



Board Members and Officers Elected at Metro Cities Annual Meeting

Special thanks to those who attended Metro Cities' Annual Meeting on Thursday evening! We were pleased to see 100+ city, regional and state officials from throughout the metro area.

Guest speakers Briana Bierschbach from *MinnPost* and Patrick Condon from the *Star Tribune* provided their insights on the legislative session, noting Minnesota appears to be aligning with federal trends more than in the past, the strong possibility and more frequent occurrences of special sessions, changing dynamics for transportation bill compromises, and their take on the 'why' behind the many bills this year seeking to restrict local control.

Member city officials elected Gary Hansen, Councilmember-Eagan, as Metro Cities President, and Mary Gaasch, Mayor-Lauderdale as Vice President. Members also elected Judy Johnson, Councilmember-Plymouth, Robert Stewart, Councilmember-Edina, and Bill Reynolds, City Administrator-Shakopee, as new Board members. Officer and new member terms begin July 1. Metro Cities would also like to thank outgoing board members Mark Casey, City Administrator-St Anthony as Metro Cities Past President, Mike Knight, Councilmember-Andover, and Frank Boyles, City Manager-Prior Lake for their service on the Board.

Metro Cities President Anne Mavity stressed the importance of city engagement with Metro Cities and state policymakers and thanked city officials who participate in the policy work of Metro Cities, noting the fundamental importance of that work to the organization.

Congratulations to new board members and officers, and thanks to all Metro Cities' Board members for your commitment to the work of Metro Cities on behalf of its members.

Legislative Conference Committees Begin Work

Several conference committees, which are formed to work out differences between Senate and House omnibus bills, began work this week. Conference committees usually have five House and five Senate members, and include one minority member from the House and one from the Senate.

This week Transportation, Environment, Taxes, State Government, and Public Safety conference committees held first meetings. Most committees did "walk throughs" of the bills by non-partisan staff, and some committees took public testimony. Public testimony is not a given in conference committees. The Jobs conference committee is expected to begin work on Monday. Links to "side by side" comparisons that delineate House and Senate positions in the bills are [posted online](#). Metro Cities will provide updates on conference committee actions in future newsletters.

Wage/Paid Time Preemption Bill Passes Senate

On Thursday, the Senate voted 35-31 to pass HF 600-Miller, that prohibits local units of government from raising the minimum wage and setting local paid sick time policies. The bill is retroactive to January 2016, and thus would nullify sick and safe time ordinances passed by Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

Sen. Jeremy Miller, the bill's author had authored an amendment to the bill while it was in committee that removes the term 'working conditions', which was viewed as overly broad. There were no amendments to the bill as it was debated on the floor. Proponents argued that wage and paid time mandates must be decided at the state level to avoid patchwork laws and confusion for businesses, while opponents argued for the need to preserve local authority and decision making. While Metro Cities does not have specific policies on employment mandates, the organization opposes the bill because it restricts local decision making authority.

Governor Dayton, in a press conference Thursday, did not indicate whether he would veto or sign the bill. He said he has concerns with the bill and its preemption of local authority, but stated he had heard compelling arguments from both sides, and that he may be open to considering the bill within the context of negotiations on other bills.

Met Council Wastewater Reuse Task Force Holds First Meeting

A newly formed Metropolitan Council Wastewater Reuse Policy Task Force held its first meeting on Wednesday. City officials from the metro area and Metro Cities staff, as well as Met Council member and Task Force Chair Sandy Rummel, make up the task force.

Members were provided an overview of the regional wastewater system and possibilities for reuse and examples of uses being implemented in the state. The group is tasked with reviewing the Metropolitan Council's wastewater reuse policies and making recommendations on how the Council should respond to future wastewater reuse requests. These requests could come from private partners or other water users seeking to use treated wastewater for industrial, commercial or other uses. Questions? Please contact Steve Huser at steven@metrocitiesmn.org or 651-215-4003.

Metro HRA Funding Facing Shortfall, Housing Choice Voucher Losses

Metro HRA staff presented a federal HUD funding [shortfall scenario](#) to members of the Met Council Community Development Committee this week. Congress is operating on a continuing resolution that expires April 28 and public housing agencies are awaiting an official 2017 federal budget. HRA staff explained the current budget and possible funding options.

One option, a full year continuing resolution, would mean a six percent cut, leading to 325 families losing housing vouchers. An alternate option being considered by Congress would represent a 2.5 percent cut and loss of vouchers for 160 families. The President's proposed budget calls for a 10% percent cut and a loss of 620 vouchers administered by Metro HRA.

Staff shared three proposals to deal with the funding scenarios. One would spend \$3 million in Council reserves to maintain the existing level of vouchers. The second would reduce the program size through attrition and not allow any new vouchers for families on the waiting list. It would also spend \$1.3 million in reserves. This would lead to permanently reduced funding for future vouchers because current year spending informs future year funding. A third proposal would schedule the 65 voucher per month attrition while also terminating vouchers for 350 families.

The Metro HRA serves 7,200 households across 96 communities in the metro region. It distributes \$57 million in rent subsidies annually for low-income Minnesotans. Contact Charlie Vander Aarde at 651-215-4001 or charlie@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

Community Development Committee Reviews Updated MUSA Guidelines

The Community Development Committee reviewed proposed updates to its Metropolitan Urban Service Area Implementation guidelines this week. The guidelines are used when the Council reviews decennial comprehensive plan updates and comprehensive plan amendments. The Met Council is updating the guidelines to be consistent with the current regional framework and 2040 Water Resources Policy Plan, thus the new guidelines do not represent new policy changes, but are intended to be largely clarifying changes.

There are several changes to the guidelines for reviewing comp plan amendments. These include: density determination will be based on approved preliminary plats as reported in the Plat Monitoring Program and communities may receive credit for the installation of storm water BMP facilities provided facilities are located on separate lots or out lots, are publicly-owned, maintained, and do not encroach upon an existing natural resource.

The following will not be counted in a city's density determination: re-platted areas previously platted and reported in the Plat Monitoring Program, existing developments that are part of townships or areas being annexed from townships, and areas that have failing sub-surface sewage treatment systems (SSTS) and no onsite alternative SSTS locations. There are also updated guidelines on density determination for each city's comp plan update based on plat development history.

More details on the [updated MUSA guidelines](#) can be found on the [Council's website](#). Contact Patricia Nauman at 651-215-4002 or patricia@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

TAB Approves Regional Solicitation “Over-Programming”

The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) approved five projects for potential funding through the regional solicitation should additional funding become available. The amount approved is eight percent above the 2016 Solicitation approved in January. Over-programming has been used by the TAB in the past as a means of lining up additional projects should additional federal funds become available due to increases in federal funds, project withdrawals, or scope changes that occur with programmed projects. Approved projects include a Brooklyn Park roadway expansion project, Minnetonka roadway reconstruction project, Washington County roadway system management project, Minnesota DNR multiuse trail project, and St. Paul multi-use trail project. For more information, click [here](#) and [here](#).

Local Comprehensive Plans Seminar Addresses Ethics in Plans

Hamline Professor David Schultz gave a presentation on Ethical Decision Making for Comprehensive Plans to local planners, the Met Council, and engineering firms, this week.

Schultz addressed ethics involved with planning and outlined a few best practices that local governments could consider when updating their comprehensive plans: solicit input and solutions from the public through non-traditional ways (Facebook, Twitter, websites) in order to reach consensus, share ideas and create a vision; follow hard data but ‘dream big’ to formulate new ideas for the community; be wary of biases and avoid politicizing the process. Professor Schultz also discussed the importance of the term *customer*, and political connotations in using the word *citizen* when addressing community members. Instead he offered the words *stakeholder* and *resident* as more appropriate terms to use.

Metro Cities is planning a forum for later this spring on comp plan requirements and local approaches to comprehensive planning. Stay tuned for further information.

Introduced Bills of Note to Metro Cities

[H. F. 2602/S.F. 2330](#) establishes new requirements for the Metropolitan Council's transportation policy plan and prioritizes bus system improvements

[H. F. 2605/S.F. 2316](#) requires Metropolitan Council and greater Minnesota transit systems to reduce transit fares to 25 cents and appropriates funding to offset lost funds from reduced fares.

[S.F. 2317](#) prohibits a local governmental unit from dissolving a law enforcement agency without a referendum.

[S.F. 2328](#) requires notice of certain ordinances and resolutions that are related to marketing of products. Also requires an economic analysis on the impact of licensed businesses and local or state tax revenue.

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