Excellence in Service Award (Elected City Officials & City Staff)

Shannon Mortenson (City Administrator, Warren): Mortenson is a strong and loyal partner in CGMC's quest to find solutions to the child care shortage that impacts her city and many others across Greater Minnesota. This year, she testified before House and Senate committees on CGMC's legislative initiatives on child care and met with key lawmakers and the media to garner additional support.

Heidi Omerza (City Councilor, Ely): As a member of the Board of Directors, Omerza has long been a go-to leader for CGMC. For the past two years, she has also served as president of the Greater Minnesota Partnership, CGMC's partner organization that focuses on economic development issues. In that role, she has been an outspoken champion for Greater Minnesota on a variety of issues including child care, broadband expansion and housing.

John Paulson (Project/Environmental/Regulatory Manager, Hutchinson): Paulson is a key advisor to CGMC on matters related to wastewater facilities. He has participated in several stakeholder groups and testified at legislative hearings on water-quality regulations and other environmental issues that impact Greater Minnesota cities. With his first-hand experience and connections to other industry professionals, Paulson provides invaluable guidance to CGMC.

Jack Murray Award for Distinguished Rural Leadership

Bob Beussman (Former Mayor, New Ulm): Beussman was a fearless advocate for New Ulm and cities across Greater Minnesota throughout his 11 years as mayor. A staunch supporter of CGMC's transportation initiatives, he was instrumental in advocating for the creation of the Corridors of Commerce program. Never one to stay silent, Beussman worked hard to bring attention to Greater Minnesota's needs and is well-known for his relentless advocacy.

Bob Filson Award for Distinguished Rural Leadership

Brian Gramentz (Former City Administrator, Willmar and New Ulm): Throughout his decades of service to cities in Greater Minnesota, Gramentz was a strong supporter of CGMC. With his breadth of knowledge and experience, he was a reliable contributor when it came to setting CGMC's goals and priorities on a wide range of issues including LGA, economic development, infrastructure needs, and environmental regulations.

Friend of the CGMC Award

Center for Rural Policy and Development (CRPD): For many years, CRPD has regularly produced high-quality research on issues that impact Greater Minnesota. Its in-depth studies on issues such as child care, housing, broadband and workforce development have served as a springboard for many of CGMC's legislative initiatives. The information provided by CRPD empowers city leaders and allows CGMC to more effectively advocate for our members.

Lori Sturdevant (Retired Columnist, Star Tribune): Over the course of her 40-year career at the Star Tribune, Sturdevant used her platform as a reporter and columnist to draw attention to issues that impact communities across Minnesota. She often wrote about topics that are especially important to Greater Minnesota, such as LGA and broadband expansion. An astute observer of activities at the Capitol, there are very few people who know the ins and outs of Minnesota politics as well as she does.

President's Award

Greg Zylka (Mayor, Little Falls): As president of CGMC, Mayor Zylka led our organization through a year of unprecedented challenges. With the pandemic still in full swing for much of his term, he served as the voice of Greater Minnesota as communities attempted to wade through all the uncertainties, struggles and opportunities that emerged over the past 12 months. Under his steady leadership, CGMC accomplished many of its legislative goals and brought added attention to the issues that impact Greater Minnesota cities.

2021 LEGISLATIVE AWARDS

JULY 29, 2021 - ALEXANDRIA, MINN.

Honoring the legislators, city officials & community leaders who helped advance CGMC priorities during this strange, virtual-meeting filled year!

COALITION OF GREATER MN CITIES

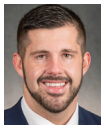
Legislator of Distinction - Tax Policy

Sen. Carla Nelson (R-Rochester): As chair of the Senate Tax Committee, Sen. Nelson was instrumental in crafting a tax bill that features a number of priorities for Greater Minnesota, including provisions related to LGA, housing, child care, and local option sales taxes. Currently serving her fourth term, Sen. Nelson has long been a champion for Greater Minnesota families and communities.

Legislator of Distinction - Economic Development

Sen. John Jasinski (R-Faribault): As a former mayor, Sen. Jasinski understands the issues that impact cities and uses that knowledge to effectively advocate for Greater Minnesota businesses and communities at the Capitol. A fierce supporter of the Greater MN Business Development Public Infrastructure (BDPI) Grant Program, this year he led the charge for additional funding and policy improvements that will allow more cities to benefit from this successful program.

Rep. Liz Olson (DFL-Duluth): In a particularly challenging year for child care providers and families, Rep. Olson went above and beyond to find solutions to the child care crisis. This session, she worked closely with CGMC to craft several pieces of legislation aimed at combating Greater Minnesota's child care shortage. She continues to be a strong, consistent leader on this critical issue.



Rep. Dan Wolgamott (DFL-St. Cloud): In just his second term in office, Rep. Wolgamott has emerged as an enthusiastic and passionate leader on economic development issues. This session, he was a key champion of the BDPI program and led efforts in the House to put additional funding into the program and enact beneficial policy improvements.

Legislator of Distinction - Environment

Sen. Gene Dornink (R-Hayfield): A newly elected legislator, Sen. Dornink emerged as a leader in the push for additional state funding for municipal water facilities. This session, he was the chief Senate author of a bill to provide $100M in state bonding to help cities pay for water and wastewater infrastructure repairs and upgrades. His advocacy helps set the stage for a strong investment in water infrastructure in 2022.

Rep. Luke Frederick (DFL-Mankato): Elected to office in 2021, Rep. Frederick quickly demonstrated a passion for solving issues related to water quality. He served as the chief House author of a bill to provide $100M in bonding for water infrastructure grant and loan programs. Although new to the Legislature, Rep. Frederick jumped right in and worked hard to draw attention to the need for a strong state investment in water infrastructure.

Sen. Bill Weber (R-Luverne): As a mayor-turned-legislator, Sen. Weber has long been a strong supporter of issues that are important to Greater Minnesota cities. This year, he was instrumental in securing state funding for the creation of the PFAS Municipal Reduction Initiative, which focuses on developing strategies to prevent PFAS from entering municipal wastewater facilities and educating wastewater operators and the public on these dangerous "forever chemicals."

Legislator of Distinction - Transportation

Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Minneapolis): As chair of the House Transportation Committee, Rep. Hornstein is a driving force in calling for a substantial, comprehensive investment in transportation needs across the state. This session, he advocated for ongoing, dedicated funding for small-city streets, as well as the Corridors of Commerce program, which funds highway improvements that are necessary to enhance safety and foster economic development.

Legislator of Distinction - Transportation

Sen. Jeff Howe (R-Rockville): Sen. Howe is a leading advocate for finding ways to help small cities repair and replace their deteriorating streets. This session, he introduced legislation aimed at creating a consistent, ongoing source of funding for small-city streets. Although that long-term plan did not pass this year, his efforts helped secure $18M for small-city streets in 2022.

Sen. Scott Newman (R-Hutchinson): As chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, Sen. Newman is a passionate advocate for funding local roads and highway projects across the state. This session, he played a central role in crafting a transportation package that will move Minnesota's infrastructure forward while making key investments that benefit Greater Minnesota, such as funding for small-city streets and highway improvement projects.

Minnesota Legacy Award

Rep. Jeanne Poppe (DFL-Austin): Throughout her eight terms in the House, Rep. Poppe was dedicated to improving and strengthening rural communities. She was a strong supporter of LGA, community and technical colleges, farming and agribusiness, and other key programs and institutions that are vital to Greater Minnesota. In addition, she authored legislation that aimed to provide additional funding for clean water infrastructure, a top priority for CGMC.

Sen. Dan Sparks (DFL-Austin): Throughout his nearly two decades in the Legislature, Sen. Sparks was a go-to advocate for Greater Minnesota. He authored or co-authored several bills related to CGMC priorities such as LGA, housing, and economic development, successfully securing state funding for new and existing programs that have helped strengthen Greater Minnesota communities and businesses.

Excellence in Service Award (Elected City Officials & City Staff)

Susan Arntz (City Manager, Mankato): Arntz started her role with the City of Mankato less than a year ago, but she is already proving to be a leader for CGMC. She has a keen understanding of the problems cities face, as well as the drive and initiative to help solve them. This session, she participated in several meetings with legislators and testified before legislative committees on CGMC priorities, particularly the need for additional state funding for water infrastructure.

Pat Baustian (Mayor, Luverne): A long-time member of the CGMC Board of Directors and active participant in our organization, Mayor Baustian is a key leader in the CGMC's efforts to find solutions to the child care shortage. This year, he testified at the Legislature in favor of bills that aimed to support child care providers and increase child care capacity in Greater Minnesota. He also participated in several media visits and co-authored a guest column on this critical issue.

Andy Bradshaw (Wastewater Operations Manager, Moorhead): As an experienced municipal wastewater operator, Bradshaw is a key resource for CGMC on all matters related to wastewater. He provides an operator's perspective as CGMC develops new legislation and he strives to find smart, proactive and cost-effective solutions that will keep Minnesota's waters clean without placing an undue burden on municipal facilities.

Brian Holmer (Mayor, Thief River Falls): Mayor Holmer never turns down an opportunity to help advance CGMC's goals. As a member of the Board of Directors, he is involved in several program areas, particularly economic development and the environment. This session, he played a key role in efforts to address the housing shortage that impacts Greater Minnesota communities. He participated in meetings with legislators and co-authored a guest column to highlight the struggles businesses and communities face due to the lack of housing.