



ACCOUNTABILITY

A Report to Lake Elmo Taxpayer-Investors on 2013 Tax Dollar Use

Maintaining Accountability in a Year of Transition

Dean Zuleger, City Administrator

2013 was a year of transition and increased involvement, as we welcomed Mike Pearson as our new mayor and three new Council Members; Mssrs. Bloyer (elected), Nelson (appointed) and Reeves (appointed). In addition, the City Council appointed five new Planning Commissioners, three new Park Commissioners, created an Economic Development Authority made up of community business leaders, and shored up the infrastructure of government with the creation of a Public Safety Committee, Human Resources Committee and Finance Committee. Couple this with the Speak Your Peace Committee and the Next Generation Group the City of Lake Elmo has more taxpayers involved in our government than ever before – we are indebted to all for their service. More voices, more ideas – and no blind spots.

Three Governing Principles: How the City Council Thinks

With all of the changes and additions, the City Council saw fit to adopt a set of governing principles that serve to guide each of our Commissions, Committees and Ad Hoc groups in an effort to keep everyone on the same page. These principles are:

1. Efficient, low cost, taxpayer-serviced based government;
2. Disciplined and balanced, market-driven growth;
3. Well-ordered, low regulatory burdened quality of life.

These three principles serve as the backbone of all that we do for our taxpayer-investors and set a standard of consistency for all involved parties.

Collaborative Relationships

In an effort to control our own destiny, the City Council worked hard to establish / re-establish better relationships in a collaborative manner with our external partner the Metropolitan Council, MN Department of Transportation (our key partner in the remodeling of a safer Highway 5), our business community, and last but not least Wash-

ington County. In each case, staff has reached out to find the best ways to partner with these groups to create more efficient government, spur commerce for our small business community and leverage each other strengths. Key in this effort was the commitment of Mayor Mike Pearson to make most if not all of these bridge-building meetings.

One relationship that we are in the early moments of rekindling is with 3M. In the fall of 2013, the City decided to put its lawsuit on hold with arguably the most important business in Minnesota (and a large part of our community's history) and seek to find if we could sit down and discuss the challenges of our groundwater resources. I am happy to say that our initial talks have gone well.

Infancy of Balanced Growth

The City Council also began its work on creating a community based on balance, sustained growth. In the spring of 2013 we welcomed Valley Cartage to the community and their 50 new jobs at an annual salary of \$52,000. Staff is currently working with eight new developments in both the Old Village and I-94 corridor. And we have constructed three sewer lines. Policies have been in place that put the onus of the cost of growth on the developer. Alternative funding sources have been sought. We were able to do all of this without raising the tax rate, maintaining our Aa2 bond rating, and keeping Lake Elmo number 1 in the category of holding your home's value in Washington County.

Appreciation

A year of transition has its share of speed bumps, missteps, and delays. As you know, much of this is new to Lake Elmo so we appreciate the patience of our taxpayers who had to endure road projects, sewer construction and traffic delays. I can tell you that in all of my years of government, I have not worked with a finer staff that is committed to making Lake Elmo a better place. You and I are lucky to have them.