



Minot Chamber and MADC talk about a potential future together

The Board of Directors for the Minot Area Chamber of Commerce and Minot Area Development



Corporation met to discuss what a potential merger of the two organizations would mean. The boards heard from Bismarck/Mandan Chamber EDC President Brian Ritter and former board member John Mongeon. The two presenters know firsthand the process that goes into combining economic development and chamber as Bismarck/Mandan has done so. The two Bismarck/Mandan groups began talks in the fall of 2017. The time was right due to similar missions, member-based income and, at the time, there were staff changes with the EDC president retiring. Bismarck/Mandan Chamber and EDC officially merged on Jan. 1, 2019.

The meeting with Minot chamber and economic development board members took place Jan. 30 in Minot. The group is gathering information to see how this would affect the two organizations and if it is a fit for Minot. The two boards would have to agree to further explore a merger. Part of that process would ultimately involve conversations and listening sessions with memberships from both organizations.

2019 highlights and a look ahead during Minot's State of the City address

Minot Mayor Shaun Sipma highlighted accomplishments from 2019 and outlined the City of Minot's vision for 2020 and beyond during the third annual State of the City on Feb. 6.



"As much as we're here today to reflect upon our challenges and accomplishments of 2019 – and there were many of both – our larger purpose is to envision and embrace the opportunities before us as a community," Sipma told the crowd at Magic City Campus' Arvel Graving Theatre. "Some of those opportunities, like flood control, are daunting and will

require massive amounts of time, work, and money to complete. Others, like the 2020 Census, are simpler and require far less time and effort to achieve success. Yet both projects – and many others – are vital to secure the future of Minot and its residents.”

Several times during his roughly 45-minute presentation, the mayor focused on the theme for this year’s State of the City: One voice, one mission, one Minot.

“If we are to successfully face our challenges in 2020, our collective voices must resonate as one. If we are to strategically guide our community through one of the most important times in its history, our mission must be a common one. If Minot is to continue to grow and prosper, we must stand together as one community,” Sipma said. “One voice. One mission. One Minot.”

The mayor noted that by working together with community partners and Minot-area legislators at the 2019 Legislature, Minot was able to secure funding for both the flood protection project and the Northwest Area Water Supply project. In addition, changes to the hub city formula will provide up to \$6 million more per biennium that Minot can use for infrastructure projects.

Programs related to the \$74.3 million Minot was awarded through Housing and Urban Development’s National Disaster Resilience contest were also successful in 2019, and more projects related to NDR will be happening in the future. The Resilient Homebuyer Program had nearly 100 applicants in 2019, with dozens of applications going through the eligibility and verification process. Blu on Broadway is a mixed-use project that will combine commercial space with 42 units of low-to-moderate income housing; an environmental review is under way, and construction is expected to begin this summer or fall.

“All of this is being done to build a more resilient Minot by assisting our most vulnerable population, protecting our critical infrastructure, and ensuring that more residents are permanently out of harm’s way,” Sipma said.

During the speech, Sipma also unveiled the Barksdale Trophy, which is awarded to the community that has provided the highest level of support to a base in the Air Force Global Strike Command. Minot recently won the award, and the trophy will remain here for two years. Sipma thanked Minot Air Force Base leaders and members of Task Force 21 for their ongoing partnership.

City of Minot department heads held a traveling City Hall prior to the State of the City address, where they answered questions and provided information to members of the public.

For more on the City of Minot’s State of the City event, [click here](#).

Save the date for MADC’s Annual Meeting

Time to mark your calendar! The Minot Area Development Corporation’s Annual Meeting will take place on Tuesday, Feb. 25 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Sleep Inn & Suites in Minot. This year’s event will feature keynote speaker, James Leiman, Director, Economic Development & Finance Division with the

North Dakota Department of Commerce. MADC's annual meeting will provide a recap on 2019 accomplishments and take a look at what's in store for 2020! Please RSVP your attendance to Jaime at jhaug@minotusa.com or 701-852-1075.



Maximize Minot Buy Local preference policy approved by Minot City Council

At the early January Minot City Council Meeting, the council approved a number of actions on a new procurement policy. The policy changed the limits that controlled what the approval process was for the purchase of goods. In some cases it simply requires the sign off by the department head and in others it requires the sign off by the Finance Director and/or City Manager. In all cases, the goods being purchased need to be included in the budget for that fiscal year. Depending upon the level of purchase, the city department is required to either get an oral bid or an informal written bid and at least one of those bids needs to come from a local vendor. It is believed that this process will improve the expenditure of dollars with local businesses as opposed to buying from out of town.



This is the result of a year-long effort by the Minot Area Chamber of Commerce Maximize Minot Committee. The Committee was formed after several members contacted the Chamber hoping to find ways to promote buying locally, hiring locally (meaning professional services) and investing local. One part of the maximize Minot campaign involves the letters, M-I-N-O-T, being moved around the community with the encouragement that people take their picture with it and become the "I" in Minot.

Jason Olson retires after 32 years in the Minot Police Department

Law enforcement has changed dramatically since Jason Olson joined the Minot Police Department more than three decades ago. But Olson's passion for serving his community has only grown stronger. As Olson prepares to retire after nearly 32 years, the last eight as police chief, his commitment to Minot and its residents is first and foremost in his mind. It always has been.



"I think we learn from our mistakes, and I've made my share of mistakes," he said. "That's part of life. You regret those. I think everyone would go back and do some things differently. But would I do it all over again? Yes."

"Looking back, I'm sure I've had a bad day or two, but I've

always enjoyed my job and found it rewarding,” Olson added. “It’s been a challenge, and it’s always been fulfilling.”

Olson’s last day on the job was Jan. 31. He was succeeded by Capt. John Klug, who officially took over Feb. 1. For more on Olson’s career, [click here](#).

Improving the City’s employee retention

In recent years, the City of Minot faced a rising employee turnover rate that was negatively impacting not only staff morale and experience levels, but the overall budget as well.

At the end of 2017, the turnover rate was an alarming 14.9 percent, with 17 open positions. Many short-staffed departments were unable to address long-term projects, instead having to cross-train staff members on the fly simply to keep up with the day-to-day work. Plus, constant turnover meant constant training, and that gets expensive very quickly, especially in the Police Department and Fire Department where each staff member can require approximately \$70,000 in training.

City Manager Tom Barry said as part of the preliminary budget process, he gathers input from staff, department heads, and Council members as to their budget priorities.

“One of the priorities that everyone agreed on was to stabilize the workforce by implementing budget strategies focused on improving employee retention and reducing turnover,” Barry said. “So that was one of our main marching orders right at the beginning of the 2019 budget process.”

For more on how the city turned around its turnover rate, [click here](#).

Trinity Health Foundation awards scholarships

Trinity Health Foundation awarded nearly \$50,000 in nursing scholarships at its 4th Annual Nursing Scholarship Banquet on Jan. 14. Fourteen students pursuing nursing degrees at



Minot State University, Dakota College at Bottineau, the University of North Dakota, and North Dakota State University received the awards. Foundation Chairman Jeffrey Verhey, MD, said the awards are part of the Foundation’s goal to help ease a nationwide nursing shortage. “We recognize the vital role that nurses play in providing medical care and are dedicated to addressing this issue by supporting the education of nursing students,” he said. Some 43 nursing students have received \$145,000 in scholarships since the Foundation’s Nursing Scholarship Endowment Fund was revised and expanded four years ago.

Minot State offering tax preparation services through VITA program

The Minot State University College of Business will again offer tax preparation services free of charge to individuals earning less than \$55,000 a year, elderly individuals, military members, and taxpayers with small businesses that meet certain guidelines, through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.



VITA was originally created by the Internal Revenue Service to assist low-income taxpayers in properly filling out and filing their tax forms. All tax preparation work will be completed by fully trained accounting students. This year nine MSU students are participating in the program.

"Taxes can be complicated," said MSU Assistant Professor Nicole Wald. "For people with tax situations that are not complicated, VITA offers a way for them to meet their tax obligation without an extra expense."

Services are being offered every week until Tuesday, April 7. Hours of operation are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4 to 7:30 p.m. Appointments can be made by calling 701-858-3122 or by going to Minot State's VITA appointment page online. Potential clients are reminded to bring all necessary documentation, including their ID and the ID for their dependents, to their tax appointment.

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