



A Time for Optimism

A column by Mayor Dave Bartholomay printed in the Quad Community Press Newspaper on March 6, 2012

I believe being a successful mayor is about choosing priorities and managing your time. I attend over 125 meetings and events per year (of which only about 40 are 'required') for the \$4,200 I earn as Mayor of Circle Pines. If you listen to the news or talk shows, or watch the divisive issues the State Legislature spends their time on, you may get depressed and worry about the future of our communities and our state. But the job of a small town mayor isn't about political posturing or playing to interest groups, but rather about improving the quality of life in your community. To stay optimistic and be successful, you need to carefully focus your available time on areas that can truly make a difference in people's lives. I want to tell you about some of the important projects I'm focusing on right now as mayor:

Schools: I'm helping the Centennial School District as they start a major effort to gather community input on what folks want and need from their school district. Already a high-performing district, Centennial wants to do even better and to make sure they are an attractive choice at a time when students have many options on where to attend school. Asking residents what they expect from their schools, and retooling the district to compete for students in a competitive marketplace, is a smart and innovative way to improve your educational product!

Reform: I was recently named to the Governor's Advisory Group on Tax Reform and have been personally involved in 'Government Redesign' efforts long before the latest rise in popularity. These and other efforts are allowing the City of Circle Pines and other communities to think of new ways to deliver services and to engage the community.

Collaboration: Circle Pines, Centerville, Lexington and Lino Lakes (and now also Columbus and others) have worked for the past year to identify where cities can become more efficient while still providing the level of service our residents expect. We've met many times and the city staffs have put forth innovative ideas, identified equipment to share, discovered a grant to apply for where working together improves our chance of success, and looked at the needs and strengths of each community to maximize the efficient use of your tax dollars.

Partnerships: Partnerships are a big part of why Circle Pines was named the 3rd Best Suburb in America by CNBC. The Centennial Community Network and the Centennial Ministerial Association effectively weave nonprofit and faith community involvement and resources into the picture. These groups provide important services to residents that in other places are paid for by tax dollars. By working with these wonderful people and organizations, we can help stretch public dollars and coordinate our work to help those most in need.

Diversity: Our area, and Anoka County as a whole, has experienced growing diversity since the last census and that trend will continue. Rather than deny or fear the change we see around us, we need to work together to appreciate people who may be different from us, whether it is by race, religion, ethnicity or sexual preference. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said in 1966: "Not only will we have to repent for the sins of bad people; but we also will have to repent for the appalling silence and indifference of good people." We are good people. Let's be welcoming neighbors.

In the end, my optimism comes from my faith and from seeing everyday people enrich their lives by working together to improve their community. Please support those who are making a difference, and consider volunteering!