

## Sorensen, Cathy

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**From:** Patricia Nauman <patricia@metrocitiesmn.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 12, 2016 2:58 PM  
**To:** Patricia Nauman  
**Subject:** Four Counties' Metro Governance Proposal - Metro Cities Policy Position

Good afternoon:

Representatives from Dakota, Carver, Scott, and Anoka counties have sent a request to metro area city officials seeking support for their proposal to restructure the governance of the Metropolitan Council to one made up of county and city officials. Metro Cities has received requests by city officials for clarification of our policy positions on this topic. I am sending this communication so that you have an understanding of Metro Cities' policy positions and how they were generated, and Metro Cities' perspective on the four counties' proposal.

Metro Cities supports the current statutory appointment process for the appointment of Metropolitan Council members by the Governor, and in contrast with current law, supports staggered terms and modifications to the selection process for Metropolitan Council members to more fully involve local officials in the selection process. Metro Cities has initiated and continues to support these legislative changes. Such changes would enhance the governance of the Council by providing more local official input into member selection and stabilize ideological shifts in Council membership. These are pragmatic changes that could reasonably be accepted by the Governor and Legislature.

On the surface, the proposal by Dakota, Anoka, Scott and Carver county officials, to have the Metropolitan Council made up of local officials, would appear to be a solution to the tensions that exist between a regional level of government and local governments in the metro area. However, a 2011 Metro Cities Governance Task Force identified several problematic implications for this structure and did not recommend this model of metropolitan governance. Metro Cities subsequently has not recommended this model in its positions on the governance of the Metropolitan Council.

Task force members identified several concerns, primarily related to the incompatibility of holding the offices of local official and Metropolitan Council member. Concerns centered on:

- Local officials who are elected in one community and are appointed to serve other communities through Metropolitan Council membership could face actual conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts in determining regional investments, funding and policy.
- Local officials would be serving and voting on two political subdivisions, generally considered to be incompatible functions.
- The Metropolitan Council could become overly parochial and politicized, which could hamper regional planning, and service delivery effectiveness and efficiency.
- Appointments to the Metropolitan Council could potentially be geographically imbalanced.
- There could be an infusion of special interests and political campaigns into the selection process for Metropolitan Council members.
- Local officials would serve as both the “regulator” and “regulated” party, which are generally considered to be incompatible roles.
- This governance structure could result in less scope of expertise on regional issues on the Metropolitan Council.
- A Metropolitan Council with this structure could be more resistant to legislative oversight.

The 2011 Task Force also identified a concern about the impracticality of having sitting city officials serve as Metropolitan Council members. Unlike county commissioners, most city officials are not full time mayors or city council members. The Task Force concluded that the practical result could be to narrow the pool of potential candidates from which to draw future Metropolitan Council members.

Metro Cities' policies do align with the counties' proposal in support of staggered terms for Metropolitan Council members. Staggered terms would confer significant benefits for regional governance, providing more knowledge continuity on the Council, more political and philosophical diversity, and fewer possibilities for narrow policy agendas to emerge from the Metropolitan Council.

Metro Cities' governance policies on the Metropolitan Council recognize the importance of a separate regional government, more input by local officials into the selection process for Metropolitan Council members, staggered terms, and a high and consistent level of collaboration and engagement between local governments. Metro Cities, through its representation of metro cities' shared interests, works to ensure that city needs are accounted for all Council functions and planning, and for local officials to have adequate input and opportunities to contribute their expertise and perspectives on regional issues.

Please let me know if you would further information or if you would like to discuss these issues. I can be reached at 651-215-4002 or email: [patricia@metrocitiesmn.org](mailto:patricia@metrocitiesmn.org)

Sincerely,

Patricia Nauman  
Executive Director  
Metro Cities