

**STAFF SUMMARY  
CITY OF MINNETONKA  
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION  
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**Council Present:** Bob Ellingson, James Hiller, Brad Wiersum, Tony Wagner, and Mayor Terry Schneider.

**Staff:** Geralyn Barone, Desyl Peterson and David Maeda

**1. At Large B Council Seat Interviews**

Assistant City Manager Geralyn Barone noted that one of the nine finalists, Denny Lambert, withdrew his name from consideration.

**Paul Ansolabehere**

Ansolabehere said the biggest quality he would bring to the council is his experience as a member of an oversight board. He said one of the skills he has learned is how to be factual and empathetic in decision making.

Hiller asked what experience Ansolabehere had in trying to affect government. Ansolabehere said he has worked on political campaigns. He has also worked with the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and on issues with the city of Eden Prairie.

Schneider noted Ansolabehere's 2005 campaign literature indicated city taxes were increasing due to the rapid increase in housing values, but that taxes should be based on the cost of city services. Schneider asked if that was still Ansolabehere's understanding of the city's budget process. Ansolabehere said the tax process is very complex but he believes whenever a cost can be tied to a service it can provide a cost and reward system. He said in 2005 he wasn't aware of the city's survey process. The survey ties residents' satisfaction level to the tax level and allows open and public comment on what services are provided for the taxes paid.

Wiersum asked if there are areas in the city where the council has made the wrong decisions. Ansolabehere said if the council would have known that the economy is going where it has gone, the economic development in Glen Lake might not have been done. But the successful development for United Healthcare also might not have been done. He said it's easy to look back and say things should have been done differently but what the council has to do is make the decision based on all the information available.

Ellingson asked what Ansolabehere's vision for the future includes.

Ansolabehere said the city's comprehensive plan is excellent. He said as the city redevelops, it needs to make sure the housing and employment pieces fit together. He said one of his concerns moving forward is to protect the creeks and green spaces. Another concern is affordable housing.

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Wagner asked Ansolabehere to describe the decision making process he would use when a project comes forward that meets the city's ordinances and guide plan but is unpopular with the neighborhood residents. Ansolabehere said hopefully conversations with the residents would address concerns before the proposal is before the council. Face to face contact with the people involved would be helpful as well as understanding that for those that have made their views known, there are many more who probably haven't spoken up. The council's job is to solicit as much information as possible to determine the basis of the concerns. There needs to be balances between what residents want, taking into account what is best for the city, and making sure enough people have been heard to get the broad perspective.

Hiller asked how Ansolabehere would help the council reach out to a broader perspective than what is currently being done. Ansolabehere said he likes to be active in community events and that by being at the events there is an opportunity to gain trust and get feedback.

Schneider noted Ansolabehere's previous campaign literature also said the city needs a plan for county and state roads as well as local roads. Ansolabehere said when work was completed at Minnetonka Boulevard and County Road 73, the intersection was closed for about six months. Six months later the road and bridge in the area was worked on. Several businesses struggled with the lack of traffic. He said coordination of road projects needs to be done whenever possible.

**Joseph Bodell**

Bodell said the council's job is to look forward and anticipate issues before they become problems. He said by 2020 he envisions a city that is thriving. One of the biggest challenges facing the city is attracting and keeping younger families in the community.

Schneider said the city has a long standing policy of avoiding partisan politics in its elections and its interactions with the state. He asked Bodell how he would separate his involvement with the blog he writes and his work on the council. Bodell said he would step back from the more partisan aspects of the blogging community and focus more on his skills of building a community around a common set of values.

Wiersum asked Bodell how he would deal with a proposed development that met all the city's requirements and had the city's staff recommendation for approval, but the neighborhood was against the development. Bodell said he would try not to defer to either side but would try to bring everyone together around a common set of principles. He said the existing community needs to feel it has a role to play in working with the developer to bring about a good solution.

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Ellingson asked if Bodell had any suggestions or strategies for developing affordable housing in the city. Bodell said the growth rate of the city is very low. Higher density housing is a component of sustaining growth. He said it is important to have many modes of real estate available to people.

Wagner asked Bodell for his suggestions on how the city can do a better job at reaching out to the community on development projects. Bodell said part of bringing people together is to get out in the neighborhoods to have face to face time with the neighbors. He said people are dejected about the political process and that a large part of that dejection is they do not know how to get in touch with their leaders.

Hiller said one of the council's responsibilities is to reach out to the breadth of the diversity in the city. He asked Bodell what he would bring to the council that is different. Bodell said he was the youngest person to apply for the position. Bringing young people together in the community is a benefit. He said there is a misconception younger people have about being able to afford to live in Minnetonka.

Schneider asked how Bodell would achieve his goal of ensuring every resident had an advocate on the council in a development situation where a group of residents has a completely different viewpoint from what he thought was the right way forward. Bodell said it is a matter of balancing the responsibility of elected officials voting the will of their constituents and exercising their own judgment on the issue. He said all concerns need to be brought out in the conversation and taken into account in decision making.

Wiersum asked Bodell what he thought was his one distinctive characteristic that made him the best candidate for the position. Bodell said he represents a new face for local government. It is important to bring in new voices and new ideas.

Ellingson asked Bodell to elaborate on his view for the city in terms of development. Bodell said the city is currently in great shape and has a great foundation to build on. The foundation needs to be complimented with smart development. This means not only building sustainably, but also not building beyond the market.

Wagner asked what role Bodell sees the city playing in broadening affordable housing and how he would deal with the increased density while maintaining neighborhoods and open space. Bodell said transit is the glue that holds all the issues together. To be able to get on light rail and get across town will be a boon to the neighborhoods. He said bringing everyone together to ensure the existing community can stop a proposal is also important. Wagner asked Bodell if he felt a neighborhood has the right to veto a development project that meets all the cities ordinances. Bodell said if a development meets the community standards

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and the larger community has made a decision, then the neighborhood does not have the right to veto the project.

Bodell asked about the most rewarding and most frustrating parts of a council member's job. Schneider said the most rewarding part of the position is having a resident who is difficult to deal with, come to understand the whole process and although they may not agree with the final decision, say the process was fair. Wiersum noted the most frustrating part is making difficult decisions that do not make everyone happy. The key is to make all sides feel they have had the opportunity to be heard and listened to respectfully.

**Amber Greves**

Greves said as a mother she has a broad network of relationships with other moms and families in the community. As a speech language pathologist for the Minnetonka school district she works with elementary school aged kids. Some have larger impairments such as Autism or learning or emotional disabilities. She also does occasional work at North Memorial Hospital working with adults or senior citizens who have suffered brain damage or strokes. She said her time on the park board would allow her to bring knowledge from the board to the council.

Wiersum asked how Greves makes a decision when faced with a contentious issue. Greves said her approach is to look at an issue with an open mind. It is important to keep the lines of communication open. She said she tries to get as much information as she can about the issue including information from different perspectives. She tries to identify issues and not be reactive and shortsighted. She strives to work to build consensus.

Ellingson asked what the city could do to attract more young families. Greves said one of the most important things is to continue with the great things the city is already doing by investing in parks and recreation. Addressing affordable housing for all age ranges and demographics is also important. She said the city should continue its focus on environmental issues.

Wagner asked how she would address some of the weaknesses her network of young families and mothers have identified. She said one issue is continuing looking long term at connectivity issues as well as affordable housing.

Hiller said it is important to reach out to the depth of diversity in the community. He asked what ways Greves would bring a different way of thinking to the council. She said her knowledge of human services helps her understand demographic shifts and trends. She also understands what is going on in the schools. Her park board experience helps her understand the changes going on in the city.

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Schneider asked if Greves believes in the concept of the silent majority with the majority of residents happy with the way things are going in the city. If so, how she would weigh the majority's perspective when there are some very vocal residents on an issue. Greves said she naturally seeks the perspective of others and would do her best to make sure people are heard. She encourages people to get involved no matter what she is working on.

Wiersum asked Greves which of three options best described her: a) hard working achiever b) consensus builder c) great listener. She said listening and being empathetic is a major part of being a consensus builder. She said she works collaboratively on a team every day at work.

Ellingson said as a member of the guide plan committee Greves faced situations where a proposal faced opposition by a neighborhood. He asked how she resolved that situation. She said it was about making the decision to move forward with what is in the best interests of the city. One of the special purpose plans identified in the comp plan was the area off Highway 7 and Highwood Drive. She said she lives in the area and she had to keep an open mind.

Wagner asked Greves to discuss her thought process for a proposal with competing interests. She said she would approach the proposal with an open mind putting preconceived ideas aside. She would keep the communication lines open and seek as much information as possible from residents, developers, staff and the council. She would then weigh the issues and perspectives and be proactive by identifying issues and outcomes to try and gain consensus.

Greves said she enjoyed her time on the Park Board and would continue to bring some of those interests forward. She said she understood the commitment of serving on the council and would go above and beyond and be willing to participate in meetings outside the city. She is interested in running for the seat in the fall but would want feedback from other council members and the community about the value she had added to the council.

**Bonnie Burton**

Burton is the finance director for the city of Shorewood. She said she has had the opportunity to see the issues facing cities and has been involved in committee work. She has been working in local government for 20 years and loves the work because it is accessible to residents.

Ellingson asked Burton to talk about her vision for development in the city. Burton said like Shorewood, Minnetonka is mostly developed. Redevelopment is the next stage. Redevelopment is like remodeling because you don't always know what you are getting into. Land use issues can take up 80 percent of the council's time but only represent 20 percent of what the city does. She said the areas around Ridgedale could use redevelopment.

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Wagner said developments and redevelopments can be controversial at times. He asked Burton to discuss her decision making process when a development comes before council that meets the comp plan and goals of the city but meets passionate neighborhood opposition. Burton said a proposal to build a Cub store in Shorewood was controversial. She said there were many meetings to respond to residents' concerns. She would work hard to understand the ramifications of the proposal and ultimately the council must make the decision that is best for the community while maintaining the city's standards.

Hiller said the council has to represent the diversity of the city. He asked in what way Burton would bring a different thinking to the council. Burton said she would bring a woman's voice to the council. She is in the baby boomer age group and going forward the city needs to consider diversification.

Schneider asked if Burton saw any issue with the potential getting into the micromanagement role with staff given her professional background and expertise. Burton said because she is accustomed to the city staff role, she is sensitive to what staff is allowed to do in order to do a good job.

Wiersum asked Burton which of three options best described her: a) hard working achiever b) consensus builder c) great listener. Burton said her undergraduate degree is in psychology and social work so she said she is an empathetic listener. She also has an MBA in finance and strategic planning so she can also be a hard worker. She is working on becoming a better at building collaboration.

Ellingson noted Burton was a delegate to a state political convention. He asked how a partisan background would fit in with being on a nonpartisan city council. Burton said a professional sets the political background aside in the interest of the greater good.

Wagner asked what Burton would bring to the council that would make her a good council member. Burton said a good council member is knowledgeable about city issues and does his or her homework. A good council member is attentive and respectful of constituents and is supportive of city staff.

Hiller asked Burton what she saw as a council member's responsibility to do outreach when out in the community. Burton said a council member has to be mindful that all the interaction in the community is as a representative of the city. While not representing the city's point of view, residents still will connect the person with the city. Therefore behavior should be one of decorum. She said as a council member she would hold informal town meetings and would use the internet as a communication tool.

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Schneider said he appreciated Burton's top ten list of things she likes about Minnetonka. He asked her for a couple of things the council may need to improve about the city. Burton said it was important to emphasize the positive. She said she was hard pressed to find things she doesn't like about the city. She is pleased to see the plans for the Minnetonka Mills area.

Wiersum asked what actions the council needs to take to manage through the challenging economic times while staying true to what makes Minnetonka the city it is. Burton said the question is one cities are grappling with every day. She said the city is on the right track with its budget. It is important to consider belt tightening moves where possible while carefully evaluating what programs might need to be cut.

**Tim Goodyear**

Goodyear has served on the park board for the past five years and has served as the chair for the last three years. As a park board member he has tried to come to each issue with a neutral standpoint, listening to as many people as he can, to gain perspective about the issues in order to build a consensus towards a solution that is beneficial to all. Professionally he has a financial background working with both large corporations and as an entrepreneur.

Wagner asked Goodyear what vision he sees for the city. Goodyear said he would want to continue the good work the city has already done. The change in the city's demographics will mean the council has to address what will be done with parks and trails and housing issues.

Hiller asked what different viewpoint and outreach Goodyear would bring to the council. Goodyear pointed to his work as a volunteer including sports activities with his children. Being out in the community and attending events, he has had the chance to talk with all types of people.

Schneider asked Goodyear if he believed there is a silent majority who do not speak up because they are happy with things are being run. How would Goodyear weigh that perspective with the perspective of the vocal residents who come to the meetings and speak out against something that may impact them negatively? Goodyear said he did believe there was a silent majority. People have busy lives and it is difficult to stay current with all the issues. He said the city has done a good job communicating through its web site and newsletter. Being out in the community has helped him gain perspective on issues.

Wiersum asked for Goodyear's experience on the park board in dealing with a divisive issue and how the board worked to bring groups together to a common solution. Goodyear said there are always issues that come up during a park redevelopment where not everyone will be happy. He said staff has done a good job in communicating with residents and the board to try to figure out problems

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with proposed plans and how the plans could be changed to accommodate concerns. Currently the board is working on the dog leash issue where there is a wide variety of opinion. Because the board has spent a lot of time on the issue and heard from a lot of people, it has helped to understand what the concerns are and if there is a solution that will make all parties happy.

Ellingson asked if there was any part of the park redevelopment process Goodyear would recommend for other redevelopment projects and what should be done next with the parks. Goodyear said the park redevelopment process gave the board members a little flavor about the planning development process. He said staff has put together a long term strategic plan on how to maintain the city's parks.

Wagner noted Goodyear stated that infrastructure is one of the most important issues facing the city. He asked Goodyear's view about how to pay for a large infrastructure project. Goodyear said it depended on the specific project. Long term, large projects have to be funded over a period of time. The city's thin overlay program has been an innovative idea to save money. Similar approaches may enable the city to do more pay as you go projects.

Hiller noted Goodyear's application stated it is important for a council member to devote the time to become educated on issues by listening to staff and residents. He asked what Goodyear would do to accomplish that. Goodyear said it would be similar to what he has done in preparing for park board meetings. Understanding the packets and talking to residents on issues is important.

Wiersum asked Goodyear which of three options best described him: a) hard working achiever b) consensus builder c) great listener. Goodyear said that he was a consensus builder. Being a consensus builder has been an important part of what he does as the chair of the park board.

Wiersum said as a marketer he tries to develop new products that have a distinctive point of difference. He asked what one distinctive characteristic made Goodyear the best person to be the new council member. Goodyear said his experience as a volunteer for the city of the past five years working on finding solutions for various solutions was that characteristic.

Ellingson asked if Goodyear had any background in running for office and political involvement. Goodyear said he has not run for office but has helped others run campaigns.

Goodyear asked the council what they thought the important things were to be a successful mayor or council person. Schneider said objectivity is important. Wiersum said integrity was important. Ellingson pointed to advocacy. Wagner said it was important to be studious by looking at all sides of the issue. Hiller said

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a willingness to listen and be open was important. Schneider said it was also important to have passion for involvement in the community.

**Craig Acomb**

Acomb said as the chief financial officer for the Minnesota Department of Health, he oversees a budget of approximately \$1 billion. His experience and expertise would complement the council, particularly in the challenging economic times ahead. He has worked with different levels of government. He unsuccessfully ran for a seat on the Three Rivers Park District Board.

Hiller asked what new viewpoints or access to new groups Acomb would bring to the council. Acomb said having not met any of the council members he would bring a fresh perspective with a common man's approach. Being new to the political arena would be valuable and important. Acomb said he is involved with the community and would bring a broader perspective having been involved with the different levels of government.

Schneider noted Acomb's application stated he was able to bridge diverse points of views to find common solutions. He asked for examples. Acomb said the challenge of governance is that at the heart of it are people's values. An important part of dealing with conflict is understanding the different values people bring to a particular issue. Ultimately the key to finding a common understanding is being able to bridge the value differences. He said it is important as an elected official to take the time to understand the issues and values. While consensus may not always be reached, the goal is to try and give people the opportunity to be heard and understood. The goal is that everyone should walk away feeling the process was fair, transparent, and people understand how the decision was reached.

Wiersum asked how Acomb would apply his public policy experience to the council. Acomb said public policy is the same whether at a national or local level. There needs to be an understanding about what the issue is and what the implications of the decisions might be. He said public policies tend to have a trickle down affect. A policy set at the state level affects the counties. As the counties set a policy, it affects the cities. At the city level, policy decisions affect the neighborhoods, school districts and individuals making it more personal.

Ellingson asked how Acomb approached dealing with budget cuts. Acomb said as a state agency representative, he needs to represent the governor and the executive branch. Part of the process requires him to submit ideas on behalf of his agency to the governor's office. The legislature then takes the governor's budget proposal and passes legislation that defines how the state will operate. He said at the city level the process is flattened because the council and mayor are the decision makers. Ideas come from the residents making it a more down to earth process. Budgets come down to two things: raising money or cutting

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costs or doing a combination of both. The challenge and opportunity is to be creative to make real change.

Wagner asked Acomb to discuss his decision making process in a situation where a development meets all the city's standards but is opposed by the neighbors. Acomb said contentious issues often come down to a value debate where there is no right or wrong answer. The key to a thoughtful approach is to listen, understand and appreciate people's perspective and value set. Both sides might be intractable but hopefully some common ground can be found. Ultimately there is a backdrop of city policy and precedence. He said people want to feel the process was fair.

Acomb said he thought the city was well run and a great place to live. His interest in serving on the council is to look forward and continue down the same track.

**Derrick Agate, Sr.**

Agate said he has coached football, wrestling, and baseball for many years. He has done much volunteer work in the community and currently serves as the president of the Glen Lake Optimists. He has been a member of the Hopkins/Minnetonka Babe Ruth Board and is president of his church council. He works as a transportation director for the Eden Prairie School District where he supervises and manages over 130 people.

Schneider noted in his application Agate indicate one way to offer more affordable housing is by getting support from local businesses. Agate said there has to be a healthy mix of resident and business tax revenue. He said he would ask businesses to help contribute towards affordable housing through philanthropic programs.

Wiersum asked Agate how he would deal with a situation where a new development meets all the city's ordinances and has staff recommendation for approval but the neighbors are absolutely against the project and are threatening to sue the city. Agate said the residents have the right to lobby the council and the council needs to listen to the residents. He said he would approach the situation with an open mind. If the residents understand the city's position, the residents may feel better about the decision. If the developer has met all the requirements, it is not fair to the developer for the council to decide it was too difficult a decision to make.

Ellingson said the community as a whole is aging. He asked Agate for any ideas he had for attracting young families to the city. Agate said his family was attracted to the city because of the strong school districts. Affordable housing and community services are important. Public safety is also a priority. He said word of mouth is also important. If residents like the community they will talk to their friends into moving to the city.

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Wagner asked Agate for his ideas about improving the city's affordable housing stock. Agate said when he lived in Hawaii there was a program to help first time homeowners. Having homes that are moderately sized is also important.

Hiller said the council represents the diversity of the city. He asked what background and experiences Agate would bring to the council that would provide a different way of thinking. Agate said he grew up in the inner city and had a teacher and coach who made a significant difference in his life. His unique background would be of value for the council. The community is getting more diverse so there needs to be an understanding and a voice to represent the diversity.

Schneider said Agate indicated in his application that part of his role would be to provide a positive voice of the community. He asked Agate to explain what he meant. Agate said he would not get into divisive argument with people. His approach would be to ask more questions to understand where a person is coming from. In order to overcome a disagreement the people have to meet at an area where there is an understanding. Being a positive voice is to sell the virtue of the city. A lot of people think everyone in the city lives in a big home on the lake. He said communicating that the community is accepting and open is important.

Wiersum asked if he were to solicit a reference from Agate's current supervisor, what the individual would say. Agate said his supervisor would say he was very creative, energetic and entertaining. She would also say he is very thoughtful and open minded in his decision making and actions. He said if he disagrees with his supervisor, once a decision is made, no one would know about the disagreement.

Agate noted finances are difficult for cities and schools. He asked how the economy will impact the city. Schneider said the city is in good shape with its budget because it takes a long term approach and plans well. However, across the board residents are feeling the impact of the economic conditions. Keeping the status quo is not good enough as residents are looking for ways for the city to reduce their burden while maintaining the same services. He said if the economy doesn't improve, the city will need to respond by cutting services. He pointed out the total tax increase on the average home is about the same as a cable TV bill. Wiersum agreed the city has planned well and the question is how long the economic situation lasts. The city will have to be prudent and mindful of its expenditures.

**Anne Malm Hossfeld**

Malm Hossfeld said because of her long history in the city she has a strong appreciation for what is unique about the city. What is unique is people choosing to come together to form the community. This means there are strong local

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values but people want opportunities for shared growth. She said she wants to be part of the process of bringing the city into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She identified affordable housing as a major issue facing the city as well as land use decisions and said she was familiar with many of the upcoming issues coming before the council. She cited analytical thinking and being a good listener as strengths. A major role of a council member is to learn and problem solve by having an open ear in order to balance different viewpoints. She has experience running a small business so she understands financial statements. She has been a project manager so she is familiar meeting goals. She has been a department manager so she has experience managing employees. She said she has shown her willingness to give her time to participate in the process.

Ellingson asked Malm Hossfeld what changes she would like to see in the city in the future and what changes she would not like to see. Malm Hossfeld said she wants the city to be vital and to continue to have housing, restaurants, exercise centers, parks, paths, and places to go for entertaining. To keep the city vital, new kinds of city planning have to be tried. If land use is going to become denser and change, she would seek resident input on what they want for the area. Keeping Minnetonka vital includes not damaging natural resources.

Wagner noted in Malm Hossfeld's application she stated too often residents tell the city concerns are not being heard. He asked what she suggested the council do to improve the public process input. Malm Hossfeld said the city has listened to focus groups. She said residents should be told early in the process about what is coming up. For large scale projects that affect many people, the city should reassure the public that decisions have not already been made without public input. Feedback sessions will build a vision for a project. She said she has a skill to be able to evaluate something that has been taken too far and would advocate taking a step back.

Hiller asked Malm Hossfeld in what way she would bring something different to the council. Malm Hossfeld said until recently she has not been actively involved in government so she would bring a new voice. Her liberal arts background means she would provide someone that is interested in ideas and being open to many things. She would also bring a varied background of technology, liberal arts and the law.

Schneider said the at large seat has some different responsibilities because there is the expectation the council member will become involved in some of the regional committees and represent the city as a whole on various task forces. He asked if being a president of a manufacturing company in Winona would conflict with this responsibility. Malm Hossfeld said because she telecommutes, her schedule is flexible.

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Wiersum asked Malm Hossfeld if there was anything she would like to see changed or improved about the way the council process works. Malm Hossfeld said the council members have been open to being contacted. She said she has seen both sides having been on a citizens group and also seeing comments from residents who say they feel they have not been listened to. Perception is important. There is always room for more opportunities for public input. She suggested looking at the option of providing an opportunity for residents to have a dialogue with the council.

Malm Hossfeld said she can separate herself from personal involvement to hear both sides of an issue. She has viewed herself in her legal career as a mediator. Because she is interested in listening to the underlying issues she can be a consensus building mediator.

**2. Adjournment**

The study session adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David E. Maeda  
City Clerk