

# 10 Commandments of Working with Elected Officials 2022

## 1. Thou shalt establish a personal and professional relationship

- Get to know them as individuals... spouse name, kids, dogs...
- Do not show favoritism. Treat them all the same.
- Friend on Facebook? Follow Twitter? This is personal talk to have.

## 2. Thou shalt always be available to each elected official

- Make sure they know it is okay to call you 24/7.
- Includes department resources being available to solve problems
- Take care of small stuff = trust on big stuff

## 3. Thou shalt be prompt, timely, and thorough in responding

- Be inquisitive – when do you need it? How much do you want? How do you want it?  
Do you want me to follow-up directly and get back to you?
- It's okay to say "I'll look into it and get back to you."
- Always let a constituent know you're calling them on their behalf

## 4. Thou shalt never embarrass an elected official in public

- Understand and appreciate the position and the political role they fill.
- Communicate what is going on – never ever let them be surprised.
- If they make a mistake, correct it later privately - never in public.

## 5. Thou shalt never show animosity to an elected official or body

- Don't throw electeds under the bus with terms like "them", "they", "those people".
- Never, even in private, speak poorly of your elected official (s).
- What does it say about you when tell folks you work for a "bunch of idiots"?
- Even if they insult you, take it professionally and not personally.

## **6. Thou shalt always give thanks and praise to the elected officials**

- If a constituent thanks you – tell them it was the elected official who got it done.
- At public meetings, introduce and give them speaking parts. Prepare talking points.
- Be prepared to wear the black hat.

## **7. Thou shalt not ask elected officials to operate your department**

- If you don't want them to run your department, don't ask them to run it.
- Frame decisions as policy decisions.
- Keep them informed on operational issues they may be interested in.
- Conduct your business honestly, ethically, and professionally – share good news and bad news.

## **8. Thou shalt provide a professional recommendation**

- Have a story their neighbor can understand standing at the fence – not a statute.
- “If you're explaining; you ain't gaining”.
- Never back them into a corner - give options.
- This isn't about you. Be passionate for the organization's best – not your recommendation.

## **9. Thou shalt learn not every comment needs a response**

- Let the bad comments just go by.
- Some comments are made for political reasons and you need to let them be made.
- Know when you've sold the milk and don't try to sell the cow.
- Your only last words should be “thank you for your support”.

## **10. Thou shalt not allow a bad vote to be taken**

- Try and know your vote count before the meeting.
- If the ship is sinking, don't get off the ship. Find a way to defer the vote and come back another time – easier to get more votes than change a vote - i.e., “There are some good questions on how we'll finance this program. Let me work more with Administration and come back to you with better information on this important item.”

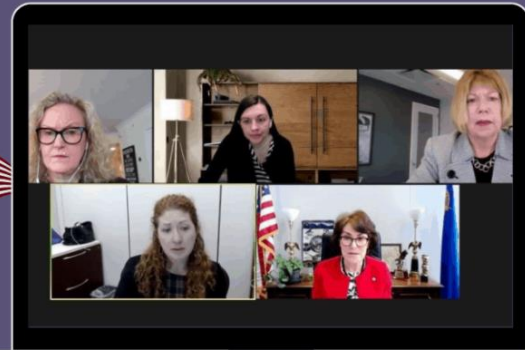


# **PUBLIC SERVICE: A NEW PERSPECTIVE**

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# Making an Impact

- Building awareness



Home Membership Sponsorship M

## 2019 Washington, D.C. Fly-In

Tuesday, June 18th, 2019 - Thursday, June 20th - Washington, D.C.

# Awareness and advocacy

We need advocates for our water and wastewater systems!

***LCC Subcommittee on Minnesota Water Policy***

<https://www.lcc.mn.gov/smwp/>

MN Public Facilities Authority

The PFA encourages clean water projects that improve water efficiency, energy efficiency, or mitigate stormwater runoff.

<https://mn.gov/deed/pfa/>

Infrastructure Month is coming up! Help us spread the word:

<http://www.apwa-mn.org/events-education/event-calendar/2022-01>

# Senate bonding tour visits

- Elysian Water Infrastructure Project
- Waseca West Water Tower Project
- Albert Lea Wastewater Treatment Facility Improvements Project
- Austin Wastewater Treatment Facility Improvements Project
- North Zumbro Sanitary District Project
- Zumbro Falls Wastewater Improvements Project
- City of Sherburne, Water Infrastructure Project
- City of Wilder Sewer Project
- Nobles County, Reading Sanitary Sewer project
- City of Tyler Sanitary Sewer Project
- City of Lake Lillian, 2022 Infrastructure Project
- City of Spicer, Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Project
- Minnetonka Beach Water Distribution
- Minnetonka Beach Water Treatment
- City of Watertown, Water Infrastructure Project
- City of Minnetonka Beach Water Infrastructure Project
- City of Mound Water Infrastructure Project
- City of Dayton, Water Treatment Project
- City of Montrose, Water Treatment Facility Project
- City of St. Joseph, County Rd. 2 Sewer Main Improvements Project
- City of Brainerd, Water Treatment Facility Improvements Project
- City of St. Michael, Reed Bed/Biosolids Facility Replacement Project
- City of Grand Rapids, Water Infrastructure Project
- Buhl Water System Project
- City of Cloquet, Water infrastructure Project



SOUTH METRO

# South St. Paul seeks funding to help fix well with high radium levels

The well's water is currently blended with other water and used on a limited basis, officials said.

By **Erin Adler** Star Tribune | JANUARY 24, 2022 — 4:16PM

South St. Paul is seeking financial help to build a water treatment plant to deal with high levels of radium, a naturally occurring carcinogen, in one of the city's wells.

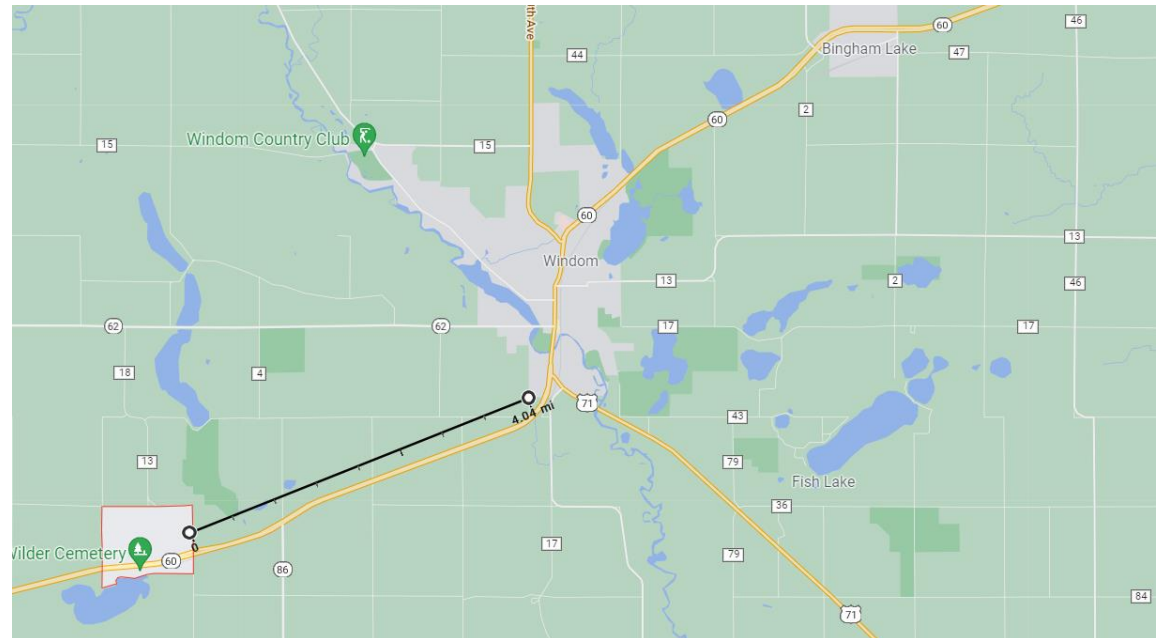
Water from the well with high radium — Well 3 — has been diluted and used only on a limited basis since 2019 when the city discovered its levels were about one and a half times what the Environmental Protection Agency and the Minnesota Department of Health allow, said Pat Dunn, South St. Paul public works director.

"Obviously, anytime there are contaminants in water it's a concern," said Sue Polka, South St. Paul city engineer. "It's one of our better producing wells."

**\$6 million**

# City of Wilder, MN

- Population 60
- 24 houses
- \$4 million interceptor needed
- \$0 local match





# Changing Policy

## CREATE A BILL

- START WITH AN IDEA
- FIND AN ALLY IN THE HOUSE OR SENATE
- ADVOCATE FOR THE BILL
- **LOBBY** CONGRESS
- TESTIFY AT HEARINGS
- DON'T STOP



# Tracking a current or past bill

[Legislature](#) > [MyBills](#)

ann stewart (annstewart)

MyBills does not send out email alerts.

Last page reload: 11:56:06 AM

Reload Page

Main Page

Edit Bills

Sub Accounts

User Info

Help

Log Out

Sub Accounts [Edit/Add](#)

Main Account

## Main Account

Description: Sub account created with new user account

Add Bill:

Add

[Shareable Link](#)

[Copy Link](#)

12 Bills - 0 Bill(s) with alerts

Show only bills with alerts

CSV of Bills

SF0005

Photo identification requirement to register to vote and to vote; voter identification card requirement; provisional ballot establishment; appropriating money

### Alerts

[View status of bill in the House](#)

[View status of bill in the Senate](#)

[Recorded roll call floor votes \(House\)](#)

[View the text of the bill](#)

[Unofficial engrossment \(if exists\)](#)

[Conference committee report \(if exists\)](#)

[Legislative Budget Office Fiscal Notes](#)

[House Research Bill Summary](#)

### Your Notes

Update

Remove bill

# Impacting Funding

- SUBMIT A BONDING REQUEST OR CREATE A BILL
- BOTH REQUIRE WORKING WITH COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND MEMBERS

# Committee lists



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## Minnesota State Senate

Search Bill (SF0001)

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## Minnesota State Senate Committees

2021 - 2022 Biennium, Ninety-second Legislature

### Committees

[Aging and Long-Term Care Policy](#)

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Members(8)

[Capital Investment](#)

Members(10)

[Civil Law and Data Practices Policy](#)

Members(8)

### Meetings & Activity

[Standing Committee Schedule](#)

View this weekly display of standard meeting days, times, and locations for standing Senate Committees.

[Upcoming Meeting Schedules](#)

View the upcoming display of the most current schedule of legislative activity. This is subject to change frequently throughout the week as meetings are scheduled, changed, or cancelled.

### Related Documents

[Select Committee Amendments](#)

An Amendment may be made available to the public before the meeting at which it will be offered or before it will appear in the Senate Journal following its adoption. Please read narrative on the linked page for an explanation of this process.

[Committee Engrossments](#)

If a committee hears and amends a bill, but does not complete action on it, committee staff will sometimes recommend that a committee



# Environment and Natural Resources



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# Capital Investment (Bonding)



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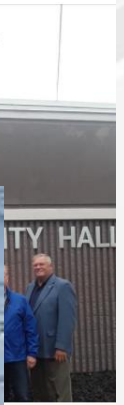
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# En

- Co
- Go
- Us



Committee tour! The committee visited infrastructure projects in Montrose, Waite Park, St. Joseph, Alexandria, and Moorehead. The committee will be back for tomorrow. Investing in critical infrastructure like roads, bridges, and higher education facilities is very important for our community. We hosted the committee today!





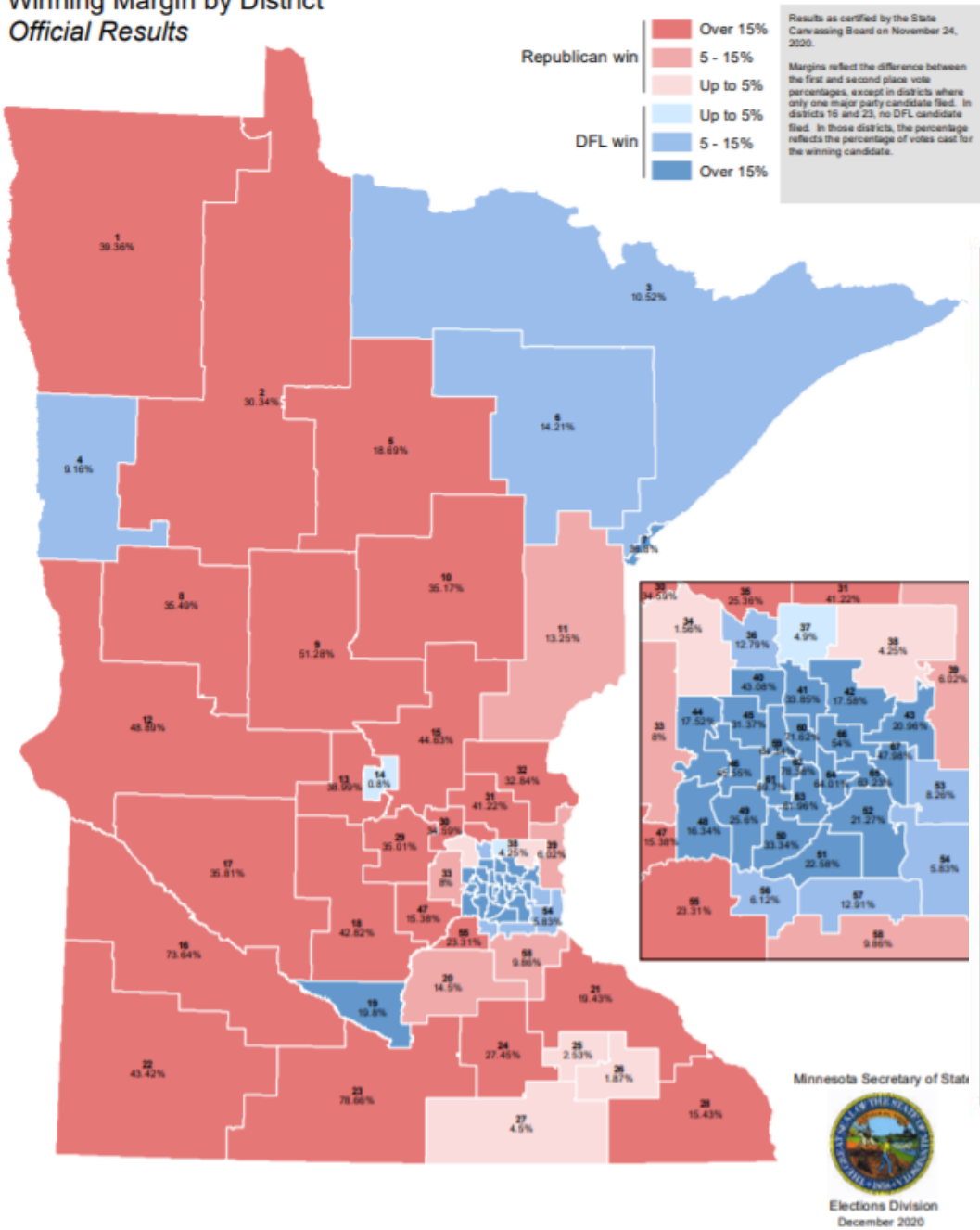
# IMPACTING THE PROCESS FROM THE INSIDE

1. Do I want the job?
2. Should I run?
3. How do I win?

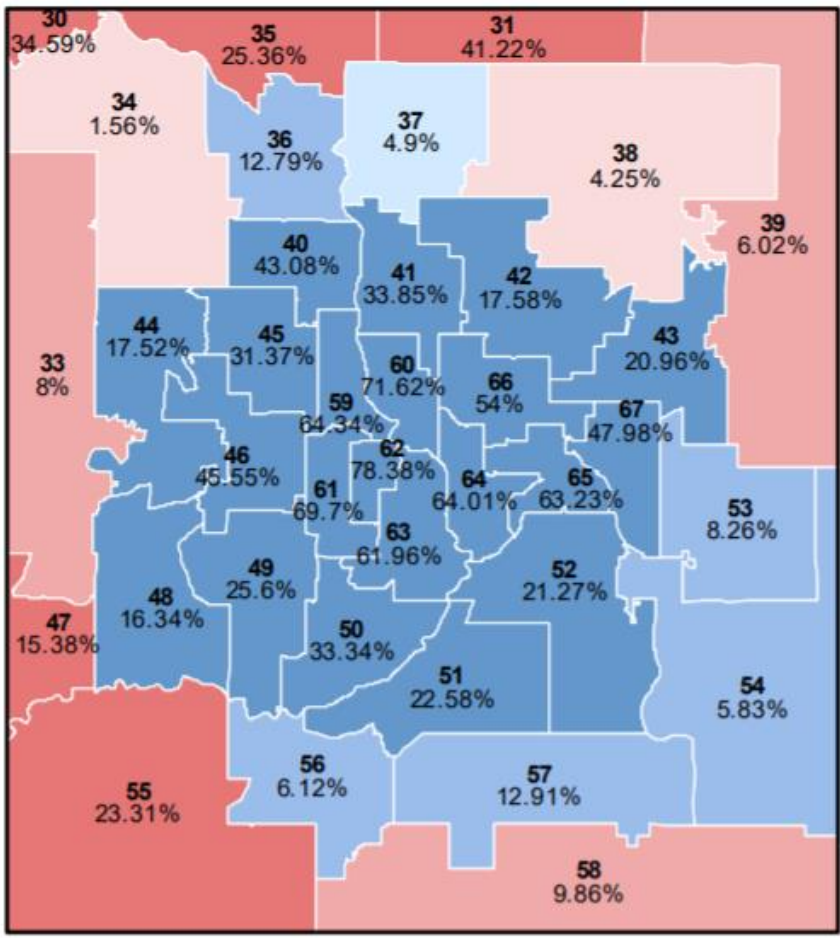


# 2020 General Election for MN Senator

Winning Margin by District  
*Official Results*



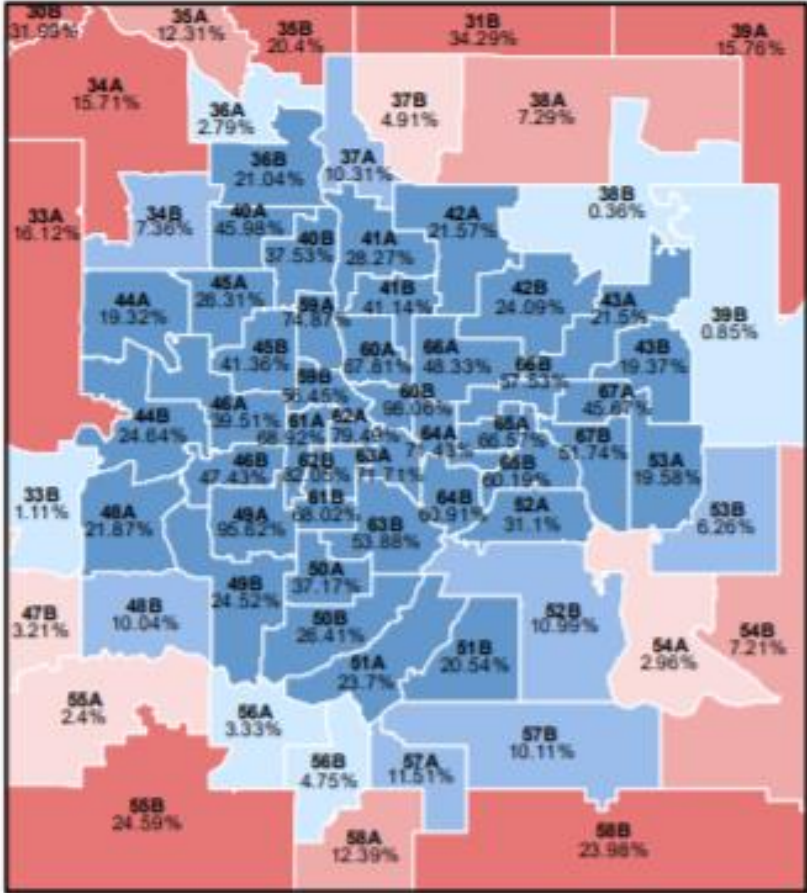
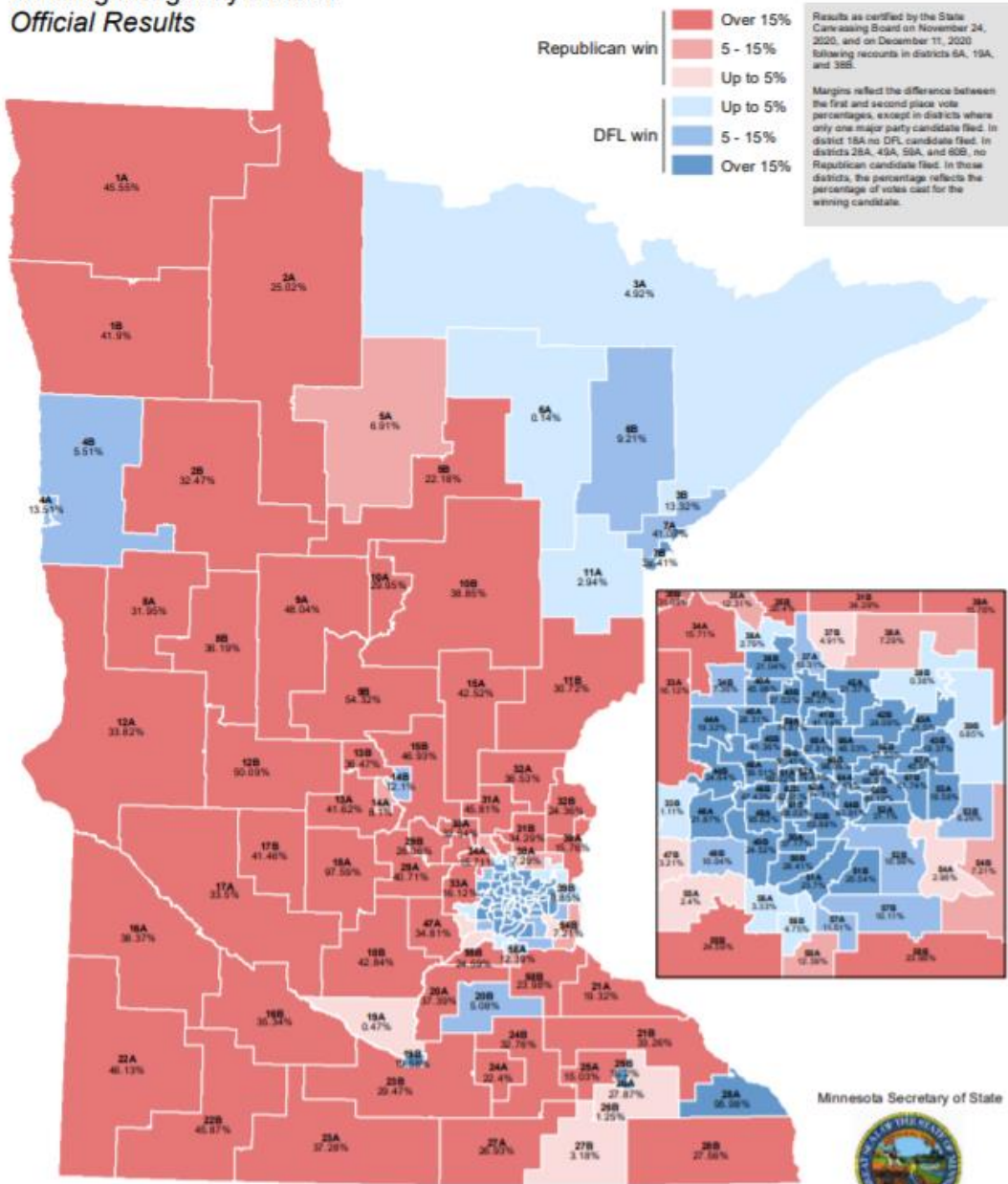
REDISTRICTING:  
February 16<sup>th</sup>?





# 2020 General Election for MN Representative

Winning Margin by District  
Official Results



# CHALLENGES

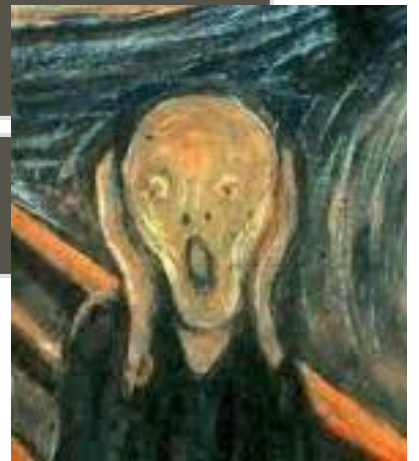
Serving in the minority with limited power

Knowing too much

Avoiding condescension

Listening to all perspectives

Exposure and vulnerability





# SUCCESSES

Lending my technical expertise

Credibility and respect

Understanding the background info

Problem solving

Connections and community

Changing the way we think about infrastructure



# Keep in touch!

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# **The 10 Commandments of Working with Elected Officials**

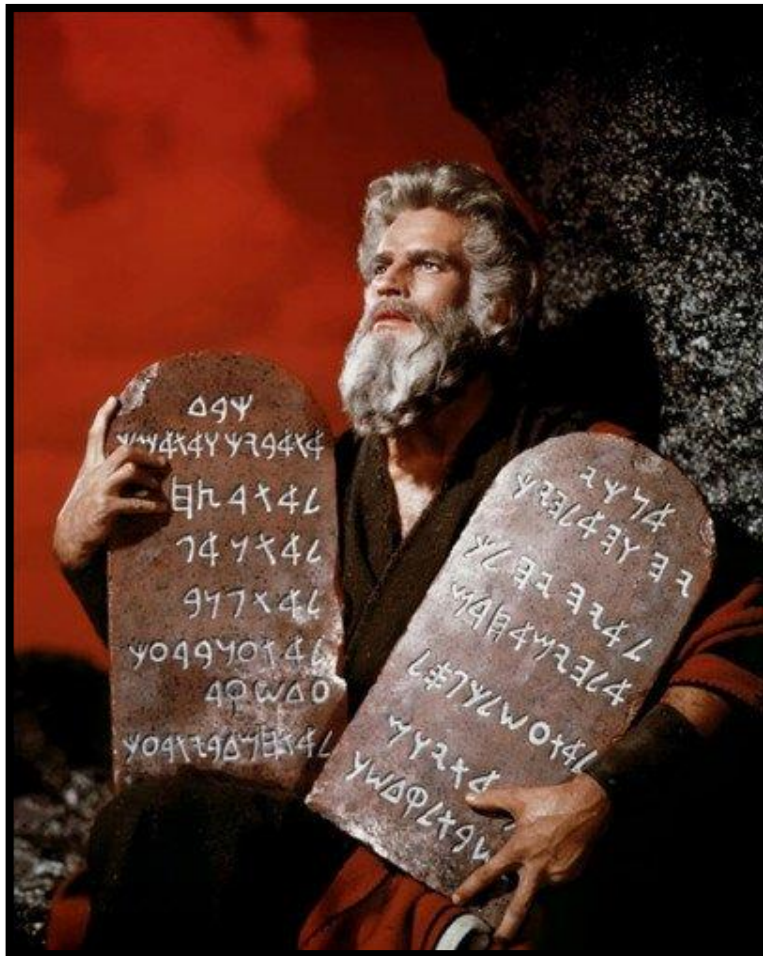
**Donald J. Theisen, P.E.  
Washington County Public Works Director**

**City Engineers Association of Minnesota  
January 27, 2022**





# The 10 Commandments.....



# #1 Thou Shalt

**Establish a personal and  
professional relationship**







## #2 Thou Shalt

**Always be available to  
each elected official**







# #3 Thou Shalt

Be prompt, timely, and  
thorough in responding



# Expectation?



# Expectation?



- **When do you need it?**
- **How much do you want?**
- **How do you want it?**
- **Do you want me to follow-up and get back to you?**

# #4 Thou Shalt

**Never embarrass an  
elected official in public**





No conversation that starts with  
“I was surprised to learn....”  
ever goes well.



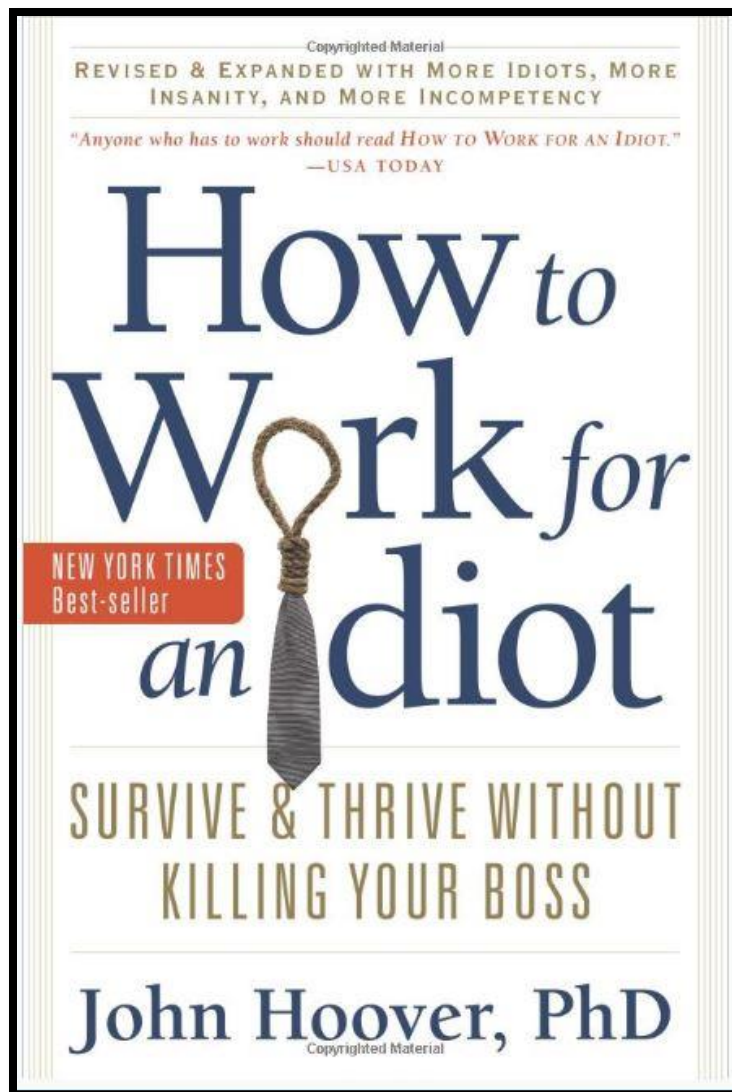


# #5 Thou Shalt

**Never show animosity  
to an elected official or  
body**



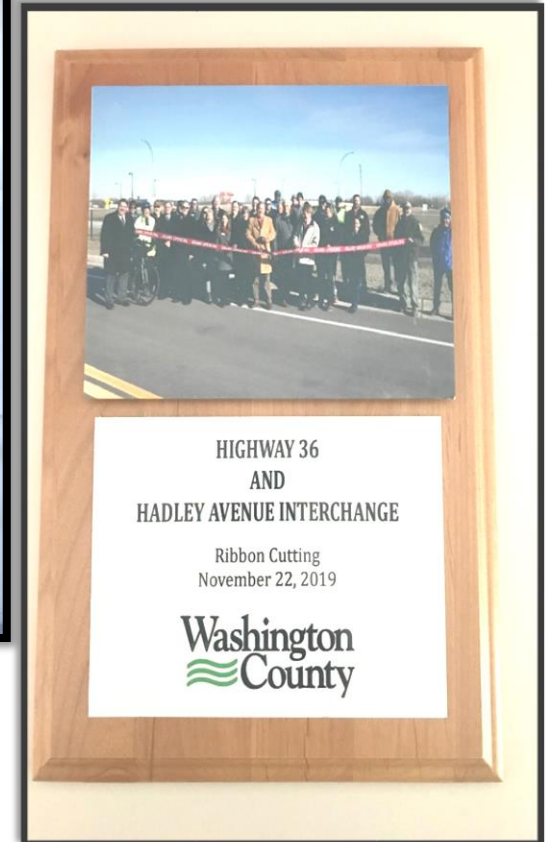




# #6 Thou Shalt

**Always give thanks and  
praise to the elected  
official(s)**





# #7 Thou Shalt

Not ask an elected official  
to operate  
your department



# #8 Thou Shalt

**Provide a professional  
recommendation**







# PCI Example



# #9 Thou Shalt

**Learn not every comment  
needs a response**

ENTREPRENEURS 1/08/2013 @ 9:07AM | 15,290 views

# Communication's Biggest Secret: Knowing When To Keep Your Mouth Closed

+ Comment Now + Follow Comments

## Sometimes, Silence is Golden

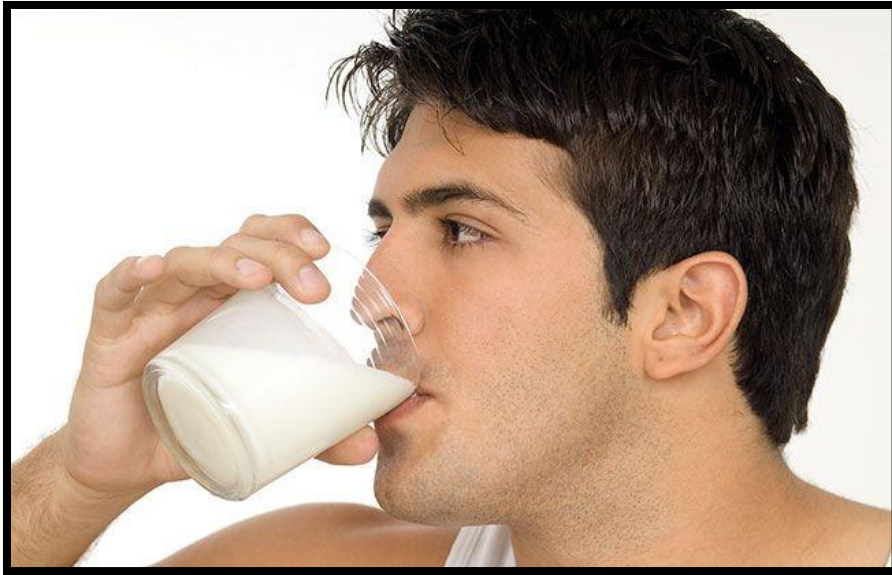
This is coming from someone who communicates for a living, and yes, it is true. I am here to tell you that the most important strategy of business communication, in my opinion, is the finely honed sense of when to *not* talk. Especially as a communicator, I can tell you (humbly, even) that the greatest business lessons I've learned have occurred during the times that my own mouth was shut.

Silence in the critical moments of a sales negotiations is a fairly widely known rule: **He (or She) Who Speaks First, Loses**. Fellow Forbes contributor [Ken Krogue](#), of [InsideSales](#), refers to this skill as **The Paul Jarman Secret of Sales**, in honor of a regional executive who uses the tactic exceptionally well.



*A communicator's greatest skill is in knowing when not to speak*







# #10 Thou Shalt

**Not allow a bad vote to  
be taken**



# Final thoughts

- It starts with respect for the elected role
- Just like the real Commandments – these are hard to live by at times
- And....

## Final thoughts

From long-time Stillwater City Attorney Dave Magnuson at retirement:

**“There have been a lot of different personalities on the council, but I’ve always said, “It’s up to me to adapt to them. It’s their city. I’m just a servant”**