

LMC Annual Conference
June 26-28, 2024

The conference kicked off with key note speaker, Amanda Brinkman, creator and producer of Small Business Revolution. Summarized were 5 themes of thriving communities, which I felt to a large extent reflected Vergas. The 5 themes were:

1. They Come Together. Have invested interest, have the ability to rally, and have shared leadership.
2. Use Arts and Culture. These bring the community together
3. Understand and Market a Unique Brand. The importance of digital marketing was highlighted as social media and websites are major forms of communications and is what brings others to a community. Had city website looked at and needs improvement. VCC (Vergas Community Club) has had an active role in marketing a community brand.
4. Diversity and inclusion. Is a priority and is intentional; the community is welcoming; and focus on experience as an outsider.
5. Support and provide resources to small businesses. Shop local platform and media marketing to highlight small businesses. The VCC has done well with this on face book and with City events.

Legislative updates were provided by the Minnesota Association of Small Cities and the LMC Intergovernmental Relations Team. This was a policy legislative session versus budget. Of note for Vergas; were cities with a population less than 5,000 will receive one-time supplemental revenue. This is intended to provide short term relief from funding not received from the Transportation Assistance funding, which was not fully implemented from the 2023 legislative bill. Vergas will be receiving \$10,139 one-time additional funding in July. Refer to handout 2024 LMC Legislative Session Overview. There was considerable discussion regarding no bonding bill passed and the work to protect local zoning authority, with no bill passed. *Law Summaries available on LMC website and slides from Association of Small Cities is on their website.

Further clarity was provided regarding Cannabis regulation, with several statutory changes in the 2024 legislative session. Enacted changes allow social equity applicants to grow cannabis for the new market by end of year. This will ensure cannabis supply once retail sales start in 2025. Pre-approval of licenses opens July 24, 2024. Additionally, can apply for cannabis license without having secured a physical location to reduce financial burden with application process. Local governments are permitted to apply to establish and operate a municipal cannabis store, which will not be included in the total count of retail licenses issues. Local governments cannot prohibit cannabis possession, transportation, use, or establishment of business. Can adopt reasonable restrictions on hours of operation, place and manner of cannabis business operations. There were numerous questions at this session. OCM has developed an excellent guide for local government; available on their website mn.gov/ocm.

There were a number of leadership type sessions focused on communication, conflict resolution, change & adaptability, building relationships and trust, momentum and greater goals. A couple quotes I especially liked;
It's not my job to be right, it's my job to find the best answer for my community.
Volunteers don't necessarily have the time- but have the heart.

There was a session regarding City Clerk-Treasurers. It was focused on small communities and a panel discussed the evolving responsibilities, strategies for beginning and succeeding in position; and how councils can bolster success. The importance of support, succession planning, and defined work practices was reviewed. Recommended was having a document listing the responsibilities and time line when reports due, having back up plan, and allowing for a minimum of a 3-month orientation time with experienced clerk.

Available Resource: Slides from the LMC annual conference available on LMC website

I again thank the Council and Residents of Vergas who support continuing education in the city budget. In addition to the educational sessions, there were several networking opportunities with information gleamed and new working relationships formed. I additionally attended meetings of the Minnesota Mayors, Small Cities Association, and Minnesota Cities Climate Coalition, and exhibit hall vendors which were all informative.

Respectfully submitted;
Julie Bruhn