

City Council and Bemidji Chamber

Special Meeting – April 22, 2014

A special meeting/work session of the Bemidji City Council and the Bemidji Chamber was held on Tuesday, April 22, 2014, at 5:30 p.m. at the Northwest Minnesota Foundation meeting room.

Councilmembers Present: Mayor Rita Albrecht, Michael Meehlhause, Ron Johnson, Roger Hellquist, Nancy Erickson, Jim Thompson. Absent: Reed Olson
Bemidji Chamber Present: Warren Larson, Bryce Oakes, Scott Turn, Kayla Walters, Matt Sconce, Kirk Malkowski, Chris Vacek, Chuck Hildebrand, Betsy Curb, Ashley Johnson, Ryan Welle, Steve Palmer, Lori Paris, Denise Anderson
Staff Present: City Manager John Chattin, City Clerk Kay Murphy

Chamber President Warren Larson acted as facilitator and discussed the purpose of the special meeting with the City Council and Chamber members. He suggested that the group use this time so Chamber and City can work together and focus on mutual goals. Each table discussed the following:

Question 1: What do we need to focus on for the future of Bemidji?

Question 2: How will Bemidji look five years from now and what steps do we need to take to accomplish that vision?

Comments and Items Noted Include:

- Continue to grow the Sanford Center – provide better education to the public regarding the event center.
- Make Bemidji a destination – True North. Suggestion that we re-market ourselves and tell “our” story.
- Clean-up of Bemidji south shore beach/lakeshore.
- Continue to market the railroad corridor and south shore property.
- Provide affordable, safe and diverse housing.
- Open better lines of communication between groups, i.e., between City and Chamber.
- Retain existing businesses and find creative ways to bring manufacturing/jobs to community.
- Old high school development which will create new jobs.
- Continue to provide city services and maintain city streets as the population grows.
- Transportation – expand to four lanes Hwy 71 south and Hwy 2 west
- Important to keep the momentum going.
- There are many great entrepreneurs in the City. How do we keep them here?
- Development – some people are afraid of change others embrace it.
- Help Bemidji Downtown Alliance increase their membership and work together with them.

It was suggested that the City, Chamber and other groups should compare their “mission statements” for what is common.

Discussion continued regarding the hospitality tax. Consensus was that there was a misunderstanding or lack of understanding regarding hospitality tax and its purpose. A smaller group made up of John Chattin, Scott Turn, Warren Larson and the City’ Finance Director Ron Eischens will prepare a spreadsheet outlining a hospitality tax. After prepared it will be shared with the Chamber members and then the group will meet again to discuss at a future meeting.

ADJOURN

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kay M. Murphy
City Clerk