

MET COUNCIL Governance Task Force listening session, January 9, 2024, 6 pm

Hello, I'm Bob Coughlen, Savage City Councilmember

City of Savage 2024 Legislative Priorities includes the following:

Oppose Metropolitan Council governance reform that includes separately elected officials.

- The City of Savage supports the appointment of Metropolitan Council members by the Governor with four-year, staggered terms for members to stabilize ideological shifts and provide for continuity of knowledge on the Council, which is appropriate for a long-range planning body.
- The City of Savage supports a nominating committee process that maximizes participation input by local officials, which the City of Savage has been a part of in the past.
- The City of Savage supports expanding the nominating committee from seven to 13 members, with a majority of a 13-member committee being local elected officials.
 - Of the local officials appointed to a nominating committee, two-thirds should be elected city officials, appointed by Metro Cities.
- Consideration should be given to the creation of four separate nominating committees, with committee representation from each quadrant of the region.

The following highlights I have been asked to present not as a representative of the Savage City Council, but as a concerned citizen:

Under Governance:

- As noted before, the MET Council governing body is not just a bunch of partisan friends handpicked by the Governor, but a vetted selection of non-partisan individuals qualified in transportation, housing, parks & natural resources, human services, wastewater management and regional planning.
- They have been selected by a committee of elected officials and trustee community leaders that represent our communities.
- The idea of no representation in the selection process is false and misleading
 - Appointments are selected by the representatives of the people
 - Remember that council members are subject to Senate Confirmation
- The decisions and guidance of the Met Council are not just limited to a select few at the Council Member governing level. Most of the work is done by staff and committees.
 - I am on the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) that vets and recommends action for approval

Legislative task force main objectives, to consider:

If Met Council should be a Council of Governments – that cities and counties would choose a locally elected official to serve as their Met Council director.

- Existing elected officials do not have the time or compensation for this extra responsibility.
 - I already attend up to 4 City Council meetings a month along with prep time and special events
 - 4 additional assigned organizations representing the City of Savage

- SCALE (Scott County Association for Leadership and Efficiency)
- 169 Coalition
- Suburban Transit Association
- I serve as an alternate on the MET Council Transportation Advisory Board (TAB)
 - Over 20 hours a month as a part time obligation on top of my regular job
- As an Elected official, I already have a local responsibility that shouldn't be diluted with the MET Council, giving a disservice to both institutions.
- I DO NOT support a Council of Governments

If Met Council Directors should be elected as a stand alone position – Met Council reps would run and be elected in the general election:

- Electing non-qualified partisan officials will bring partisanship to the met council, causing discord and misdirection.
- Elected representatives will think first for their communities and not for the greater regional good, pushing for projects only in their constituency and opposing needed items through NIMBY – Not In My Back Yard.
- Don't let this become another partisan fighting ground like other current political process's
- I DO NOT support an elected stand alone position

If the scope of the Met Council is appropriate and if their responsibilities should change:

- Most of the local complaints about the MET Council decision process have been because of the bureaucracy.
 - Difficulty getting projects approved
 - Failing to get projects approved
 - Having rules and guidelines put upon their community (like affordable housing and housing density)
 - Nobody likes being told what to do, just ask my kids
- The Scope and operational efficiency are the top objectives this task force should focus on.

In Conclusion

Nonpartisanship and cooperative collaboration overseeing larger regional needs have been the foundation of the successes of the MET Council over the years.

Why are we really considering a change? Please take the time to look under the veil at the unspoken reasons. Don't let a couple high profile issues be the excuse to make changes for the minority that have had an axe to grind for years. Don't chop down the tree, properly groom it for future growth.

Don't believe that new governance will change the bureaucracy and make all your dreams come true. You will still be denied things and told what to do, just with divided leadership and less functional direction.

I support keeping the current system of MET Council nominations and appointments with an emphasis on reevaluating their Scope, Responsibilities and operational processes.

Thank You,

Bob Coughlen