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Contact the SEMLM
brenda@semlm.org



From the Prez – We’re getting there

The robins are here again, the grass is green, and the crabapple trees are getting ready to bloom again. It must be springtime in southeast Minnesota!

The SEMLM has been pushing hard to get information to cities on the current situation for key city topics, and how to address those situations. In February and March, we reviewed the basics of **Tax Increment Finance (TIF)**, learned what the current situation is for **Housing in SE MN**, and how that relates to cities being able to address it with TIF and other economic development tools. Next, we’re diving into **SE MN Childcare**, and what cities can do to help their communities keep and grow their Childcare options. That’s coming on April 29th at 7pm. Read more about it in this newsletter.

During the same online event on the 29th, we’ll hear a fresh report on **Transit** in SE MN. All cities and counties are invited to get this new information. It really is fresh off the press, and the SEMLM is the first one to get this presentation in the region. You may think transit doesn’t relate to your city or county, but think again. To serve your residents, you need to hear this report, discuss it with your fellow officials, and make some decisions. It affects pretty much every community in our region. The good news is that we can do something about this situation, and there is help for getting a good outcome for our communities, better than we would have expected.

We will vote to fill open SEMLM Board seats on the 29th, too. Use the application in this newsletter to grab the opportunity to serve at the regional level. Got questions? Email brenda@semlm.org. Serving on the board lets you learn and network with the rest of the board, which is a great bonus for every board member.
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Kasson City Council

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See your name here!
SEMLM Board Seat
Application page 13.

Boardroom News

The Board met virtually on March 17. From Board action that evening, our new SEMLM Vice President is Kim Beise, Councilmember from Red Wing. Congratulations, Kim!

The Board got updates on the SEMLM Community Partner Program, including new ways to show appreciation for their support of our cities and the organization.

The March and April SEMLM membership events were discussed and the decision was made to continue having events online through the end of April, with a decision later for the July meeting. Session topics were discussed and confirmed for March and April events.

The Board voted to put the Board applicant Connor LaPointe, City Administrator for Claremont to a vote at the April 29 membership meeting.

Johnson updated the Board on the Public Works Online Resource Inventory program that HSEM is doing for the SEMLM region's cities as a pilot project. Their goal is to have this type of program made available for all cities in the state.

Johnson shared updates on the joint project for Wastewater Operator Training for all southern Minnesota communities to be located at Riverland Community College. Current partners in this project are the SEMLM, Riverland, MPCA, and Workforce Development Inc.

With two board seats added last year, we have open seats to fill. Applicants from all eleven counties can apply, including both elected officials and staff. The application form is included in this newsletter, and questions can be directed to brenda@semlm.org.



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Something NEW

For the rest of 2021, the newsletters include feature pages with news from our SEMLM Community Partners. We miss seeing them at our in-person city events, and they miss visiting with us, too.

Check out their pages. They bring excellent ideas to our communities, and help support the work of the SEMLM for our region.

Thank you to all our SEMLM Community Partners!

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- Construction Administration & Inspection
- Land Surveying
- Geographic Information Systems
- Project Funding Support
- Project Communication



Rochester/18th Ave NW-37th St-55th St NW



Old West Main Street and Upper Harbor
Renewal, City of Red Wing, Minnesota



TH 61/Spring Creek Road Reconstruction,
City of Red Wing, Minnesota



CSAH 22 (55th Street) Extension and CSAH 33 Reconstruction
Olmsted County, Minnesota



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City Trivia

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Contact **Mike or Gary** today!

Spring Valley Office:
507-346-7895

Faribault Office:
612-920-3320 ext. 109

City Resource Sharing Program

Our Region 1 Homeland Security Emergency Management (HSEM) Program Coordinator informed the SEMLM of approval from HSEM to create an online searchable Public Works Equipment and Personnel Inventory for SE MN. This pilot project for the entire state goes beyond what MNWARN offers for scope of projects, and is useful for non-emergencies, even for planned projects.

Right now: HSEM is revising existing software, and is currently creating categories for types of equipment and personnel skills. Several cities provided lists they use for their Public Works departments. Kudos to **Chatfield, Rochester, Red Wing, Austin, Winona, Faribault, and Owatonna** for stepping forward to help with this. Making our system match up with the terminology for categories used by counties, state, and federal entities will create a far more useful system overall.

Future: At some point there will be training for city staff (Public Works or others) to learn how to use the system. MN HSEM has included funding to cover the training. The SEMLM will assist in setting up the location and sending the communication for it.

Cities will need to have signed Public Works Mutual Aid (PWMA) Agreements, and submit the signed documents to their respective county emergency managers. We will want all participating cities of the program to have signed PWMA Agreements before they join the program. We already have templates posted on our SEMLM website for our cities to use, and the sample will be emailed again to cities.

Watch for: The SEMLM will continue to share updates on the project, provide samples of the PWMA Agreements to send to their county Emergency Manager, and announce the upcoming training when it's time.

Our HSEM Region 1 Program Director, Michael Peterson, gives our group credit for pushing this project forward. We are fortunate to have Michael Peterson, who made the case for this to HSEM. He got not only their approval, but a commitment of resources.

Thank you to all our cities for supporting this effort. Thank you to Mike Ebner and Dennis Overland of Rushford Village for being so brilliant and for sharing their idea for this type of online search program.

Goal – An online system for cities to list available equipment and personnel for loan or rent to other local units of government. From a geographic search, a city needing certain resources could find which nearby cities have those available. The system would be useful for both emergencies and routine planned city projects.



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Sven and Ole work for the City (This one is no joke!)

Ole, Lena, and Sven will be plowing the streets of Scandia, MN.

The city of more than 4,000 people held a contest to name its three snowplows, and the winners were announced at a Scandia City Council meeting.

City Council member Patti Ray came up with the idea as a "fun diversion" amid a long COVID-19 winter in Scandia, she said when announcing the winning names. The names will be stenciled on the side of the city's snowplows.

"When it's snowing and blowing in Scandia, please rest assured that Ole, Lena and Sven will be out in the cold working hard like the good Swedes they are," Ray said during the meeting.

The Swedish names could not be on point for Scandia, which is where the first Swedish immigrants to Minnesota settled, [the city's website says](#).



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MN Perspective

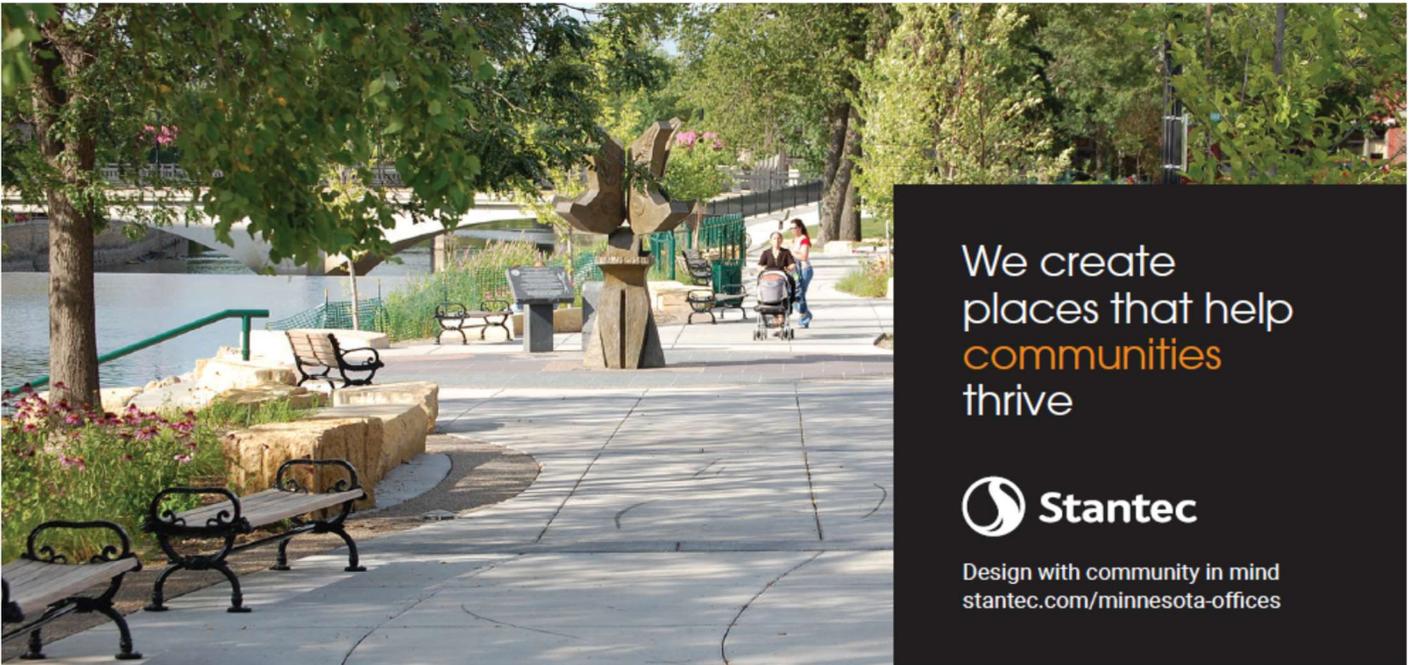
COVID-19 vs. The Spanish Flu Looking at the MN numbers

The Spanish Flu hit Minnesota hard. In the worst month of the Spanish Flu in MN, 3,260 people died. That pandemic lasted two years globally, but only about seven months in MN. In that time, 10,000 Minnesotans died.

Comparing the number of deaths from Spanish Flu to Covid-19 has to be tempered with the knowledge that today we have far superior medical interventions available. If we only had the technology of the early 1900s, the current pandemic death numbers would be far worse. Even so, the current COVID-19 pandemic numbers for Minnesota (per MN Dept. of Health) from February 2020 to now (April 2021) are:

Deaths from confirmed cases (cumulative)	6,667
Deaths from probable cases (cumulative)	387
Total deaths (cumulative)	7,054

How bad was the Spanish Flu for the entire U.S.? An estimated 550,000 people died, nearly five times more than the number of U.S. soldiers



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Childcare Needs -- Can cities help? *Yes, we can.*

Jeff Andrews from SMIF brings multiple examples of practical and doable ways cities can improve their communities' childcare situations. Grab a pen to take notes and get inspired. Jeff's no-nonsense approach is geared for any size city, with action steps you can start right now.

Elected officials, Economic Development staff and EDA members, business leaders and others should attend this session. Jeff gives proven action steps used by cities for directly addressing the current childcare situation. Put these plans into motion for your community.

SEMLM Childcare and
Transit Sessions

Thursday, April 29
7:00 – 8:30pm

[Join with Google Meet](#)

meet.google.com/hcp-vqtb-ptg

[Join by phone](#)

(US) +1 617-675-4444 PIN: 863 332
743 7626#

Transit in SE MN - What does our future look like?

With all the changes in our world due to COVID-19, could life get any more complicated? Yes, it can. Yes, it did.

Jobs changed. Not all jobs changed, but LOTS of them did.

- **Zoom and WFH (Of course we need more acronyms, right?)**
- **Home offices galore!**
- **Less commuting? For how long?**

How much of the above will continue in the future is yet to be seen. What we know so far is that the former regional bus transit option from the recent past is gone.

SEMLM - Childcare and Transit
Thursday, April 29·7:00 – 8:30pm

[Join with Google Meet](#)

meet.google.com/hcp-vqtb-ptg

[Join by phone](#)

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743 7626#

Will our region need a new transit option after the pandemic?

If so, how does it get started, who will manage it, how does it get funded?

Will it be different than the last system? Could we make it better?

Brian Carlson of SEH has become the Transit guy of SE MN. He has info to share from his work with numerous officials and experts, and now **cities and counties** have decisions to make.

As elected officials, it's time to listen, ask questions, and discuss with your colleagues. Get informed to do your best work on this regional decision.

News from Mosquito Heights

Working with his young city administrator, Jimmy, Mayor Buzz sometimes felt rather old, but it was important to train and encourage this younger fellow for the good of the city.

While working on the city budget, the Mayor encouraged Jimmy to look at each line item with a fresh eye, not to just add a percentage to every department.

Mayor: "Jimmy, put some thought into each part of the budget, keeping in mind the goals for the city for the coming year."

Jimmy: "Mayor, that sounds like a lot more work!"

Mayor: "Well, you know what our Mosquito Heights wastewater operator always likes to say. Life is like a sewer ... what you get out of it depends on what you put into it."



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How the SEMLM works

1.

Member cities have at least one person representing their city attend quarterly meetings to share issues their community faces. This person can be an elected or appointed official, or a staff person.

2.

Cities can send a different person each time, the same person, or more than one person. Each city has one vote for any official action, no matter how many representatives it sends.

3.

Shared issues can become regional legislative policy positions to promote with area lawmakers, the governor, and state commissioners.

4.

Executive Board members maintain contact with legislators on regional priorities. Background information on policy positions can be provided in the form of "Talking Points" to assist lawmakers in promoting our members' positions.



SEMLM Board Application

(Attach additional sheets as needed.)

Please send your completed application by mail or email to:

Brenda Johnson, SEMLM Exec. Dir.

P.O. Box 413

Chatfield, MN 55923

brenda@semlm.org

Name

Email

Phone

Address

Relevant Experience or Employment (attach a resume if relevant):

Why are you interested in serving on the SEMLM Board?

Area(s) of expertise and contributions you feel you can make:

Other volunteer commitments:

Initial here to indicate permission to check references. _____

Wastewater Training in Southern Minnesota

Southeastern Minnesota League of Municipalities

- Convening planning process
- Information gathering from all sources necessary
- Outreach and communication with cities across all of southern Minnesota
- Identify needs in next five to ten years
- Identify obstacles to overcome and options

Riverland Community College

- Three campuses centrally located for all of southern Minnesota
- Already offering city training for other departments
- Assist in recruitment through career counselors, course catalog, faculty
- Source curriculum for both in-person and online classes
- Experience in working with state departments and requirements

Southern MN Workforce Centers

- Multiple locations across southern Minnesota
- Recruitment using MPCA materials and video
- Work to offer state assistance to fund training for workers who come through the Workforce Centers programs
- Experienced with state programs for additional assistance

MN Pollution Control Agency

- Guidance for accreditation of training programs
- Information on other MPCA training in state
- Recruitment materials and video for use in all possible ways needed in southern MN
- Supportive of SEMLM regional efforts

“Excellent visionary decision if they can get this rolling. Agreed - most of this formal schooling at a vocational level vs 4-year degrees is up north or in the metro area. Crookston and St Cloud come to mind. This would be a valuable opportunity to support.”

Bill Daley
Water/Wastewater Superintendent
City of Lake Crystal

In recent years, more cities have identified the need for closer training options for wastewater operators and more recruitment. The SEMLM is making progress in bringing this to cities at Riverland Community College (Albert Lea, Austin, Owatonna campuses). A sustainable program needs enough people using it, which makes a location central to all of southern Minnesota important.

This concept targets people of all ages who want to get their initial licensing, and upgrade their skills and license over a period of time, at a location convenient for their schedule and lifestyle. This will be for people new to the field, and others already in it. It's for people who have time for training, but don't have the desire or time to travel far or make overnight trips.

A separate project in Marshall, MN targets people who want a certificate program. The organizer for the Marshall program is very supportive of what we are doing with Riverland. He sees it as filling a need that their program will not. These are not competing or overlapping projects in his view, and that's good to know.

For the Riverland program, trainees can come from

- **Workforce Center interactions,**
- **People seeking community college career counseling and course catalogue information that leads to career discussions and perhaps city visits,**
- **Existing city wastewater personnel ready to get licensed or upgrade their license,**
- **Other city Public Works staff interested in moving into a wastewater career who decline to travel a distance for training, and will only train if they can stay in the region for it.**

Life gets more complicated as people start a family or have multiple jobs and schedules. We see a lot of that in our smaller cities, and accommodating them will make it possible for more of their people to get training, and reduce the travel expenses for cities.

Cities identified the needs, and the SEMLM is working on how to meet those needs for all of southern Minnesota.

SE MN Together and Welcoming America invite cities across SE MN to showcase their welcoming communities during

Welcoming Week 2021: September 10th-19th

“Belonging Begins with Us”

Mark your calendars for **May 11 at 11:30am to 12:15pm** for a short webinar with ideas for communities of all sizes to show off their welcoming spirit.

Note: Special focus of the session will be for scalable ideas useful for even the smallest of cities up to the largest in our region. More information to come by email to all cities.

What is Welcoming America?

Launched in 2009, Welcoming America has spurred a growing movement across the United States, with one in eight Americans living in a Welcoming Community. Our award-winning, social entrepreneurship model is beginning to scale globally.

A non-profit, non-partisan organization, Welcoming America is proud to support the many diverse communities and partners who are leading efforts to make their communities more vibrant places for all.

For more information: <https://welcomingamerica.org/initiatives/welcoming-week/>



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A workshop providing **preparatory team building around shared language, definitions and knowledge of equity and inclusion** and the unique attributes and challenges of your market.

▶ **Gracious Hosting**

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Equity Level Set – Shared Language around Race and Racism

A workshop providing preparatory team building around shared language, definitions and knowledge of equity and inclusion and the unique attributes and challenges of your market.

Objectives:

- Participants will gain shared language and definitions about diversity, equity, and race.
- Participants will explore barriers to talking about race and racism and the importance of such discussions.
- Participants will develop practical techniques for discussing race at individual and organizational levels.

Gracious Hosting

A workshop about developing cultural inclusivity by exploring the tenets of gracious hosting as they apply to organizations and communities.

Objectives:

- Participants will draw parallels between their own heritage and culture and those of others.
- Participants will explore universal tenets of hosting and their application to workplace and public policy.
- Participants will discuss potential policy and practice shifts that increase inclusivity.

These workshops are offered specifically to those who are members of SEMLM for \$100 each. \$250.00 of the \$350.00 cost of each session is generously covered by Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation grant funding.