

Mayor Sipma and Fellow Minot City Council Members;

As I begin this letter, I have to reflect on events in 2020 that have impacted our community. First and foremost, our city, county, state, country and world are feeling the effects of a global pandemic. Twelve months ago, as we met to discuss a budget, we never could have imagined how a virus would change everything. Healthcare, public safety, commerce and education have all seen dramatic changes this year. Financial outlooks have been cloudy at best, so this body, along with City staff, have made some difficult decisions, to keep expenditures at a manageable level. I believe this approach is similar to what many of our residents are practicing in their own homes and businesses. Traditional events such as the North Dakota State Fair and the Norsk Hostfest were cancelled in 2020, which caused or will cause a loss of revenue for area businesses, but the magic within our city rallied together to create smaller opportunities for people to gather and enjoy food and entertainment. Along with a pandemic, we have seen racial unrest in many parts of our country. Those situations hit close to home with many of our residents, but I am proud to say that Minot's approach has been peaceful and effective. Collaboration between the City of Minot and our community have produced open dialogue and resolution on various points. We are keenly aware that this communication must continue into 2021.

It becomes easy to focus on the negatives, but we must pivot and realize that there are many positive things occurring in Minot. A collaborative venture between Visit Minot, Minot Area Chamber of Commerce and The Minot Area Development Corporation unveiled a cohesive brand effort called "It's Magic in Minot". The colorful new logo can be seen around town. Fundraising efforts continued for projects such as The Magic City Discovery Center and the Minot State University Summer Theater, which will bring new and improved experiences for our citizens to enjoy. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the integrated support for the 2020 Census. Individuals, groups and organizations have assisted in promoting and providing Census kiosks for our community, because they all agree that "More Means More".

Earlier this year, we provided guidance to City staff to develop a proposed 2021 budget that would continue quality municipal services to our citizens, while holding the line on taxes. As stewards of our community's resources, we are tasked with the responsibility of now reviewing that budget and adopting a budget that follows our earlier guidance. As outlined in Mr. Lakefield's letter to us, the mill levy for 2021 is proposed at 121.29, which mirrors the proposed 2020 mill levy. Capital Improvement projects, include continued flood control projects, NAWS, City Hall, the Northwest Fire Station and the City Hall Retaining Wall. It is important to note that the flood control projects and City Hall both benefit from additional funding sources. Another key consideration is that this body has previously discussed and approved all of these, either in concept or reality. City staff has taken a prudent approach to funding the Northwest Fire Station and the City Hall Retaining Wall by allowing for partial funding in 2021, with the hope that one could be fully funded if revenues improve. While I support this concept, I am aware that many residents in NW Minot have been patiently waiting for a neighborhood fire station that will better serve their potential safety needs. I encourage City staff to bring updates to the City Council in 2021, which may allow for full funding of the NW Fire Station, including the costs of equipment and personnel. While making difficult choices is part of our responsibility, I would not support the reallocation of funds earmarked

for the City Hall Retaining Wall because I believe that it, too, is needed and long overdue. I have previously voiced my approval for the acquisition of a downtown property which could house a new City Hall. Combining local funds along with NDR dollars, we can accomplish the goal of providing needed space for City Hall, moving the 911 dispatch center out of flood's way and helping to revitalize our downtown. I anxiously await more details on this endeavor. The 2021 budget allows for improved street maintenance, which has been previously discussed by the City Council. I applaud City staff for finding ways to make this happen!

Our City employees provide needed municipal services that our residents expect and deserve. Although grade classifications will remain the same, due to insufficient pay classification survey data, our employees will receive their anniversary date increases, as per the current plan. I am confident in saying that we are all thankful for the work that they have done and will continue to do. It is my recommendation, that no matter the economic situation in 2021, that a pay classification survey is completed and considered for the 2022 pay plan. Historically, we have seen the negative effects of employee turnover due to a perceived insufficient pay and benefit plan. With a low, 3.57% turnover rate, we want to continue to work with our employees so that they can ultimately provide quality municipal services to our residents. Three additional staff positions have been requested by various departments. Department Directors have provided sound rationale for the requests, so I recommend that we approve the positions of:

- Police Department Intelligence Analyst
- Public Works Project Manager/Field Design
- Fire Department Fire Inspector (Part-time to Full-time)

As we move into the First and Second Reading of the proposed 2021 budget, I encourage discussion and debate among the Council and from the citizens of Minot. Great projects with great results are always obtained through intelligent and compassionate collaboration. It should be our goal to work together, with our citizens, our stakeholders, and our fellow elected officials, to provide an excellent way of life for everyone in the Magic City. Thank you for your service to the City of Minot!

Sincerely,
Lisa M. Olson
City Council President