



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Dan Irvin
Communications Director
(309) 433-9905
dirvin@normal.org

Statement in Response to Bloomington Council Action of 2/27/2017 on the Metro Zone Agreement

The following statement was released today by Normal Mayor Chris Koos, and members of the Normal Town Council (Cheryl Gaines, Jeff Fritzen, Kevin McCarthy, Scott Preston, R.C. McBride, and Kathleen Lorenz):

Normal, IL – March 1, 2017 – The Bloomington City Council has unilaterally and without appropriate notice terminated the Metro Zone, a 30-year partnership agreement with the Town of Normal. Through its action of February 27, Bloomington has taken steps to balance its budget at the expense of the Normal taxpayer.

The Mayor and Council of Bloomington have consistently rejected offers by the Town to discuss Bloomington's concerns with the Metro Zone agreement and to negotiate changes to address those concerns. We further indicated a willingness to sit down in good faith to negotiate terms for dissolution of the agreement so that each side felt that it was being treated fairly. In fact, the agreement requires the termination of the partnership can only occur when both parties agree. But instead of working together to develop a mutually acceptable end to this long-standing economic development partnership, the City terminated the agreement unilaterally and is seizing Normal's rightful share of the partnership income.

This action by the City, in conjunction with other recent decisions, sends a clear message that Bloomington considers itself our competitor, not our partner. The Bloomington City Council's continued refusal to participate in, or even to discuss, collaborative efforts indicates the City's adversarial attitude toward the Town.

Bloomington Mayor Tari Renner has made public comments in recent days indicating his desire to explore new partnership opportunities with the Town of Normal and to collaborate with other community partners. Actions speak louder than words. The actions of Mayor Renner and the Bloomington City Council provide indisputable evidence their pledges to cooperate and collaborate with Normal and others are hollow and disingenuous. Mayor Renner has been using BN Advantage to justify the Metro Zone action. In fact, the actions of Mayor Renner and the City Council directly contradict the collaborative mission of BN Advantage. Unilateral action is not collaboration.

The termination of the Metro Zone agreement joins a growing list of behaviors by the City that are not neighborly or collaborative, and in many cases, are adversarial, including the use of lucrative incentives to lure businesses from Normal to Bloomington, unwillingness to even discuss collaborative ventures, and unilaterally withdrawing from other intergovernmental partnerships that resulted in a severe financial hardship to the Town.

In response, first, we intend to pursue our options to protect our 30-year investment in the MetroZone economic development area and ensure that the interests of the Town are served in the dissolution of the Metro Zone, particularly the preservation of revenue sources to which the Town believes it remains legally entitled.

Second, we must identify future spending priorities to account for the annual loss of \$1.2 million through what we view as unethical and self-serving action by the City of Bloomington. To that end, all intergovernmental agreements with the City of Bloomington are currently under review to ensure that they are in the Town's best interests. We will also review our participation in community efforts calling for collaboration with the City, as we now recognize involvement with a demonstrably untrustworthy partner such as the City of Bloomington may represent an undue financial risk.

The Town of Normal is a shining example of how a progressive, well run, and functional local government can operate. Normal's success in recent years is undeniable. In recent years, we have operated under the illusion that there was a shared commitment to community collaboration. Sadly, this is obviously not the case. However, our taxpayers can rest assured that the Town of Normal will continue to be successful and prosperous.

Note that this matter will be discussed in detail at the Normal Town Council meeting on March 6.