vehicles in city limits?

The City of North Mankato made changes to the ordinance following a citizen’s request to amend the city code to allow the use of golf carts on city streets. As

a result, the City Traffic & Safety Committee reviewed the request on several occasions and ultimately recommended an amendment to the ordinance be made to allow the use of golf carts on city designated streets with regulations. While golf carts are now permitted, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are not permitted at this time. Future consideration for the use of ATVs may be contemplated pending citizen compliance of the golf cart regulations.

What are the requirements/rules for operating a special vehicle on city streets and sidewalks?

All golf carts need to be licensed by the city and there are certain roadways where they are not permitted including sidewalks and parks. Additionally, there are age requirements for operation and minimum equipment requirements including proof of insurance.

Does your ordinance specify times of day or times of the year when golf cart usage is or isn’t allowed?

The regulated hours of use are between sunrise and sunset during the months of April through October.

How has the response been? Have you heard any feedback?

North Mankato amended the city code in the fall of 2023, so there has been limited time to receive feedback.

What tips would you give other city leaders who are considering adopting a recreational vehicle ordinance?

While public safety should be the highest priority, topography, daily vehicle traffic volumes, and posted speed limits should be reviewed when considering the use of recreational vehicles on city streets. As a police department is typically responsible for enforcement of the use of recreational vehicles on city streets, their involvement in the process is essential.

JESSIE DEHN

CITY ENGINEER/PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR
BRainerd (14,255)

Electric-assisted and motorized bicycles, scooters, skateboards, and other various forms of personal mobility, also known as forms of micromobility, have become considerably more popular. In recent years, the City of Brainerd has seen a significant increase in the use and presence of micromobility within our streets, sidewalks, and trails. As the use continues to grow, we wanted to be proactive in protecting public safety by enacting regulations that will reduce risks to the public.

While the city already had some regulations in place for bicycle and rollerblade use within public areas of the city, the Council enacted a new ordinance in October 2023 creating a section of city code regulating micromobility more specifically. The new regulations are a combination of what is covered by state statutes, our existing city code on bicycles and rollerblades, and other regulations that were discussed by public stakeholders, city staff, and the City Council. The new regulations were made with public safety in mind, while avoiding overly burdensome regulations that would discourage users from compliance with the new rules or not using these alternative modes of transportation altogether.

The rules mainly focus on what, where, and how these forms of micromobility can be used. For example, motorized bicycles are not allowed on sidewalks and multiuse trails. There are also more stringent regulations on micromobility and bicycle use within the downtown district. It was also decided to regulate speed.

As the new regulations took effect this fall, we have not experienced the peak season where we would see a majority of use. However, by including public stakeholders in this process, we are hopeful that the new regulations will be well received moving forward. We would recommend that anyone exploring regulation of these types of mobility should ensure that public stakeholders be involved in the discussions. One thing we heard from all those whom we spoke with during the process is being cautious not to make the restrictions so burdensome that they become prohibitive to their enjoyment and use. In these times with a lot of vehicles on the streets, limited parking, and traffic, there is value in encouraging alternative modes of transportation. 



What to Watch for During the 2024 Legislative Session

BY DEBORAH LYNN BLUMBERG



In a momentous legislative session, Minnesota lawmakers ushered in the adoption of 74 new chapters of law in 2023 that included significant tax cuts, paid family and medical leave, and the legalization of adult-use cannabis.

The Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) Party-controlled session, which started with a \$17.5 billion general fund surplus, saw the introduction of a record 6,705 bills, and passage of a \$2.6 billion capital investment package or bonding bill. Gov. Tim Walz vetoed one bill during the busy session, his first veto since he took office. Walz blocked a bill that would have set a minimum wage for Uber and Lyft drivers.

“We’re coming off a very consequential legislative session,” said League of Minnesota Cities Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) Director Anne Finn. “Legislators identified priorities early and moved aggressively with getting bills drafted and heard. They accomplished what they said they were going to do. The second year is always different from the first.”

While the first year of the Minnesota Legislature’s biennium is considered a “budget year” focused on passing the state budget, the second is typically a “bonding year” focused on capital investment projects as well as general budget tweaks. With expectations for another — though smaller — surplus for the mid-February to late May session, there may be ample room for changes, Finn said. “There very well could be another capital investment bill, especially since we’re going into an election year,” she said.

In this bonding year environment, city officials should start conversations with their legislators, she adds, so legislators are aware of local priorities. One effort that surplus money could support is Emergency Medical Services (EMS) sustainability across the state, said Finn.

Recognizing EMS providers in recent years have faced persistent funding and staffing challenges, the League convened a task force to look at the issue. “EMS funding is a logical way to spend,” said Finn.

Legislators could also earmark part of the state budget to tide cities over as they wait for ongoing funding for city streets that won’t begin until 2026.

In this Q&A, League IGR staff — including Nathan Jesson, Daniel Lightfoot, and Alex Hassel — discuss some of the major legislation passed in 2023, how new laws



The League's IGR staff work on legislative issues that matter to cities. From left to right, Ted Bengtson, Craig Johnson, Anne Finn, Alex Hassel, Brooke Bordson, Daniel Lightfoot, and Nathan Jesson.

may impact cities, and what cities need to keep in mind as 2024 gets underway.

Q *What happened in 2023 with local sales tax proposals?*

Nathan Jesson: Along with approving the local sales tax proposals within the omnibus tax bill during the 2023 session, the Legislature put a moratorium on local sales tax proposals for the next two years. This was done partly because the number of local sales tax requests significantly increased in recent years. The practical effect of this moratorium is that the Legislature will not consider any local sales tax proposals during the 2024 or 2025 legislative sessions. The moratorium doesn't apply to local sales tax authorizations or modifications included in the 2023 omnibus tax bill.

Q *How will the moratorium on local sales tax proposals impact cities?*

Nathan Jesson: It means that cities (and other political subdivisions) can't engage in activities connected to

imposing a new local sales and use tax or modifying existing ones. So, this includes activities like advertising or using funds to promote a referendum to support imposing a local sales tax, carrying out a referendum, adopting a resolution supporting a local sales tax, and even holding public forums or providing facts and data on any local sales tax and the impact it would have or the impact of projects that it would fund. Cities also can't seek voter approval for a local sales tax.

Q *At the same time, the Legislature established a Local Taxes Advisory Task Force. What will it accomplish?*

Nathan Jesson: As part of these efforts to examine the local sales tax process, the House and Senate tax committee chairs created a seven-member Local Taxes Advisory Task Force. The idea was to bring experts together to see if there could be a better way to address capital projects and other improvement projects moving forward. The group started meeting in August 2023 and is looking at

how cities and counties use local taxes to fund capital projects. The task force has been asked to come up with objective evaluation criteria for local tax proposals — including what types of projects should be eligible — and a better process for authorizing them.

One issue in the spotlight is whether projects must benefit an entire region in order to qualify and what defines “regional,” since the definition varies drastically in different parts of the state. The task force is slated to issue a report to the Legislature in mid-January 2024 with recommendations for possible changes. The League has been actively involved with the task force, with LMC President Jenny Max, city administrator for Nisswa, representing cities.

Q *What should cities have top of mind when it comes to local sales tax proposals?*

Nathan Jesson: Cities that had local sales tax proposals approved in 2019 or 2021 may face issues due to inflation increasing the costs of their approved

projects. They might run up against hitting the total revenue raised limit much sooner than they originally anticipated. With the local sales tax moratorium in place in 2024 and 2025, it will likely be years before those types of projects will be considered for modification.

Q *The 2023 tax bill included \$210 million in one-time public safety aid. What are eligible uses of the aid?*

Nathan Jesson: Unlike local government aid, this money can't be used for general purposes. Instead, cities have to use it to "provide public safety." Language in the law provides categories of eligible spending, but the list isn't exhaustive. Also key is that, while legislators expected that cities would put most of the funds toward police and fire, they intentionally wrote the bill broadly to allow for other uses. Some allowable uses named in the new law include community violence prevention, intervention programs and engagement, mental health crisis responses, victim services, and equipment related to fire, rescue, and emergency services. The broadest category is

"other personnel or equipment costs," and much of the aid may end up there.

Q *What about ineligible uses of the public safety aid?*

Nathan Jesson: The law also calls out a bunch of ineligible uses, such as the purchase of an armored vehicle or tear gas and construction costs around expanding or remodeling a police station. Cities will have to consult with their attorneys and use their best judgment to determine whether a use that is not clearly defined as eligible or ineligible is allowed. And, like with any state funds, use must be closely tracked and documented in order to respond to any future inquiries or program evaluations.

Q *The 2023 legislative session's \$1.065 billion housing omnibus bill was the largest single investment in housing in state history. What do cities need to know about this?*

Daniel Lightfoot: Funds will support the construction, acquisition, and preservation of housing. The bill also includes nearly \$300 million in direct appropri-

ations to cities, and new and existing grant opportunities for cities to support local housing efforts. What's key is that, for the first time in state history, the Legislature created two new programs that will provide direct formula-based funding to cities above 10,000 in population to support building and maintaining affordable housing. It also made available discretionary funds for Greater Minnesota cities below 10,000 in population for similar purposes. We saw other new programs, too, including \$8 million in state grant funding to help cities cover the cost of infrastructure needed to attract and support residential development. Inadequate infrastructure is often the single largest barrier to housing production in the state.

Q *What can we expect during the 2024 legislative session for cities and housing?*

Daniel Lightfoot: The state's historic budget surplus in 2023 made possible unprecedented levels of funding for housing construction and preservation across the housing spectrum. In 2024 the Legislature is likely poised to set its sights on policy,



Shaping the future,
one project at a time

Working with communities to build what's next in infrastructure
— the places, spaces, and systems that support our lives.



especially with a more limited supplemental budget. One priority will likely be around landlord-tenant issues. Specifically, efforts to address the problem of landlords who refuse to rent to a housing applicant who's receiving housing assistance.

In response to Minnesota's substantial housing supply and affordability gap, legislators on both sides of the aisle are likely to follow a recent trend we're seeing in states like Washington, Colorado, and Montana. These states are focusing more on state intervention on local land use and zoning policy. In Minnesota, this could come in the form of requiring zoning for higher density areas and prohibiting architectural design standards. The League will work closely with legislators to advocate for a continuation of the state-local partnership around housing, and will support efforts that continue to allow zoning and land use changes to be locally led and community-driven rather than a one-size-fits-all approach from the state.

Q *What are some important takeaways from the 2023 legislative session on employment laws?*

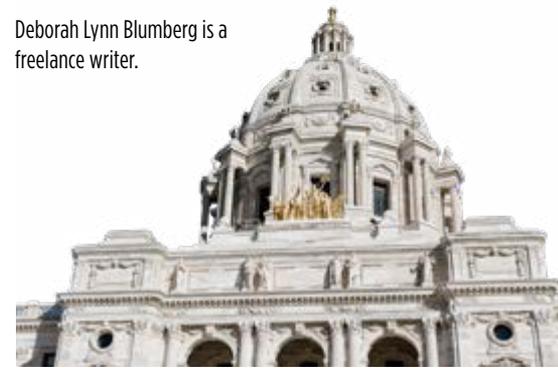
Alex Hassel: The most pressing change to employment law this past legislative session was the enactment of an earned sick and safe time requirement that all employers must administer. The new law means employers have to provide their employees with one hour of paid sick and safe time for every 30 hours worked for up to 48 hours the first year and 80 hours for ongoing years. This law applies to all employees, including part-time and seasonal workers. The law went into effect Jan. 1, 2024, and requires all cities to provide a certain standard of short-term leave benefits. It has no impact on existing paid leave policies that meet or exceed the new requirements.

Q *What do cities need to do in light of this new law and other employment law changes?*

Alex Hassel: If they haven't already, cities will need to evaluate their existing leave programs to make sure they're in compliance with the new law. If a city doesn't have a leave program, it will need to implement one that meets the state's minimum standards. The new law doesn't prevent a city from pro-

viding more generous leave benefits. Cities also need to have a few other new employment-related laws on their radar. Changes to the Minnesota Public Employment Labor Relations Act will impact bargaining negotiations. A new paid family and medical leave law creates a statewide insurance program for longer-term paid leave that employers will be required to participate in. That program starts in 2026. All of these changes to employment law will drastically impact how cities and other employers navigate benefits for their employees for years to come. Learn more about recent employment law changes at lmc.org/employmentlaw23. **MG**

Deborah Lynn Blumberg is a freelance writer.



What's your city's career advantage?

Across the state, cities are implementing creative ideas to attract and retain exceptional talent!

Visit the City Career Advantage to see how Minnesota cities are attracting new talent and retaining employees.

Find out more: www.lmc.org/cca

Help increase the visibility of Minnesota cities as key partners in policymaking!



MARCH 7 — ST. PAUL

Receive updates on cities' key priorities, hear from state policymakers, and prepare to advocate for your city's needs at City Day on the Hill.

Register today at:
lmc.org/cityday24

CITY DAY ON THE HILL

STAY UP TO DATE BEFORE THE EVENT AND THROUGHOUT THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Subscribe to League publications.

Get the full story from the Capitol in the *Cities Bulletin* — a weekly round-up of summaries and analysis of legislation.

Subscribe now:
lmc.org/bulletinsubscribe

Utilize the League's advocacy resources.

Come prepared to City Day on the Hill by familiarizing yourself with the League's advocacy toolkits, fact sheets, and legislative priorities found at lmc.org/advocacy/how-to-advocate/

Follow the League on social media.

-  [MinnesotaCities](https://www.facebook.com/MinnesotaCities)
-  [Minnesota_Cities](https://www.instagram.com/Minnesota_Cities)
-  [League of Minnesota Cities](https://www.linkedin.com/company/League-of-Minnesota-Cities)
-  [#MnCities](https://twitter.com/MinnesotaCities)

LMC's 2024 Legislative Priorities

In preparation for the upcoming legislative session, the League of Minnesota Cities Board of Directors formally approved the 2024 *City Policies*, a publication developed with input from member city officials who participated in the League's four legislative policy committees in 2023. The *City Policies* document is the only comprehensive statewide legislative advocacy agenda for all Minnesota cities — access it at lmc.org/policies.

From those city legislative policies, the League Board adopted a broad set of legislative priorities.

The priorities were determined through discussions that occurred during the policy committee process and through other member interactions and communications over the last several months. While the issues addressed in the priorities list do not reflect the entire scope of the League's anticipated activities at the Legislature during the 2024 legislative session, they do provide a starting point for important issues to watch as the session gets underway.

The 12 LMC legislative priorities for 2024

(listed alphabetically)

- ▶ Adult-use cannabis
- ▶ Bonding
- ▶ Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- ▶ Employment issues
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Local control
- ▶ Local government aid (LGA)
- ▶ Local sales taxes
- ▶ Public safety duty disability funding
- ▶ Sales tax exemption on construction materials
- ▶ School resource officers policies
- ▶ Water and wastewater infrastructure policies and funding

Have questions?

If you have questions about the legislative session or the League's legislative priorities, contact a member of the LMC Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) team. Find staff contact information at lmc.org/igr-staff.



Anne Finn
IGR Director



Ted Bengtson
IGR Administrative
Coordinator



Brooke Bordson
IGR Representative



Alex Hassel
IGR Representative



Nathan Jesson
IGR Representative



Craig Johnson
IGR Representative



Daniel Lightfoot
IGR Representative

Real People.
Real Solutions.
REAL IMPACT.



Bolton-Menk.com

715-781-4680

New Richmond WI
Mitch Campeau



Great inventory of quality
heavy duty equipment.

Call today for more details and photos!



2012 freightliner M2, 106, 109,000 miles, 300 HP
Cummins 9 L, Allison, 18K front 23K rear, air ride
rear, heat, air conditioning, P locks, P windows, P
mirrors, cruise, heated windshield, Stainless steel
10 foot box, 11 foot Berkey road tamer Hydro
turn plow, 9 foot wing, Swenson Vbox spreader
with Pre-wet, force America, hydraulic controls,
pintle hitch, Municipal owned

\$129,900

WELLNESS IN ACTION

How the League partnered with three communities to pilot a new model for public safety wellness programs.

BY CALI TORELL

Due to the nature of their job duties, public safety professionals are exposed to traumas that can cause short- and long-term injuries — whether a physical injury like a broken bone or a mental injury like depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress. Without treatment, mental injuries can worsen, compelling many talented first responders to leave the workforce.

To improve employee recruitment and retention in the field, many communities have created programs to support public safety mental health and wellness within their organizations and others

are interested, but don't know where to start. Across the state, this takes many different forms. The League of Minnesota Cities sought to understand the critical components of a successful wellness program for public safety and help cities know where to begin.

“We needed to find a way to help our members by providing an outline or foundation for them to build off of,” said the League’s Public Safety Program Coordinator Lora Setter. “Many of them had pieces of things that were going on, like ‘Check Up from the Neck Up,’ or peer support programs, but we wanted to

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF CHASKA



First place winners Jack Worm and Andrew Romine and second place winners Brendan Heitkamp and Jamie Personius took home trophies in the cornhole tournament.

understand what an overarching wellness program needed to look like and answer the question: How do I do this if I've never done this before?”

To support cities in developing these beneficial programs, the League created the *Action Guide to Support Public Safety Mental Wellness*, a five-step model with best practices and considerations for supporting public safety employees and their well-being.

Over the past year, Setter piloted this approach with three communities: Moorhead, Madelia, and Chaska. Before the pilot project began, each community varied in its existing approach to employee wellness in addition to other differences like city size, agency structure, and overall benefits programs. Joined by the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust’s Aimee Gourlay as a facilitator, Setter and these three communities followed the steps of the action guide to gain insight into their own offerings, as well as the applicability of the model for other cities starting or refreshing wellness programs for public safety employees.

For the City of Madelia, a community of about 2,500 people in Watonwan County, participating in the pilot program was the push it needed to better prioritize employee mental health, according to Police Chief Rob Prescher.

(continued on page 16)

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF CHASKA



Chaska employees “Stop the Clock” and learn to play cricket.

“For a lot of small agencies, you don’t deal with it until it smacks you in the face,” Prescher said. “This is our first attempt as a community to do something proactively.”

While they didn’t have a good understanding of what a wellness program could look like in their community, Prescher said everyone wanted to participate and learn more. They formed a wellness team representing all city departments to begin moving forward.

Getting on board

At the outset, each community participated in the critical first step: gathering city leaders for a conversation about what it means to be an organization that supports mental health.

“One of my biggest takeaways was how committed all of the department heads seemed to be in regard to mental health for all their employees and how willing they are to normalize the conversation,” Setter said, reflecting on the pilot program participants.

The City of Chaska has a citywide employee wellness program that was initiated within the police department more than a decade ago, according to Denise Beebe, senior city clerk. Even with an established program, Chaska’s BeWell Committee welcomed the opportunity to improve and evaluate the city’s offerings.

“Our wellness program has never been a static thing,” she said. “We are always changing with the different ideas that are coming in by looking at the needs of our employees and what is happening in the larger context.”

In Moorhead, the police department began its own initial wellness programming in 2008, starting with a peer assistance model where employees were trained to provide debriefs after major incidents, according to Moorhead Police Captain Deric Swenson. This eventually grew into the agency’s expanded wellness program, which today includes an in-house counselor. While Moorhead started this process on its own, Swenson said he’s glad that the action model provides guidance to communities that are now exploring these programs.

“It’s such an important topic that has not been a priority for many departments until now and there are so many ven-

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF CHASKA



Chaska employees take to the ice for indoor curling.

dors selling a product around wellness,” Swenson said. “The League is offering some standards and base knowledge to help communities as they navigate this.”

Assessing employee needs

After the wellness team is established, the model encourages cities to survey employees to inform the development of the community’s wellness strategy. For the pilot program, the League helped facilitate these surveys with questions around the employee’s own mental health and their perceptions of the organizational culture. Understanding employees’ current experiences and needs gives communities the data they need to create effective programs and evaluate progress.

In Chaska, the survey process was eye-opening and helped to identify key gaps in the wellness program.

“One of the things we realized through this process is that we are so focused on trying to reach employees with these benefits, but we aren’t getting to the rest of the family,” Beebe said.

An immediate outcome of this work in Chaska is greater communication to families about benefits and resources, like the city’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Often, families are the first to realize a loved one is struggling and needs access to resources, Setter said.

Beebe said the survey also gave the Chaska BeWell Committee the data it needs to gain support from various administration representatives and department heads for new initiatives.

Wellness initiatives range from no or low-cost team-building efforts, like Chaska’s “Stop the Clock” program, to major investments, like professional counsel-

ing and psychiatric services. Surveying employees helps communities understand what would be the most impactful before they invest, Setter said.

Prioritizing public safety

Many wellness programs are citywide, as in Madelia and Chaska, offering programming and benefits throughout the organization to support the well-being of employees. But it’s also critical to acknowledge the unique needs of employees in public safety roles.

“Wellness has been a part of workplace culture for a long time in many organizations,” Setter acknowledged. “But to really focus on the issues that public safety personnel struggle with is new and needs to be approached differently than a citywide program.”

That was the case in Moorhead, Swenson said. The police department found itself advising and training the city’s EAP provider to help prepare them for the types of issues and traumas first responders face.

“When you have a citywide program, that includes employees who work in public works and finance, they aren’t looking at the same traumas and situations that law enforcement is dealing with,” he said.

But how we define trauma and stress varies from individual to individual, Swenson added. It’s important to adapt and communicate with employees about the types of support they need.

Though Madelia is a smaller community, it was clear to City Administrator Christine Fischer that the city should take a holistic approach to employee wellness. Many employees have dual roles serving the community in the street

department, while volunteering part time with the fire department, Fischer said.

“We need to make sure that these people are OK and that they have all the resources that they need to know that we are here for them,” she said. “Some of the things that we see are not great, but we’re here for a purpose to protect the community. We need to look at the whole picture.”

While the model can be applied to both city-wide and agency-specific wellness programs, many of the action-

able steps in the model focus on gaining input from public safety employees to ensure wellness programs are relevant and useful.

Ready for action

In Madelia, the city is taking steps to implement new wellness initiatives for employees based on feedback in the survey, including a new, monthly all-staff lunch. The goal of the program is to build camaraderie and support employee relationships while the city explores more

comprehensive offerings, like an on-duty fitness area or expanded benefits.

As the pilot program continues, the cities will follow the final steps of the process by putting wellness plans into action and evaluating their success.

Taking their learnings from this process, Setter and Gourlay revised the model in late 2023 to reflect feedback from participants and observations from facilitating. A key takeaway: connecting wellness to purpose.

“Having a strong sense of purpose builds resilience. And we know from our surveys in the pilot program that employees feel deeply connected to their purpose,” Setter said. “That’s why one of the first steps in our model is finding ways to help keep employees focused on their mission because research shows that having a strong sense of purpose increases well-being.”

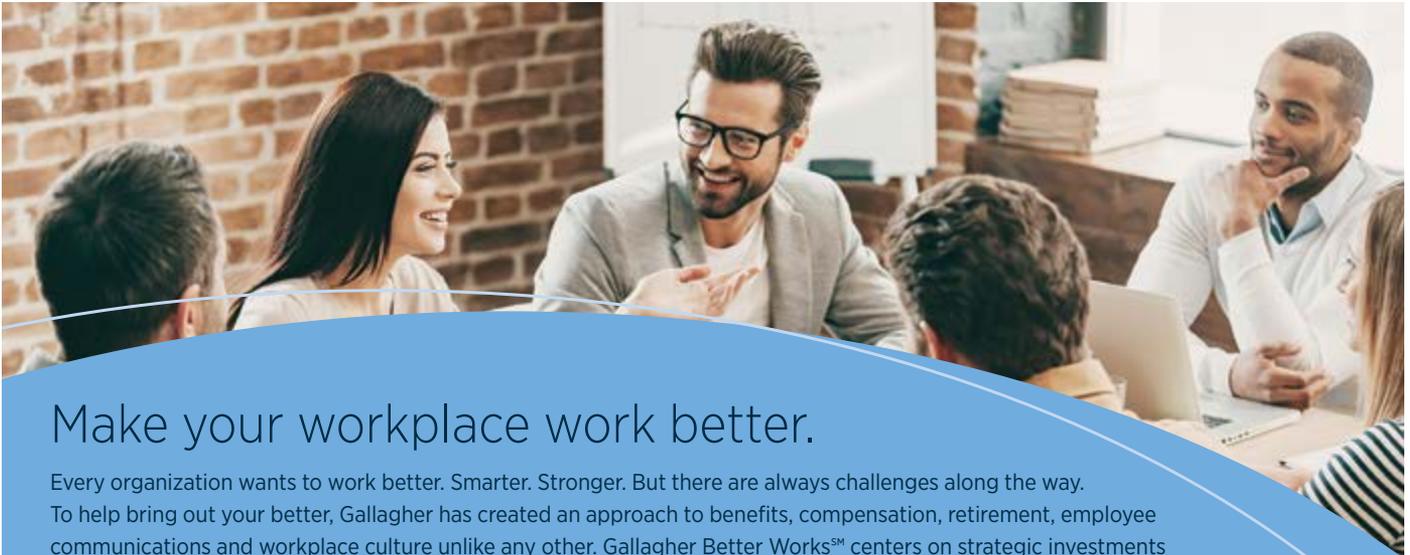
For communities interested in applying the model to form or update their wellness programs, the *Action Guide to Support Public Safety Mental Wellness* is available at lmc.org/ActionGuide. **MG**

Cali Torell is account manager/lead writer for Goff Public.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF CHASKA



Chaska employees enjoying a beautiful late August afternoon at the city’s first Annual Cornhole Tournament 2023.



Make your workplace work better.

Every organization wants to work better. Smarter. Stronger. But there are always challenges along the way. To help bring out your better, Gallagher has created an approach to benefits, compensation, retirement, employee communications and workplace culture unlike any other. Gallagher Better WorksSM centers on strategic investments in your employees’ health, financial wellbeing and career growth, with a holistic focus on organizational wellbeing.

Jessica Nikunen
Senior Consultant, Gallagher Benefits Services
952.201.2029 | Jessica_Nikunen@ajg.com

Jenny Hering
Associate Consultant, Health and Welfare Consulting
952.356.3852 | Jenny_Hering@ajg.com



ajg.com

© 2021 Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. 40397



Insurance | Risk Management | Consulting

GROWING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES CONFERENCE



GRAND RIVER CENTER IN DUBUQUE, IOWA

ATTEND THE LARGEST SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE IN THE MIDWEST

APRIL 23-24, 2024

This conference is packed with comprehensive, impactful, and actionable sustainability ideas, plans, and best practices for local government and business professionals.

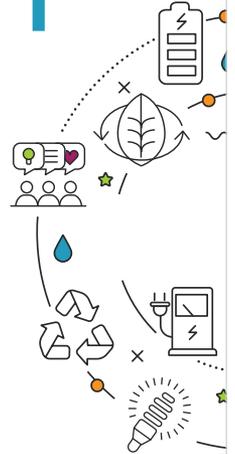
SPONSORED BY



PRESENTED BY



POWERED BY



LEARN MORE AT WWW.GSCDUBUQUE.COM



Smart solutions for all your engineering needs.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Streets and storm sewers | Site grading and drainage plans |
| Wastewater systems | Flood control |
| Water systems | Groundwater studies |
| Solid waste/landfills | Community planning |
| Airport improvements | Funding |
| Wetland delineation/mitigation | Engineering survey and environmental planning |

WIDSETH
Widseth.com



Love Minnesota Cities? Follow us:

-  MinnesotaCities
-  Minnesota_Cities
-  Minnesota_Cities
-  League of Minnesota Cities
-  MinnesotaCities #MnCities



Exploring AI Applications in City Government: The Promise and the Risks

BY JOSHUA PINE AND LENA GERAGHTY, IN COLLABORATION WITH KATE STOLL AND DANIELLE GREY-STEWART

Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing the landscape of work, and local governments are by no means exempt. Cities, towns, and villages can harness the power of AI to draft resolutions, create social media content, summarize information for constituents, improve data-driven decision-making, and more. However, not all municipal applications are suitable for AI, and not all AI technologies are appropriate for government use.

To discuss the opportunities and risks of AI for local leaders, the National League of Cities (NLC) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science Center (AAAS) for Scientific Evidence in Public Issues co-hosted a virtual event in August 2023, titled “Introduction to AI in Municipal Government.”

Although the conversation was just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to AI applications and policies by municipal governments, several key takeaways can be gleaned from the event:

 **Artificial intelligence is not a magical solution.** Hoda Heidari, co-leader of the Responsible AI Initiative at Carnegie Mellon University, shared how AI utilizes statistical processes designed to find patterns in data. This can be a valuable tool for local leaders. However, like human-made decisions, AI systems have the potential for bias and discrimination depending on their training, the data they use, and their ultimate application. Extra care should be exercised when AI is used to inform consequential decisions or to provide risk assessments that impact people’s lives.

 **There are many types of AI.** Generative AI, like ChatGPT or Google Bard, is just one type of technology. Generative AI for text works by predicting the next word in a sentence, and the next sentence in a paragraph and so on, based upon what’s most likely to follow according to text pulled from many sources, including the internet. Generative AI does not generally test for accuracy — humans should fact check its outputs.

 **Experiment but verify.** The City of Boston’s Interim Guidelines for Using Generative AI highlight how AI tools have significant potential to benefit the work of city employees. This potential does not, however, remove responsibility of staff for its output, which is why verification and accountability are essential. Boston’s Chief Information Officer Santiago Garces emphasized three guiding principles:

1) *Fact check and review all generative AI outputs.* Humans are ultimately responsible for whatever products or outcomes they publish, regardless of whether AI is used.

2) *Disclose when generative AI has been used.* Constituents expect transparency from their local government.

3) *Do not share sensitive or private information.* The information input into generative AI prompts is not inherently private and therefore could be vulnerable to security threats or could be taken by the company providing the model to further train their technology.

 **AI is not just for big cities.** Whereas other emerging technologies often require significant technical training and staff resources, generative AI tools based on natural language inputs allow cities of all sizes to benefit from its value. The City of Wentzville, Missouri is piloting generative AI tools to automate certain aspects of city communication, which creates more time and space for creative and strategic thinking by city staff. Wentzville offers in-person training and requires virtual training for staff on the use of generative AI.

The August event merely scratched the surface of the many questions raised about the promise and peril of AI applications in local government. What questions do you have about using AI in your city? What creative applications of AI can propel your city into the digital future? What guardrails should be put in place to ensure the safe use of AI in your city?

To learn more about AI, visit the AAAS EPI Center resources at bit.ly/AAAS-epi-center. 

This article was originally published by the NLC and reprinted with permission.

Joshua Pine is the program manager of urban innovation at the NLC. Lena Geraghty is the director of urban innovation and sustainability in the Center for Municipal Practice at the NLC. Kate Stoll and Danielle Grey-Stewart are with the AAAS Center for Scientific Evidence in Public Issues.

The League of Minnesota Cities is committed to providing relevant resources to our members. Learn more about the use of AI and how that intersects with your responsibilities under Minnesota law at lmc.org/AIconsiderations.

Interested in adopting a policy to govern the use of AI? Check out the League’s updated Computer Use model policy, available at lmc.org/computerusepolicy.



WE'RE READY

Stop by one of Ziegler CAT's 27 locations to learn more about the latest models, parts, service, and technology. We're here to help with all of your heavy equipment needs.

LEARN MORE:
www.zieglercat.com

ZIEGLER 

Howard Lake Set to Open State's First Net-Zero Library

BY HEATHER RULE

Howard Lake ran the risk of losing its library.

A Great River Regional Library System largescale assessment found that Howard Lake was the smallest, most outdated, and most under-used library in its system. To stay an active member, Howard Lake needed to consider upgrading.

“The old library just wasn’t going to cut it anymore,” said Sue Claessen, secretary/treasurer of Howard Lake’s Friends of the Library.

The Howard Lake City Council and City Administrator Nick Haggemiller, along with support from the Friends of the Library, worked on solutions. The result is a new, net-zero library building that counterbalances the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced by the facility with the amount removed from the atmosphere. It’s the first net-zero library in Minnesota.

Ground broke in August 2023 for the new 7,000-square-foot library in the center of town, with an expected opening in June 2024.

Background and planning process

Discussions for the new library started in 2017 after the library system assessment and a feasibility study was conducted that explored various options. However, the “real meat and potatoes” of new library construction didn’t start until 2021, Haggemiller said.

The city of about 2,500 people was deliberate in engaging the community with open houses and surveys, and giving the Friends of the Library a seat at the table to consider the overall needs of library programming in the space.

The new building will only be about 1,000 square feet bigger than the current library, built in 1979 during the energy crisis. The old building was built into a hillside with almost no windows. Haggemiller called it a “concrete fortress.” Ninety-nine percent of the library’s services are currently in a space “about the size of a two-stall garage,” Haggemiller said.

New amenities and features

The new building will have high-efficiency windows, solar panels, and heating, ventilating, and air conditioning sys-



RENDERINGS COURTESY OF BKV ARCHITECTS



The above renderings show what the Howard Lake Library will look like once it has been completed.

tems “miles above” a typical high-efficiency system, Haggemiller said. A lot of windows allowing natural light for passive solar energy will be one noticeable difference for library users.

“When you think about it, libraries are designed for the future,” Claessen said. “This one, I’m sure, will take us into the next 40 or 50 years.”

What library patrons will perhaps take notice of, too, is the way space will be used inside the new building. Currently, space is so tight that the children’s story area overlaps with a space for adults reading newspapers or using computers.

The one-level, new library will provide more separation and breathing room with areas for children and teenagers, along with a full circulation of books. There will also be a meeting room for community use.

“I’m excited about the space,” Claessen said. “And it’s just going to be configured so much more useably this time.”

A net-zero facility

Building a net-zero library was not part of the initial project planning conversations, Haggemiller said. However, to meet the requirements for a Minnesota Department of Education

Focus on Small Cities

grant, which helped finance the \$5.6 million project, the building would need to meet the state's B3 energy guidelines. Learning that the new building's design could accommodate a lot of solar panels is what advanced discussions and ultimately the decision to move beyond meeting the B3 energy guidelines to instead creating a net-zero facility.

It came down to a long-term cost-benefit and having the net-zero benefits in place for the future, according to Haggenmiller.

"Just a very pragmatic response to what seems like a pretty green initiative was met with favoritism by the Council, by the community, because this makes both mental sense and financial sense," Haggenmiller said.

To the best of Haggenmiller's knowledge, Howard Lake will house the first net-zero library in the state. It's hard to know for sure, without a database or list of net-zero libraries around the country, but it's also believed to be the first net-zero library in the upper Midwest.

"I think the single biggest takeaway is that if this tiny little town of Howard Lake can do it, any other city in the state or even the country can do it as well," Haggenmiller said.

What he called a "secret sauce" in the process, however, was navigating through the hoops and bureaucracy within the various funding mechanisms for the project. Communities should be aware of requirements or construction procedures that are attached to various funding sources, according to Haggenmiller.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HOWARD LAKE FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY



The new Howard Library is currently under construction. It is expected to open in June 2024.

"We jumped in really cautiously, and we're learning as we go," he said.

Claessen encourages other cities or organizations not to be deterred if they're a small entity, thinking that net-zero might not work for them. As with any construction project, stay determined, she said.

"If this is something that feels right for your community, keep looking," Claessen said. "Because there should hopefully be a way to do this." 

Heather Rule is a freelance writer.



Seeing things from a long-term **PERSPECTIVE**

"Your improvements plan should be a living document. With just a few clicks you can reprioritize for today and prepare for the future."

Jacob Strombeck, AE2S Engineer



Water Engineering and Beyond

Legal Changes Affecting Employee Compensation and Leave Time

BY LISA SCHAEFER

Following the 2023 legislative session, several new laws impacting compensation and leave benefits for city employees are now in effect.

Repeal of local government compensation cap

The statute setting maximum compensation for city employees was repealed as of May 25, 2023. For many cities, the artificial cap created challenges with recruitment and salary compression. With the salary cap repeal, cities now have the authority to determine what compensation is needed to recruit and retain staff.

Cities still need to comply with the Local Government Pay Equity Act, including submitting a report with the State of Minnesota every three years. As a best practice, many cities run a mock pay equity report with the state prior to making any compensation changes to ensure they remain in compliance.

Inquiries into pay prohibited

Effective Jan. 1, 2024, employers can no longer ask about, consider, or require disclosure of pay history of an applicant for the purpose of negotiating wages, benefits, or other compensation. For employees covered by collective bargaining agreements, the law becomes effective for contracts implemented after Jan. 1, 2024.

This law does not prohibit an employer from providing information about the salary range or other benefits. In addition, applicants are allowed to voluntarily disclose their pay history, without being asked. However, the employer can only use the information disclosed to support a salary higher than initially offered.

Cities will want to review their employment applications and hiring procedures to ensure questions related to past salary history are removed. View the LMC Employment Application model form at lmc.org/employmentapp.



Earned sick and safe time (ESST)

Effective Jan. 1, 2024, employers must provide earned sick and safe paid leave to employees who work at least 80 hours in a year. Under the new law, eligible employees will receive at least one hour of ESST for every 30 hours worked, up to 48 hours per year.

The League has resources to help cities better understand the new changes:

- ▶ Access a recording of an LMC webinar about ESST at lmc.org/LMCwebinars.
- ▶ Access LMC FAQs about ESST at lmc.org/ESSTfaq.
- ▶ Contact the League's HR and Benefits team at HRbenefits@lmc.org.

State holiday recognition

Two changes were made related to state holidays. June 19 of each year, also known as Juneteenth, was added to the list of mandatory state holidays in which public business cannot be conducted. Christopher Columbus Day (the second Monday in October) has been changed to Indigenous Peoples Day. This day remains an optional state holiday, and cities can decide if city offices will be open.

State law does not generally require the city provide paid leave for employees who are not working. However, many cities choose to provide employees with paid holidays, or are required to do so under personnel policies or collective bargaining agreements.

League updates salary and benefits survey

The League's current Local Government Salary & Benefits Survey includes data from over 480 Minnesota local governments including approximately 389 cities and 80 counties. Compensation data is collected and validated for 260 benchmark jobs. The 2023 survey has several notable improvements including:

- ▶ **Increased reliability.** We have moved to an annual survey, with a set deadline for cities, counties, and other local government organizations to enter data. Moving to once per year participation is important because it allows the data to be run through a more robust validation process. The participation window for the 2023 survey is now closed. However, we will seek feedback from members regarding the annual deadline, as well as possible enhancements for surveys in 2024 and beyond.
- ▶ **Addition of incumbent data.** The new survey collects incumbent salary data, in addition to salary ranges. Organizations can now access position details or averages, depending on their needs.
- ▶ **Addition of extensive employee benefits data.** Affordability of benefits for employees is a hot topic in relationship to the attraction and retention goals, and benefits programs are increasingly complex. The new survey collects specific details of benefits plans including health insurance and medical plans, types of paid leave, wellness, and other ancillary benefits.

The last legislative session brought significant changes to employee compensation and benefits. As more details become available, the League will continue to evaluate best practices and other implementation details on these new laws through webinars, FAQs, model templates, and consultation. 

Lisa Schaefer is the League of Minnesota Cities human resources director. Contact: lschaefer@lmc.org or (651) 281-1203.

Court Finds City’s Park Dedication Fee Complied With Subdivision Statute

SUBDIVISION STATUTE

Park dedication fees

Almir Puce applied to the City of Burnsville to redevelop his residential parcel for commercial use as an automobile dealership and a bakery/coffee shop. Puce objected to the imposition of a park dedication fee, arguing “no need whatsoever will be created for parks by this proposed development.” The city planning commission recommended a park dedication fee of \$37,804; however, the city later recalculated and reduced the fee to \$11,700.

To comply with the subdivision statute (Minnesota Statutes, section 462.358), cities may impose park dedication fees rather than requiring land dedication for public use. The fee may be “based on the average fair market value of the unplatted land for which park fees have not already been paid.” The subdivision statute also provides “[t]here must be an essential nexus between the fees ... and the municipal purpose sought to be achieved by the fee,” and “[t]he fee ... must bear a rough proportionality to the need created by the proposed subdivision or development.”

Puce sued, claiming in part that the city’s application of its ordinance did not comply with the subdivision statute and had resulted in an unconstitutional taking of his property in violation of state and federal constitutional provisions. The district court ruled in the city’s favor, upholding the park dedication fee. The Minnesota Court of Appeals reversed the district court’s decision, concluding the city’s imposition of the park dedication fee did not comply with the subdivision statute, based on the lack of the city’s “individualized determination” of the proposed development’s impact on city parkland.

The Minnesota Supreme Court reversed the court of appeals’ decision and returned the case to the district court, finding the city had a sufficient legal and factual basis under the subdivision statute to impose the park dedication fee. The court held the city made an individualized determination and complied with the “rough proportionality” requirement of the subdivision statute when it recalculated the fee using the fair market value of his specific property, rather than applying the city’s blanket dedication formula that is based on the average cost per acre by zoning district.

The court further held the city complied with the subdivision statute as it made a reasonable determination that it will need

to acquire and develop or improve a reasonable portion of land due to the approval of a subdivision before imposing a park dedication fee. Citing the city’s comprehensive plan, which requires 5% of the gross land area of the development to maintain open space, the court ruled the city acted reasonably.

Puce v. City of Burnsville, N.W.2d (Minn. 2023). Note: The League filed an amicus brief in Burnsville’s support.

EMPLOYMENT LAW

Duty disability

Amy Kriegshauser was a firefighter and paramedic concurrently employed by the cities of Hugo and White Bear Lake (WBL). Through WBL, Kriegshauser received health insurance and contributed to the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) Police and Fire Plan.

The cities have a Reciprocal Emergency Services Agreement that provides emergency services and automatic response to reported structure and building fires for residents, and provides equipment, personnel, and other resources to both departments.

Kriegshauser injured her knee and femur during a call placed to both Hugo’s paid on-call firefighters and firefighters from neighboring cities in accordance with the Reciprocal Emergency Services Agreement. Kriegshauser’s pagers from both Hugo and WBL alerted her, but she answered the Hugo page, in part to satisfy her 25% call-response requirement, and arrived at the fire scene in Hugo gear and in a Hugo fire truck. A few days after the fire, Kriegshauser filed a first report of injury with Hugo.

Hugo accepted liability and provided Kriegshauser with workers’ compensation benefits. Kriegshauser underwent multiple knee surgeries, various rehabilitation efforts, and a full knee replacement. She attempted to return to work as a WBL firefighter, but she experienced pain and swelling preventing her from performing her job. In April 2020, WBL terminated Kriegshauser’s employment. She filed a PERA application for duty disability benefits and after appealing their initial determination for regular disability benefits, PERA awarded Kriegshauser duty disability benefits and notified WBL of its obligation to provide ongoing health insurance benefits.

WBL challenged the PERA determination, and an administrative law judge (ALJ) determined WBL failed to prove Kriegshauser did not sustain a duty disability. As a result, WBL



was “responsible for continuing to provide health insurance coverage for [Kriegshauser] and her dependents and for continuing to pay its contribution for that coverage pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 299A.465.” WBL appealed the ALJ’s decision.

The Minnesota Court of Appeals affirmed the ALJ’s decision, finding the duty disability statute (Minnesota Statutes, section 353.01) ambiguous regarding the interpretation of “duties that are specific to the positions covered by” the plan. When a statute is ambiguous, appellate courts generally defer to the interpretation of an agency charged with administering the statute. In this case, the court deferred to PERA’s interpretation because it was reasonable and held Kriegshauser’s injury qualifies as a duty disability.

There is no dispute WBL provided health coverage at the time of the injury as Kriegshauser’s employer. Minnesota Statutes, section 299A.465, subdivision 1(c), requires a firefighter’s employer to continue to provide health coverage for the firefighter and the firefighter’s dependents if the firefighter was receiving dependent coverage at the time of the injury under the employer’s group health plan. The court interpreted “employer shall continue to provide health coverage” as the employer that provided health coverage at the time of the injury. This means there is no other “employer,” except for WBL that could continue to provide Kriegshauser with health insurance coverage. Thus, the court held the ALJ correctly identified WBL as Kriegshauser’s employer responsible for providing continuing health coverage.

City of White Bear Lake v. Kriegshauser, No. A23-0005 (Minn. Ct. App. Sept. 11, 2023) (nonprecedential opinion). Note: The League filed an amicus brief in White Bear Lake’s support.

CRIMINAL LAW

Firearm regulation

The State of Minnesota charged Corey Lynden Stone with the unlawful possession of a firearm after searching a vehicle he was in and discovering a backpack containing parts for an unassembled shotgun. Stone agreed he had previously been convicted of a “crime of violence” and was therefore prohibited from the possession of a “firearm” under Minnesota Statutes, section 609.165, which does not contain a definition for the term “firearm.” A jury found Stone guilty, and the district court entered a judgment of conviction. Stone appealed his conviction, claiming in part “an incomplete collection of disassembled component firearm parts” is not a “firearm” within the meaning of section 609.165. The Minnesota Supreme Court affirmed the



(continued on page 26)

F H FLAHERTY | HOOD P.A.

Minnesota’s Leader in Law & Legislative Advocacy

Flaherty & Hood, P.A. has provided comprehensive legislative, legal, communications, and organizational management support to local governments, associations, nonprofits, and businesses for more than 30 years. We are built on a tradition of providing cost-effective services for organizations with substantial needs, and we relish the opportunity to tackle new and complex issues. Our hands-on, team-driven approach emphasizes creativity and communication to get the best possible outcomes for our clients. At Flaherty & Hood, there will always be someone to answer your call.



The Flaherty & Hood team has extensive experience in:

- Legislative & Regulatory Advocacy
- Securing State Bonding Dollars
- Environmental Review, Compliance & Enforcement
- Labor Relations & Employment Law
- Job Classification & Compensation

www.flaherty-hood.com | (651) 225-8840 | FH@flaherty-hood.com



Minnesota Court of Appeals’ decision upholding Stone’s conviction and found that a group of unassembled shotgun parts can constitute a firearm within the meaning of section 609.165, so long as it is an instrument designed for attack or defense that expels a projectile by some explosive force. The evidence that Stone possessed shotgun parts was sufficient to establish he possessed a firearm, even if the shotgun was disassembled and parts were missing.

State v. Stone, N.W.2d (Minn. 2023).

LAND USE

Orderly annexation

Albert Lea Township and the City of Albert Lea published a notice of intent and later a joint resolution to designate an area of the township for orderly annexation pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 414.0325, including a 7.6-acre parcel owned by Trails Truck & Travel Plaza LLC (Trails). Trails filed an

objection letter with the Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) and requested a hearing. OAH scheduled a

telephone conference between the two parties. Following the conference, OAH issued an order and memorandum approving the annexation and declined to comment. Trails appealed the order to district court. The district court held a status conference, later vacated the annexation order, and remanded the case back to OAH. The city appealed this decision.

The Minnesota Court of Appeals reversed the district court’s decision, finding the joint resolution satisfied the criteria in the orderly annexation statute. Because statutory timelines providing for a hearing and for approval are incompatible when a hearing could not be held before approval of the annexation, the court reasoned the statutes must be interpreted to harmonize and give effect to all provisions. Therefore, the court found the only reasonable interpretation of the orderly annexation statute is that subdivision 2 (establishing hearing timeframes) and subdivision 3 (presuming discretion to deny annexation) do not apply to a joint resolution that satisfies the criteria of subdivision 1(h). Put differently, OAH was not required to hold a hearing under subdivision 2 or evaluate the factors identified in subdivision 3. Ultimately, the court held a review by OAH of a joint resolution for annexation is limited to determining satisfaction of the conditions and procedural requirements in section 414.0325, subdivisions 1 and 1b.

Trails Truck & Travel Plaza, LLC v. Albert Lea Twp., No. A23-0048 (Minn. Ct. App. Aug. 21, 2023). 

Written by Aisia Davis, research attorney with the League of Minnesota Cities. Contact: adavis@lmc.org or (651) 281-1271.

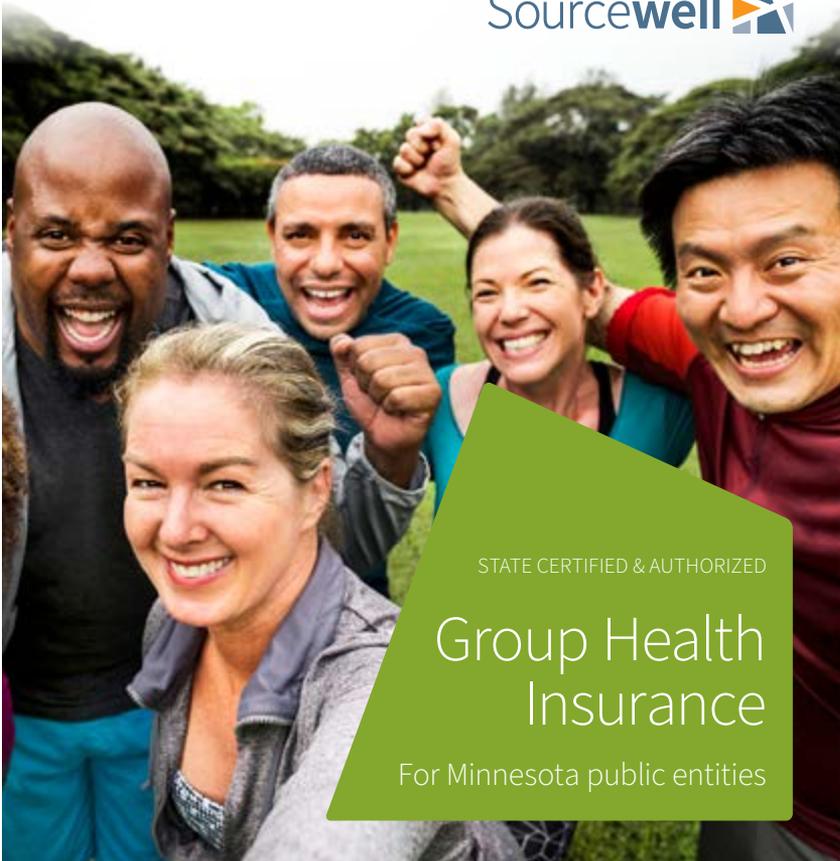


The Better Health Collective

As a member, you can:

- **Budget confidently** with rate stability.
- **Choose from multiple networks**, balancing provider choice and affordability.
- **Create a culture of wellness** with our help.
- **Offer unique benefits** to employees like programs for fertility, disease prevention, mental health, and more.
- **Proceed with confidence** because we’re certified and authorized by the MN Department of Commerce.

Learn more at: mn.sourcewell.org/health.



STATE CERTIFIED & AUTHORIZED

Group Health Insurance

For Minnesota public entities

What Is the Process for Rezoning?

Land Use

Q What is the process for rezoning?

LMC Rezoning is changing the zoning district assigned to a particular property from one type to another (for example, from commercial to residential). Under state statute, a zoning map is part of a zoning ordinance. So rezoning is a type of zoning ordinance amendment that should be done following the process set forth in the Municipal Planning Act at Minnesota Statutes, section 462.357, subdivisions 2-4.



The statutory process includes a public hearing after published notice. The hearing may be held by the planning commission or city council. If the rezoning affects an

area of 5 acres or less, then a similar notice should be mailed to properties within 350 feet. A different provision under the county planning act provides for mailed notice to properties within 500 feet, which can be a source of some confusion.

The statute has a two-tiered voting requirement for the city council. A rezoning ordinance requires a majority vote of all council members — unless the ordinance is rezoning away from residential to commercial or industrial, in which case a two-thirds majority vote of all council members is required. Notably, it used to be that a two-thirds vote was required for all rezoning, but the statutory voting threshold was lowered in 2001 to make it easier to rezone toward residential.

A city ordinance might have additional relevant considerations. Learn more in the LMC information memo Zoning Guide for Cities at lmc.org/zoningguide.

Answered by Land Use Loss Control Attorney Jed Burkett: jburkett@lmc.org.

Meeting Minutes

Q Is a city required to publish council meeting minutes in the official newspaper?

LMC Statutory cities under 1,000 in population are not required to publish their council meeting minutes, though they may do so if they choose. Cities with populations over 1,000 must publish meeting minutes, or a summary of the minutes, in their official newspaper. An article covering the council meeting written by a reporter from the newspaper does not relieve the city of the requirement to publish the official minutes. As an alternative to publishing, a city may choose to mail a copy of the minutes upon request. The city bears the mailing cost if they choose this alternative.

If a city does not choose the alternative of mailing minutes upon request, the publication of the minutes must occur within 30 days of the date of the meeting, or, if the council does not meet more than once every 30 days, by 10 days after the minutes are formally approved.



Answered by Research Analyst Angie Storlie: astorlie@lmc.org.

Personnel Policies

Q There have been significant changes to employment laws in the last year. How do I ensure our personnel policies are up to date?

LMC You will want to ensure your personnel policies cover changes to recent laws including:

- CROWN Act protections.
- Earned sick and safe time.
- Juneteenth and Indigenous Peoples Day holidays.
- School conference leave.
- Bone marrow/organ donation leave.
- Voting leave.
- Reasonable work time for nursing mothers, and more.

View the League's Personnel Policy Template model policy at lmc.org/personnelmodel.

When updating policies, cities will want to keep in mind requirements of the 2019 Minnesota Wage Theft Prevention Act (bit.ly/MNwagetheft). Specifically, the Minnesota Wage Theft Protection Act requires that employers retain a list of personnel policies with brief descriptions, including the date the policies were given to employees.

The records must be retained at a place where employees are working or retained in a manner that allows the city to comply with the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) Commissioner's demands within 72 hours. Fines for failure to submit records as required by DOLI increased following the 2023 legislative session from \$1,000 to \$10,000. www.doli.state.mn.us/



Answered by Assistant Human Resources Director Joyce Hottinger: jhottinger@lmc.org.

You don't hire engineers who are "good enough."
You hire the very best.

Incidentally, so do we.



There is no B-Team.

ApexEngGroup.com



SAFETY. SERVICE. PERFORMANCE.

4M Fund

MINNESOTA MUNICIPAL MONEY MARKET FUND

Financial Services Designed for Minnesota Cities

When your city wants cash management and investment choices, consider the benefits of a trusted partner like the 4M Fund:

- Customized reporting for all investments held by the fund
- Wide range of options from daily cash management to long-term fixed rate investments
- Direct deposit of all state aids
- Fixed-term investments for longer terms
- Comprehensive bond proceeds management program
- Cash flow management services

www.4MFund.com

**SPONSORED AND
GOVERNED BY
THE LEAGUE OF
MINNESOTA CITIES
SINCE 1987**

*Over 400 entities
participating*

The 4M Liquid Asset Fund and 4M PLUS Fund (the "Funds"), as well as the Term Series Fund (Term Series), seek to maintain a net asset value of \$1.00 per share. However, an investment in either Fund is neither insured nor guaranteed by the U.S. government and there is no assurance that the Funds will be able to maintain a stable net asset value of \$1.00 per share. The 4M Limited Term Duration Fund (LTD Fund) seeks to provide current income while maintaining limited price volatility. The LTD Fund has a floating net asset value, and the net asset value of a Participant's investment could decline below the amount originally invested by the Participant. You should consider the applicable Fund's investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses detailed in the Information Statement before you invest.



Create One-Pagers to Share Your Message With Legislators

BY TED BENGTON

Every year, city leaders look to the state Legislature for support in serving Minnesotans and helping to solve issues at the local level. When it comes to communicating issues to legislators, perhaps no one is in a better position to do so than city officials.

Legislators and city officials may share the same constituents, but city officials are the first line of communication when residents have a problem. Cities directly deliver vital services to their residents, and are the first to know when those services fall short and when issues arise. As such, it is important for city officials to communicate the needs of their communities to legislators.

However, lawmakers' time and attention can be scarce, particularly in the midst of a fast-paced legislative session. Minnesota legislators typically only meet for about four months per year and during that time there are hundreds of hearings and meetings, and thousands of pieces of legislation to consider.

That is why it is important for city officials to make their messaging as clear, concise, and as useful as possible. Legislators need to be able to easily understand the issue, and subsequently present and explain it to their colleagues to gain support.

Fitting your messaging onto one sheet of paper — a one-pager — is an excellent communication tool when city officials and legislators only have 15 minutes to meet — and even less time to testify at a committee hearing. Legislators often expect advocates to provide one-pagers to quickly explain an issue and so they can refer to it as legislation progresses. In fact, the League of Minnesota Cities Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) team often uses one-page fact sheets in its advocacy efforts — check out these fact sheets at lmc.org/advocacy.

We highly recommend cities craft one-pagers when advocating for issues. Here are some considerations in creating a good one-pager:

- ▶ **What is the “ask”?** Are you seeking funding for a bonding project or general funding? Is it policy related? Provide a paragraph or two about what you are specifically asking for, and, if you can, reference specific legislation or bills.
- ▶ **Provide background.** Legislators like to tell stories. They want to explain how problems came to be, how they impact Minnesotans, and how the Legislature can help. Provide brief background on the problem your community or residents are facing and how the legislation will help. Requesting a new public safety facility, community center, or street funding? Explain why it's needed and how it will serve your community.
- ▶ **Quantify the ask.** If you're asking for funding, provide an exact dollar amount or projection of the financial need. Legislators want to know specific figures when attempting to budget among hundreds of other funding requests.



- ▶ **Provide visuals.** Adding photos paints a more complete picture of the ask and makes the one-pager easier to skim at a quick glance. Is your city's infrastructure clearly in need of repair? Include a photo. Minnesotans all know what a street in dire need of repair looks like, but they may not be as familiar with wastewater infrastructure. Concept photos of proposed projects or infographics are also a great choice.
- ▶ **Highlight and enlarge the main issue and ask.** Break the issue down into three memorable points. With limited time, it is important to emphasize the main points of your ask.
- ▶ **Beyond the one-pager.** Make sure your one-pager includes contact information and note that you are available to answer any questions. You can always supplement a one-pager with separate information such as design and cost details, testimony notes, etc. And remember that the one-pager is just one component of your advocacy plan — don't forget to regularly follow up with your legislators with emails, phone calls, or meetings.

Reach out to your legislators early in the legislative session or even before the start of the 2024 session on Feb. 12. Once session begins, legislators will immediately be busy with constituent meetings, committee hearings, and working on legislation. Make sure your city's needs and issues are on their radar now.

As always, the League is here to help. Whether it's reviewing your messaging or helping you get in touch with key lawmakers, the League's IGR team can assist. The League's advocacy toolkits include information on prominent legislative topics and general tips on how to get in contact with your legislators. Learn more at lmc.org/advocacy. If you have any legislative questions you can refer to the League's website at lmc.org or email the League's IGR team at advocacy@lmc.org.

Ted Bengtson is IGR administrative coordinator with the League of Minnesota Cities. Contact: tbengtson@lmc.org or (651) 281-1242.

Door Knocking Campaign Provides Voice for Brooklyn Park Renters

BY ANDREW TELLIJOHN

Brooklyn Park city staff has long had regular meetings with apartment property managers in its city. But after a series of reports indicated high eviction rates, significant shortcomings in unaddressed maintenance needs, and a lack of relationship between the city and its apartment-dwelling residents, city officials took action.

The city overhauled its previously routine annual oversight program and initiated a door knocking campaign aimed at building rapport with residents who live in rental properties. After visiting with hundreds of tenants across five apartment complexes, elected officials are rewriting laws and city staff are proactively enforcing improvements to better apartment residents' standard of living.

"This work started with knowing we have a high eviction rate as well as renters expressing concerns with property maintenance," said Kimberly Berggren, director of community development. "We decided to get out and connect directly with renters where they live to help us figure out how the city can use its tools and resources to help improve living conditions."

Back to the beginning

The program, which won the League's 2023 City of Excellence Award for "Creative Solutions for City Housing Challenges," kicked off in 2019 when the Brooklyn Park Economic Development Authority first commissioned and funded a study of renters' experiences in the city's largest apartment communities.

Conducted by the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), the report followed an earlier study indicating Brooklyn Park has some of the highest rental property eviction rates in the state. Researchers interviewed apartment residents who

expressed concerns around affordability, safety, and dignity in housing.



CURA's January 2022 report recommended that the city play a more proactive role in collaborating with community members to establish and enforce expectations for property management actions in rental housing units.

"It made the city realize how we need to have a direct relationship with tenants and not just through property managers," said Josie Shardlow, Brooklyn Park's community engagement manager. "This is a complete shift in how the city works with renters."

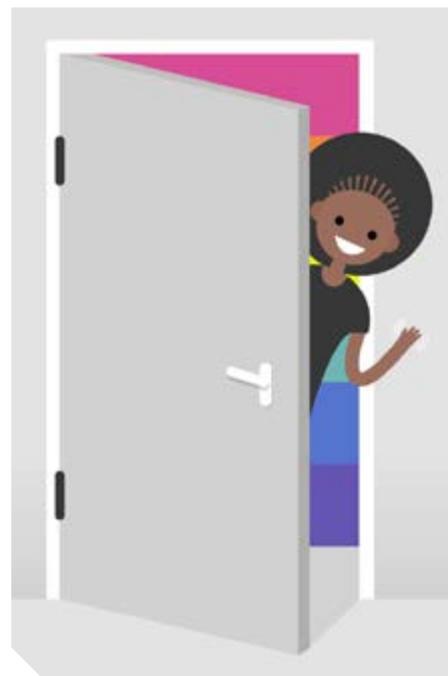
City staff, elected officials, community leaders, and others decided to pilot a renter-centered proactive door knocking program to hear from apartment residents directly on maintenance, communication, and livability concerns they were facing and to inform them of different city programs and resources available that might help improve their circumstances, such as Health on the Go events and training on Driver's License for All legislation.

Knocking on doors

Staff chose to prioritize visiting neighborhoods with higher concentrations of diversity and affordable housing. The proactive program partnered the city's rental inspectors and community engagement staff, who set off in teams to meet the residents.

Staff identified priority complexes where violations and repeat maintenance issues had been previously observed, complaints or requests for service had increased, and where active managerial control was lacking and maintenance was deemed not responsive to apartment residents' needs.

This differed from past efforts, which had centered on a single floor in each building, common areas and exterior maintenance.



Staff goals included:

- ▶ Connecting with residents to provide resources.
- ▶ Documenting problems.
- ▶ Educating residents on how to connect with the city, property management, and maintenance staff.
- ▶ Making sure property management firms address identified maintenance items.

"The city's historic practices have been more focused on the relationship between the city and the rental property manager, Berggren said. "This really adds more of a human-centered thoughtful approach to how we think about the housing in the community and making sure that we're elevating the needs of renters."

Property managers notified renters about the door knockings, but were not included on visits.

Many residents welcomed the visits, staff said. Others were skeptical. When residents were either not around or did not open their doors, city officials left informational materials.

The door knockers ended up, over the course of a few months, speaking with hundreds of apartment residents.

“A surprising number of people answered the door,” Shardlow said.

She went on a few of the door knocking sessions, which were held in the mid-to-late afternoon and helped coordinate others.

“We just talked with whoever answered the door. We introduced ourselves, said that we were with the city, and we’re just checking in and seeing how everything’s going,” she said.

Initial reactions varied. Some people were hesitant to raise any issues. Others invited them into their apartments and eagerly pointed out issues.

“It was kind of a wide spectrum,” she said. “What’s helpful is, as we talk to people on a certain floor or in a certain building, if some people are more willing to share, then we can ask about things we’ve already heard. We can say, ‘Oh, some of your neighbors talked about this issue. Have you seen that?’ Sometimes that will open up the conversation.”

No intent for confrontation

There might be a couple of rental property managers in the city who feel like the door knocking program is an overreach of government authority, but city code allows the enforcement of rules and regulations within reason, said Keith Jullie, manager of the city’s rental and business licensing division.

City officials believe apartment residents felt safer after the meetings in communicating concerns to management without fear of retaliation. The intent is not for this to be a contentious program, though Brooklyn Park officials do intend to follow through on making sure residents have better living conditions.

“We want to have the managers’ cooperation and support,” he said. “It works a lot better that way. However, if in the future we run across someone who doesn’t like it, and we feel a need to door knock, we have the legal authority to do that and we will.”

ON THE WEB

Access a video about this Brooklyn Park initiative at lmc.org/BrooklynPark.

At one apartment complex, Huntington Place, staff visited with people in 236 units. Residents expressed concerns about mold, pests, leaky pipes, holes in walls and ceilings, doors in disrepair, unsanitary units, lack of life safety items such as carbon monoxide alarms, and security concerns.

City staff issued correction orders on all identified property maintenance code violations and ensured corrections were completed. They continue meeting with Huntington Place residents on a frequent basis, have improved ongoing inspections, and are being proactive in following up on fixes, according to a summary report.

While there may have been some initial hesitation, Huntington Place management also was “trying to work with us so they could show that they are doing the best they can to move forward,” Jullie said.

After finishing at Huntington Place, city officials had that property management’s endorsement.

“They were aware of the program,” Jullie said. “They agreed with what we were trying to accomplish there. They sent notification to their residents, letting them know we were coming and why we were coming.”

What’s next?

After visiting five apartment complexes city staff are happy with initial results. Residents now know it is OK to report maintenance concerns without fear of losing their residence.

“With regards to educating and building some trust and ensuring some better communication in the five apartment complexes that we’ve been at, we’ve been very successful,” said Jason Newby, inspections and environmental health manager.

Previously there had been fear of retaliation and a simple lack of knowledge, he added. The materials distributed by city officials included detailed information in several languages on how to properly report issues or reach city officials.

“There are people who just don’t know how to report maintenance issues,” he said. “Those types of things are definitely improved now because of this program.”

City staff is now working to collect from property managers policies and procedures surrounding their communication with residents relating to emer-

“[Door knocking] really doesn’t take that long and when you do have conversations it’s so impactful. People are surprised the city is at the door and they’re like ‘Whoa, the city really cares.’ It’s worth the effort.”

JOSIE SHARDLOW
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
MANAGER
BROOKLYN PARK

gencies, power outages, towing, maintenance, and other issues. Many companies are doing fine, but visits revealed that others are using outdated communication modes, such as leaving Post-it notes on doors.

Meanwhile, Newby said, the city has also been working on updating its rental ordinances. The City Council recently passed a new rental inspection program requiring property managers to allow city staff to door knock, though these visits preceded the change. The change likely will provide better and easier enforcement of rental standards.

Moving forward

Staff has decided to continue the program with planning underway on visiting the rest of the city’s apartments. Then they’ll start over and do it again.

“I think, big picture, it’s showing a level of commitment to our apartment residents,” Newby said. “It helps identify problems, it helps identify potential solutions, and just makes the properties better places to live.”

It can be time consuming with limited staff resources to find time to make the visits, but thus far the benefits have outweighed the challenges.

“It really doesn’t take that long and when you do have conversations it’s so impactful,” Shardlow said. “People are surprised the city is at the door and they’re like ‘Whoa, the city really cares.’ It’s worth the effort.”

Andrew Tellijohn is a freelance writer.



LMC's Grant Navigator provides up to **\$5,000 for member cities** to assess grant opportunities and local needs for city projects.

Cities that are awarded Grant Navigator funding are encouraged to work with industry partners to identify grant opportunities, and for support throughout the application process.



LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA CITIES

GRANT NAVIGATOR

For more information and to apply, visit lmc.org/grant-navigator

BY THE NUMBERS - THE FIRST YEAR OF GRANT NAVIGATOR

LMC has provided more than **\$200,000** in grants for >>

49 Minnesota cities
48 out of 49 in Greater Minnesota

City populations **67 to 27,974**

34 Infrastructure projects
69% of total projects

THANK YOU!



Business Alliance Program Members

2024

Building Relationships, Creating Partnerships That Last

Members of the League of Minnesota Cities Business Alliance help provide valuable financial support to the League, ensuring our ability to provide important research and information services and educational and training opportunities.

Find out how to join this group and reach city decision makers-

VISIT [LMC.ORG/REACHCITIES](https://www.lmc.org/reachcities)



Members of the Business Leadership Council are the League's premier partners, providing the highest level of financial and expert resources to support the organization's mission.



BUSINESS PARTNERS

Abdo
Eckberg Lammers
Gallagher
LeVander, Gillen & Miller, P.A.
Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP

BUSINESS ASSOCIATES

AE2S
(Advanced Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc.)
Barna, Guzy & Steffen, Ltd.
CenterPoint Energy
David Drown Associates, Inc.
Flaherty & Hood P.A.
Hakanson Anderson
Hamline University
School of Business
ICS
Kraus-Anderson

Lockridge Grindal Nauen P.L.L.P.
LOGIS
McKinstry
Moore Engineering
National Insurance Services
RBC Capital Markets
Stantec
Stonebrooke Engineering
Ulteig
Widseth

2024

**NEW THIS YEAR: FOCUS ON ADA
(Americans with Disabilities Act)**

This track is open to anyone who wants to gain valuable insights into modern accessibility and disability inclusion.

**SAFETY AND
LOSS CONTROL
WORKSHOPS**



FIND OUT MORE: [LMC.ORG/LCW2024](https://lmc.org/lcw2024)



DATES & LOCATIONS:

**MARCH 26
MAHNOMEN**

**MARCH 27
ALEXANDRIA**

**APRIL 3
SLEEPY EYE**

**APRIL 4
WILLMAR**

**APRIL 10
VIRGINIA**

**APRIL 16
ROCHESTER**

**APRIL 18
ST. PAUL**

**APRIL 23
ST. CLOUD**

**APRIL 25
BROOKLYN
PARK**

Spring Safety And Loss Control Workshops Are Back!

Brought to you by the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust, these workshops focus on providing practical information to help cities reduce costs and avoid losses.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

We all play a role in loss control! All city employees are invited to attend and find new ways to keep their cities safe and protected.

- City Administrators/Managers
- Clerks
- First Responders
- Firefighters
- Police
- Human Resources
- Parks & Rec
- Public Works
- Engineers
- Risk Managers
- DEI Specialists
- Elected Officials
- City Insurance Agents

**WORKSHOP
FEE:**

**ONLY
\$20**

LUNCH INCLUDED!

Continuing education credits/contact hours sought for: Claims Adjusters, Insurance Agents, Police and Public Safety Personnel, Water and Wastewater Operators

Questions? Call (651) 281-1249 or (800) 925-1122 or email registration@lmc.org.