



4646 Dakota St. SE
Prior Lake, MN 55372

A message from our Mayor:

Making a Safer Community for Our Kids

I am proud of the Prior Lake City Council. They have chosen to do what virtually no other city council in the metropolitan area has done: establish a Community Safety Task Force.

In February 2007, the 130-member Long Range Planning Committee recognized that to become the kind of community we want to be in 2030, the City would have to be considered safe by its residents. And so they added a new Vision Element called "Safe and Healthy Community" to our Strategic Plan.

As it turns out, they were visionaries since we have now had two Level III Sex Offenders begin the process of moving into or back to Prior Lake. Accordingly, the Prior Lake Police Department, with the help of the Minnesota Department of Corrections, has conducted community safety meetings to help residents understand facts about sexual offenders and what they can do to protect themselves and their families.

But the community meetings are not enough. Those meetings are reactive. We must be proactive as our Safe and Healthy Community vision element proclaims.

So the Prior Lake City Council asked the staff to prepare a report regarding what is being done and what should be done in the short and long term to improve safety to our community. I was pleasantly surprised to see the large number of activities our community is already engaged in to improve safety. As an example, the schools conduct a community Halloween party to assure a fun and safe holiday for our youth. But what we are doing today can be improved upon.

Consequently, with assistance from Jacob Wetterling Foundation Executive Director Nancy Sabin, the City Council has asked for volunteers to create a "Prior Lake Area Community Safety Task Force." With 40 volunteers, the Task Force will have representation from parents and grandparents, caregivers, ECFE, schools, faith-based organizations, daycare, athletic organizations, law enforcement, legal, public policymakers at various levels, corporations and the SMSC. Councilors Ken Hedberg and Chad LeMair will serve from the City Council.

On Monday, Nov. 5, 2007, the City Council will officially appoint the task force. By mid-November, I expect they will have their first meeting.

How will the task force make Prior Lake safer? In some very basic ways. First, I expect the task force to inventory what is being done in Prior Lake to address drugs, alcohol, gangs and the like. I am confident we will find many efforts underway we do not know about. The task force will assemble these efforts and resources into an organized and comprehensive list and share it with the public in electronic (Internet) format and in hard copy at the local Library. As a result, all of us will be able to take advantage of the resources already available should we need them.

This inventory process will have a second important benefit. We will ask the question: What else can we do? The task force will be able to work with the appropriate groups to improve safety by adding policies or procedures or providing educational materials.

According to Jacob Wetterling Foundation Executive Director Nancy Sabin, this is the first community effort of this nature. As usual, Prior Lake makes a path to improve youth safety for other cities to follow.

I encourage you to participate either by serving on the task force or staying informed on the topic of safety for our youth. To help you become more familiar with this topic, there are two programs that run daily on Prior Lake Cable Channel 15. Nancy Sabin is the guest in one program, and William Donnay, the Director of the Risk Assessment/Community Notification Unit is the other. Both programs offer important information to help you keep your family safe.

Mayor Jack Haugen