

Testimony of Carol Peterson

Economic Development Coordinator, City of Milnor

701-427-9414 milnoreconomicdev@hotmail.com

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I come before you today as the Economic Development Coordinator and a citizen of Milnor, ND to support funding the Department of Commerce.

We are asking the Senate to return the grant funding for the Department of Commerce to:

- \$800,000 for the grant line item. This funding will be used for vibrancy, planning and additional grants to implement community planning.
 - We were not able to provide funding to all the great projects and planning this past biennium. With the reduction of this fund, we would need to do more cuts to the grant line item, thus hurting the state to create communities that attract and retain workforce.
- \$15M for slum and blight removal for commercial and housing.
 - The house combined both programs, which is workable, but then cut the funding in half. This pilot program has a great opportunity to help communities remove the blighted areas both on in their commercial areas as well as support the removal of housing stock and replace it with workforce housing.
- Return the additional one full time employee the governor had budgeted for the Main Street Program.
 - We are seeing incredible connection between state and federal government programs along with support to rural communities who do not have professional staff. This additional person will help in developing and implementing planning along with grant support.

Milnor has in the past been able to take part in the many programs and grants that the Department of Commerce has used to give our community the opportunity to grow and focus on our future. Small communities do not need a hand-out but a hand-up to become more appealing and self-sufficient.

We need assistance with programs that will help rural communities address the issues we are faced today. Milnor is within a ten-minute drive to one of the biggest manufacturing companies in the state, Doosan Bobcat. There are many other businesses and spinoff industries in the area that support the Bobcat factory with components and services that go into the manufacture of the Bobcat machines. These companies include Comstock Construction, Lunseth Plumbing, HA Thompson & Sons, Gates Inc., Job Erection, Grotberg Electric, ICS, (which all work on-site at the Bobcat factory) along with support industries such as Thompson Customizing, Ray Mac, Wurth Service Supply, Fargo Assembly, J & M Printing, Briton Manufacturing, trucking companies and many other auxiliary businesses working with Bobcat. We need assistance to help our area be prepared to meet the needs of today's workforce and support our citizens, our youth and our seniors.

We want you to know that small communities are not sitting idly by waiting for "hand-outs". We are looking for "hands-ups". Here are a few of our accomplishments to show how active and growth oriented we are. Many of these projects are the culmination of elbow grease, local funding and

programs and grants from the State of North Dakota. Please fund programs that can help us keep this type of momentum going so that we continue to grow.

(Programs and improvements using State grants and State programs are in **bold print**).

2018-2022

- **City purchased the grocery store, replaced all the refrigeration/freezers and made other improvements, and leased the building to entrepreneur**
- Installed natural gas throughout our community (MDU)
- **Built wildlife observation deck on Storm Lake Wildlife Refuge (west edge of town in city limits)**
- Built a pocket park next to the City Hall/Senior Center
- Fire Department built a new 8,700 sq ft fire hall in 2016. Because of this new facility with more space/training/equipment/improvements, Milnor's classification has now dropped from a Class 7 to Class 4 for insurance purposes, giving everyone better rates.
- **Painted a mural on Main Street**
- **City planted 228 trees in public spaces**
- Improvements made to our golf course and clubhouse
- A dilapidated building was removed on Main Street (old VFW building)
- **Airport installed an additional 1,000' runway to the existing runway which compliments the hanger and terminal**
- 7 new businesses added
- 10 business successions
- One business expanded multiple times (elevator)
- One business closed (barber)
- Four Businesses built new buildings - Green Iron JD (22,500 sq ft), U Stor It (3,600 sq ft), Dakota Dirt Coffee (2,560 sq ft) and IBBG (1,920 sq ft)
- City worked with the Sargent County JDA to build two spec homes in Northview Subdivision. This subdivision opened in 2016 with 49 residential lots with infrastructure to all lots. Additional homes built by private individuals.

2023 Future Plans

- **City will replace 6.5 blocks of curb, gutter, sidewalks and lighting on Milnor's Main Street business district**
- **A non-profit will be building a \$1M addition to the childcare that currently has over 50 children attending (16 employees). Original building built in 2014 (5,000 sq ft)**
- **City will plant 92 trees in our new Northview residential subdivision**
- The Veterans organizations will be building a new building
- A community group will be building a new ice cream shop, replacing a dilapidated building
- The veterinarian will finish building her 3,128 sq ft kennel (this is in addition to the 5,000 sq ft veterinarian business constructed in 2011)
- **City will build a playground in the Northview residential subdivision**
- **City will work with Hometown Housing to do a housing study**
- **City will work with Confluence Architects to do an Urban Plan for our business district and park district**
- **City plans to extend our Renaissance Zone program for an additional 5 years. RZ Program started in 2003**

Milnor is a thriving community that has grown its business district in the last twelve years with 25 new businesses. Some of these new businesses are small, one-person business, but several are anchor businesses that employ numerous people. Some of our new, larger anchor businesses are Crossroads Electric/HVAC (15 employees) Sheyenne Valley Veterinary (4 full-time and 6 part-time), Camryn's Clubhouse Childcare Center (16 employees), Swede's Plumbing (5 employees), and Dakota Dirt Coffee (new business with 4 employees, doubling their sales in one year).

Businesses that have historically been located in Milnor are still thriving and building their base such as Green Iron Equipment, which has been a part of Milnor for over 75 years and has recently built a new 22,500 square foot building in our new Ruby Industrial Addition, with plans to expand with additional construction in 2023. Milnor Grain, a main stay in our agricultural community, has seen 4 different expansions in the last twelve years. Stock Growers Bank, a part of Milnor since 1906, still working in the community also expanded and remodeled their facility in 2012, employing 8 staff. These are just a few of our lasting businesses.

Help us to continue to grow by giving us opportunities to make the improvements we need and give us the necessary tools to build by funding the ND Department of Commerce. North Dakota needs vibrant communities and with the assistance from the Commerce Department, we will make changes and grow, which will be a win/win for all of us.

Thank you for your time.