



DEDICATED TO A STRONG GREATER MINNESOTA

August 19, 2020

Mayor Mark Utecht
City of Stacy
30955 Forest Boulevard
Stacy, MN 55079

Dear Mayor Utecht,

As President of the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC), I am writing to urge your city to join our organization for the upcoming year. It is no secret that 2020 has been challenging. I am writing to you at a time when you are making difficult decisions about how to allocate your city's resources amid extreme uncertainty. A global pandemic, economic downturn, civil unrest, and continued partisan political bickering have combined to make this one of the most trying times in our state's history. As we prepare to take on these difficult challenges, I believe that Stacy would benefit significantly from membership in the CGMC, and the CGMC would be stronger with your city's voice.

2021 will bring a difficult legislative session, during which state policy makers will grapple with how to deal with a state budget deficit. As this takes place, CGMC will be right where we always have been—on the front lines fighting to defend Local Government Aid (LGA) and fighting for policies that will help Greater Minnesota emerge from this crisis stronger.

Before we look ahead any further, I would like to share with you some of the CGMC's recent accomplishments in the first five months of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Fought for and secured \$841 million in federal CARES Act funding for local governments and a fair and equitable distribution formula that addresses needs in all corners of the state.
- Helped cities navigate the pandemic through a new COVID-19 resources page on its website (greatermncities.org/resources/covid-19/), webinars on labor and employment concerns and the state budget, increased member communications, and ensured that the needs of Greater Minnesota cities are communicated to the Governor's office and in the media.
- Secured millions of dollars in emergency grant and loan funding for small businesses and child care providers.
- Advocated for a large bonding bill that includes significant funding for priorities such as water infrastructure, roads and bridges, child care facilities, housing, and economic development programs.
- Advocated for and defended Local Government Aid amid the state's emerging budget woes.
- Defended cities from harmful legislation that could have placed unfair and unwarranted liability on municipalities for the presence of PFAS chemicals in wastewater.

I am proud of these accomplishments and the work of the CGMC, but there is still so much more work to do. CGMC will be more important than ever in fighting for the needs of our cities.

LGA remains CGMC's highest priority. CGMC continues to vigorously defend LGA and has already initiated efforts to urge the state to ensure that the remaining 2020 LGA payments are issued on time and in full. Our collective efforts to defend and advocate for LGA will be especially important in the months ahead and into the 2021 legislative session.

As the COVID-19 pandemic lingers on, CGMC is also working hard to ensure our cities have the necessary tools to persevere through this challenging time. If there is another round of federal relief, CGMC will be leading the fight for Greater Minnesota to receive its fair share of funding. In addition, CGMC advocates for state funding to ease the burden on small businesses and child care providers and to increase housing options.

As we look toward the November election, CGMC will be instrumental in educating candidates on our issues and tracking what they say about topics such as LGA, infrastructure funding, and environmental regulation. We will also make sure our issues are top of mind as new and returning legislators take office in January.

Working together for the future of Greater Minnesota

The upcoming year will be busy for the CGMC. This is the longer, budget-focused session where state spending priorities are set for the next two years. Working together as a coalition, we can ensure that Greater Minnesota issues remain a central part of the conversation.

Enclosed with this letter are handouts with additional information on the CGMC, the issues we work on at the Capitol, and information about the benefits of membership.

For your consideration, we have also included a sample invoice and resolution that reflect what your city's general dues would be for 2020–21 membership. For new CGMC members or returning members that have not been members of the organization for more than five years, the CGMC offers a four-year dues phase-in period, during the first year of which your city will pay 25% of its full dues amount, scaling up 25% in each of the following years.

To learn more about membership, CGMC issues, or to schedule a meeting with CGMC staff, please contact Shane Zahrt at SAZahrt@flaherty-hood.com or (651) 295-1123. You can also find more information on the CGMC's website at greatermncities.org.

Join the CGMC today!

This is a pivotal time for Greater Minnesota. Join the CGMC to help us continue to strengthen Greater Minnesota communities. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Greg Zylka, Mayor, Little Falls
President, Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities

SAMPLE **CITY** RESOLUTION TO JOIN THE
COALITION OF GREATER MINNESOTA CITIES

WHEREAS, the interests of **CITY** and its residents are deeply impacted by the actions of the Minnesota State Legislature and Minnesota state government; and

WHEREAS, the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC) is a nonprofit advocacy organization whose mission is to pursue policies at the state legislature that benefit Cities located outside of the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan area; and

WHEREAS, the CGMC works to protect LGA funding and works on economic development, environment, transportation, and annexation issues which benefit **CITY** and other Greater Minnesota communities; and

WHEREAS, this is a pivotal time in Minnesota's history, and it is important for Greater Minnesota communities to speak with a collective voice on issues at the State Capitol;

WHEREAS the CGMC offers a phased-in dues structure for new or returning member cities, under which, **CITY** will pay 25% of our full dues amount during our first year of membership, 50% of dues in the second year, 75% in the third year, and 100% of our dues during the third year.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF **CITY**:

1. That the City of **CITY** hereby agrees to join the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities.

Adopted this the ___ day of _____, 2020



SAMPLE – 2021 CGMC Dues Invoice

To: Mayor Mark Utecht, City of Stacy
From: Lisa Bode, CGMC Treasurer
Date: August 19, 2020
Re: SAMPLE – 2021 CGMC General Dues Assessment

This **sample** invoice reflects the general dues assessment for your city should you elect to join the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (“CGMC”) for 2021. This dues assessment is based on the assessment policy approved by the CGMC membership at its annual meeting in July 2020.

2021 general assessment for Stacy \$897

For research, advocacy, and general services related to property taxes, LGA, annexation, environmental regulation and funding, economic development, and transportation. This also includes services for labor and employee relations that will be provided to all CGMC cities.

For new member cities or returning member cities that have not been CGMC members for more than five years, this assessment is based on a policy of phasing in. For the first year, new cities are assessed 25% of their total dues. In the second year, 50% of their total. For the third year, 75% of their total. In the fourth year of membership and thereafter, cities pay their full dues.

Payment may be made out of your 2020 or 2021 budgets, but payment should be made by February 1, 2021. About 11% of your general assessment is used for annexation and environment programs, which some cities pay out of their utility funds because of the direct impact of these issues on their sewer and water service.

For additional information about joining the CGMC or to request an official invoice for 2021 dues assessment, please contact CGMC staff member Shane Zahrt at (651) 225-8840 or SAZahrt@flaherty-hood.com.



Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities 40 Years of Legislative Advocacy

*The CGMC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization that represents cities outside of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Its five core advocacy issues are **Local Government Aid/property tax relief, economic development, transportation, environment & energy and annexation.***

Local Government Aid (LGA)/Property Tax Relief

- Fight for a fair, rational and sustainable LGA formula
- Advocate for annual LGA increases
- Inform legislators and the public about the importance of the LGA program and its impact on Greater Minnesota communities
- Vigorously defend the LGA program and oppose any cuts

Economic Development

- Support the creation, enhancement and expansion of economic development tools for Greater Minnesota communities and businesses in areas such as child care, job training, housing and broadband expansion

Environment & Energy

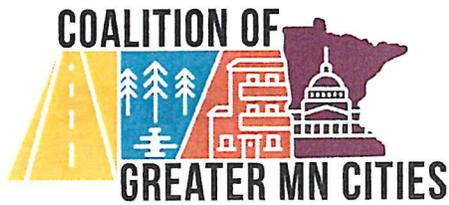
- Advocate for funding for state grant and loan programs that help cities cover the costs of necessary facility upgrades and repairs
- Educate legislators and the public on environmental issues facing Greater Minnesota cities
- Support regulations that provide effective and measurable benefits to the environment

Transportation

- Develop comprehensive plans to fund highways and transit
- Fight for a fair distribution of transportation dollars between the metro area and Greater Minnesota
- Support funding for city streets in cities of all sizes

Annexation

- Promote orderly municipal growth and land use policies that support the efficient provision of government services and infrastructure
- Promote better land use and zoning controls in areas surrounding cities



Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities

40 Years of Legislative Advocacy



Lobbying: Fending Off the Sharks

No one else stands up for Greater Minnesota cities. Minneapolis, St. Paul, the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities and many suburbs all had paid lobbyists before the CGMC came into existence. The professional lobbying presence of the metro-area local governments at the Capitol far outweighs the lobbying of Greater Minnesota—both in terms of the number of lobbyists and the amount of money spent on lobbying. Before the CGMC there was no unified voice for Greater Minnesota at the Capitol.



Members: The Keys to Success

The CGMC is successful because of its members. Mayors, council members, city administrators and city staff members are involved in every aspect of the CGMC's advocacy work, from policy formation to lobbying at the Capitol. City officials have an immeasurable impact on shaping public policy by attending lobby days at the Capitol, responding to "action alerts" from CGMC staff, testifying in front of committees, engaging in social media and keeping in close contact with legislators.



Policy Analysis: Knowing the Numbers

The CGMC's advocacy is effective because it is based on policy, facts and analysis. The CGMC philosophy is that city officials, legislators and the public should know and understand legislation that is being considered and the impact of the legislation once it is passed. Because of this philosophy, the CGMC has a policy analyst on staff who can run the numbers and analyze the impact of legislative proposals in real time.



Staff: Close When You Can't Be

It is extremely difficult for city officials from Greater Minnesota, on their own, to have a constant presence at the Capitol simply because of the distance from St. Paul. It is far easier for a mayor from Edina or Minneapolis to visit the Capitol than a mayor from Worthington or Warroad. CGMC offices are located one block from the Capitol, and staff are there on a daily basis during the legislative session. This proximity has allowed CGMC staff to strengthen relationships with key lawmakers.



Media: More Than Just a Press Release

The CGMC understands that a crucial component of good lobbying strategy is a strong media presence that helps build public support and keeps members informed. The CGMC is in regular contact with editors and journalists throughout the state. The CGMC is very successful at getting our message out through guest columns, letters to the editor, radio and TV interviews, and on social media. Legislators pay attention to the news from back home and we make sure they hear our message loud and clear.



DEDICATED TO
A STRONGER
GREATER
MINNESOTA

The CGMC is fighting for Greater Minnesota cities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Looking Out for Your Bottom Line

- Leading efforts to demand this year's LGA be paid on time and in full
- Fought for Greater MN cities' fair share of federal CARES Act dollars
- Successfully fought against a prohibition on new local sales taxes
- Pushing for more budgetary tools and increased flexibility for cities

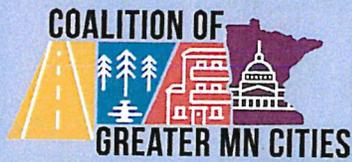
Labor & Employment Support

- Hosts webinars to help cities navigate public employment concerns
- Consistently communicate up-to-date legal guidance and resources
- Publish in-depth reports on how COVID-19 directly impacts public employment

Investing in Your Recovery

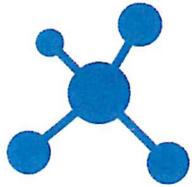
- Pushing for a bonding bill to support Minnesota's economy
- Helped craft COVID-19 small business loan legislation
- Fought for new investment and reforms to solve the child care shortfall
- Examined a regional approach to re-opening businesses with Gov. Walz

For more COVID-19 resources and tools for cities, visit the CGMC website at greatermncities.org/resources/covid-19/.



CGMC Environmental Program Emerging Issues & Continued Advocacy

Legislative Issues



Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

PFAS are a class of pervasive chemicals that have been linked to various health concerns and have been found in a variety of waterbodies across the state. PFAS can be removed from drinking water through expensive treatment, but there is no technologically feasible method for removing them from wastewater.

CGMC's Role: We plan to focus on source reduction strategies at the Legislature and with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), as well as defend against any proposals that seek to place liability on cities for the presence of PFAS in wastewater or drinking water.

Chloride

More than 100 cities may be facing chloride limits in their wastewater permits, but there is no feasible method to remove chloride at a wastewater facility. Most cities will need a variance from these permit requirements, and a variance will still require efforts by the city to reduce chloride. Some cities may be required to install central water softening, but others may be able to address the issue by working with citizens to remove and/or upgrade home water softening equipment.

CGMC's Role: We are pushing for legislative funding for grants to assist cities with the removal or upgrade of home water softeners. We will also continue to monitor this issue, submit comments, and take other steps to support chloride variances.



Reestablishment of Wastewater and Water Operator Advisory Council

The Wastewater and Water Operator Advisory Council provided operators from our cities an opportunity to help shape the requirements and regulations governing their operations, but the statutory authority for this council lapsed. MPCA sought to reestablish this council during the 2020 legislative session, but the legislation stalled.

CGMC's Role: We supported this legislation and will continue to do so.

Microplastics

Tiny bits of plastic, known as microplastic, are appearing in waters across the globe. By themselves, plastics may cause harm to humans and animals, but this concern is compounded because PFAS and other contaminants may accumulate on microplastics. Federal regulators and state legislators are looking at ways to mitigate this risk.

CGMC's Role: We are monitoring this issue to ensure that sole responsibility for addressing microplastics is not placed on municipal wastewater facilities



Funding for Innovative Approaches and Climate Impact

As the cost of wastewater treatment increases, cities are looking to alternative approaches to address water quality issues and the impacts of the changing climate. Current state funding may not always support innovative projects because they do not fit into traditional program definitions.

CGMC's Role: CGMC is exploring how current funding programs can be improved and/or how new programs might be created to support innovative water quality approaches.



CGMC Environmental Program Emerging Issues & Continued Advocacy

Legal & Regulatory Issues

Integrating Wastewater Permitting in Watershed Framework

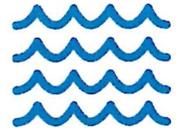


At the directive of the Legislature, state and local agencies have been moving toward a water quality framework based on watersheds, but to date permitting for wastewater facilities had not been well integrated into that approach.

CGMC's Role: We are working with MPCA to explore better and more cost-effective ways to integrate wastewater permitting into the watershed framework. This work will include an informational webinar for municipal wastewater operators and examining whether further legislation is needed to assist in this integration.

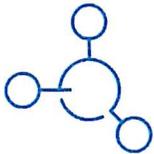
Lake Pepin TMDL

Nearly two-thirds of Minnesota's watersheds drain into Lake Pepin and are therefore subject to the Lake Pepin Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan. This plan seeks to impose phosphorus limits on cities' wastewater and stormwater even though data shows the lake is no longer impaired.



CGMC's Role: We joined with other local government advocacy organizations to bring a contested case action on the TMDL. We hope to negotiate a solution with the MPCA on this issue.

Nitrogen and Nitrate Standards (EPA Nutrient Criteria)

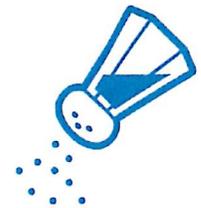


The federal Environmental Protection Agency is developing nutrient criteria for lakes that will regulate nitrogen and nitrate. These standards could have major negative economic impacts for municipal wastewater facilities.

CGMC's Role: CGMC is participating in the federal rulemaking process and will monitor state developments.

Class 3 & 4 Waters/Salty Parameters

Multiple CGMC members have unnecessary permit limits based on MPCA's outdated Class 3 and 4 water quality standards, which have caused major impediments to economic development (i.e. Luverne and TruShrimp). In addition to the cities that currently have problematic permit limits, more than 20 CGMC members are slated to receive outdated permit limits unless MPCA updates the underlying water quality standards.



CGMC's Role: We are engaging with MPCA to push for revised Class 3 and 4 water quality limits and for the revision of permits with outdated limits.

Proposed Permit Fee Increase



MPCA is seeking to impose a fee increase on water quality related permits to generate more funding for its water quality operations. A significant portion of this increase will fall on municipalities.

CGMC's Role: We continue to push for increased general fund spending for water quality operations, rather than requiring local municipalities to pay for these increases.