



4646 Dakota St. SE  
Prior Lake, MN 55372

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## A message from our Mayor:

Our 2030 Vision and Strategic Plan mission statement says we should enhance the quality of life for current and future citizens by providing quality services which result in a safe, secure community; recreation and leisure opportunities; preservation and effective use of lakes, parks and other natural resources; economic vitality; and the promotion of partnerships, volunteerism and civic pride for the community's diverse population.

Five years ago, there was a lot of criticism regarding the city's lack of progress in bringing business and economic vitality to the community.

In the last five years, we have explored many opportunities that did not have unanimity in the city or the council, but were considered as they presented themselves: downtown redevelopment, development of the orderly annexation agreement and South Lake Village area improvements.

When these opportunities presented themselves, we didn't just look at how these projects would impact the neighborhood; we also looked at the broader community. We knew there were things we needed to do for the long-term benefit of Prior Lake. The challenge of the council is not to make the convenient decision for today, but to weigh all the benefits and liabilities and make the best decision for the present and future.

In early July, we were faced with a similar situation with the Northwoods League. Team owner Joel Kramer came to us with his proposal to bring a Northwoods League collegiate wood bat team to Prior Lake and Veteran's Field in Memorial Park.

I initially met with a group of community leaders and there was unanimous support, but we recognized, early on, there were issues to overcome. Soon thereafter, we went to the council and got a 5-0 vote to proceed.

From that point forward, we moved to get significant public input through a series of neighborhood meetings, two public town hall meetings, along with a lot of informal dialog. It was clear the council had a difficult balancing act between the rights of those immediately impacted and the entire community, now and in the future.

My brother once said there's a fine line between being a visionary and a fool. With each issue we needed to ask ourselves, "does the proposal truly meet the long-term vision of our community, or is it foolish?" I don't think it was foolish and I don't think the process was foolish, but it became clear that parking was an issue: that we were creating a dependency on the school district's parking lots.

We were going forward until we hit a stop sign, and I think the stop sign for Mr. Kramer was looking at the parking environment. In using the school lots, we needed to be respectful of the school district's philosophy and not put them in a compromising position. That could not be guaranteed. The plan to include no parking in front of residents' homes and issue parking permits was a solution, but I don't think it's the American Way.

So what is the lesson? Some believe government should not consider such opportunities at all. I disagree. If an opportunity fits, we ought to proceed; if it doesn't, we ought to have the courage to say it just doesn't fit. This was a great opportunity, but it just didn't fit Prior Lake right now. So at the Monday, Sept. 18 council meeting, Mr. Kramer sent a letter withdrawing his proposal because of his concern about the continued availability of parking.

Prior Lake will not be getting a new baseball team, but we learned some things: The system worked. People, especially those opposing, had great access to express their views. And true to our 2030 vision, the city council encouraged interactive communication and sought to enhance economic vitality.

That is the job of government: to examine and even seek out opportunities, especially unique economic opportunities which can distinguish our community. And rest assured, I and members of the Prior Lake City Council will continue to do so.

Mayor Jack Haugen