

OPINION

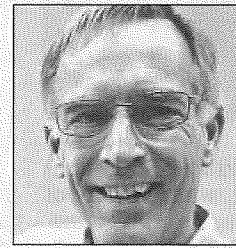
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Cultivating a passion for Prior Lake

This is a wonderful time of year in Prior Lake. We have a fabulous town supported by our businesses, employers, community organizations and volunteers.

The police department celebrated the retirement of police officer Maureen O'Hehir. Maureen is passionate about helping kids and families. She encourages everyone to embrace their individual talents, avoid drugs, pursue their ambitions and respond positively to what life presents. She is an excellent role model for all public employees. If your life has been touched by Maureen, I hope you will speak passionately to the city council in support of the eight additional police officers that Police Chief Mark Elliott needs to hire in the next five years to respond to the issues you identified in Prior Lake's residential surveys.

As you walk down Main Avenue, you will notice that storefronts are filling up. Sandi Fleck, executive director of the Prior Lake Chamber of Commerce, is another person passionate about building a more vibrant Prior Lake. Her leadership



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team members understand that they are successful if they help employers and businesses become successful. With more than 400 members, the Chamber is promoting collaboration and networking while adding jobs here in Prior Lake. Their contributions to our community are exceptional.

We are fortunate to have so many other community organizations—Lions, Rotary, Optimists—as well as faith-based organizations that respond in our community. They design and deliver programs to encourage youth and families, build

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leadership and encourage further learning. It is through their collective efforts that we receive the benefits they provide. We all become better residents and citizens when we join together for the common good.

The council will vote on the 2016 tax levy for Prior Lake on Dec. 14. For the next six weeks, we need to ask our council members how they will make the changes and improvements to create a more vibrant and productive Prior Lake. The council should explain specifically how they will meet the goals and objectives of

the 2040 Vision. We assembled in April 2014 to define how we wanted our city to develop. That session resulted in the seven strategic elements, along with short-, mid- and long-range goals. This plan was adopted in September 2014.

Each of us will have different concerns and priorities, but now is the time to ask how the council intends to deliver on those goals. Please review the plan and send to each council member the goals that are most important to you. Ask for them to respond in public to your questions. For me, there are several short-term goals — those that are to be addressed within 18 to 24 months — that have high priority:

Community assets: complete Stemmer Ridge Road and connect water and sewer.

Effective city resources: research and install car and/or officer camera systems.

Prepare and receive approval for a personnel plan that promotes recruitment and retention of highly capable, productive and customer-oriented staff.

Here in Prior Lake, we need

to add capacity for many of our systems (sewer, water, roads, trails). We also need to hire additional city employees to deliver the services outlined in the 2040 Vision. The council needs to be clear about how it will determine what new positions are needed, and how they will be funded. I also wonder how the council will address the maintenance issues that are being delayed, and what impact that will have on the service life of the equipment involved.

I worry that we are becoming a first-rate city with a second-rate infrastructure. This is a critical time for the council to tell us about the choices we need to make for the next five years. Now is the time for answers. Let's pull together for Prior Lake.

Lloyd Erbaugh lives in Prior Lake with his wife. He focuses on diversity, training, recruiting and team performance. His views here do not represent the city's Economic Development Advisory Committee, of which he is a member. (Editor's note: Erbaugh is a community columnist and not employed or paid by the newspaper.)