

Name: Bert Chamberlain

Campaign Contact Information:

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Political Party:

Independent

Are you the incumbent? No

How long have you resided in Moorhead? 22 years

Background for public office: None

If you ran for elected office but were not elected, please list those races: None

BACKGROUND

Please describe your current employment status:

This past June I retired from 30 years of being in the education field, 2 years as an airborne MP, and 2 years as a counselor for teenagers at the Willmar State Hospital Adolescent Unit.

Why are you running for this office?

I was an assistant principal and teacher for Moorhead School District for 22 years. I coached for private sport clubs, the park department and for Moorhead high school women's swim team. I have volunteered with Riding On Angel's Wings. My wife is a paraprofessional for the school district, she has been the swim and water exercise instructor for the city for the past 20 years. My son went to Moorhead schools found his advocacy from his art teach and had a great experience with the swim team as a diver.

Moorhead has been good to my family for its employment opportunities, art programs, athletics, and friendships. The citizens help take care of each other from sandbagging to shoveling snow off the neighbors driveway. People who live in this area give back to those in need.

What does my family do when we go shopping? It is mainly Walmart but then we go to the mall in Fargo. For fast food we do eat in Moorhead but we go out mostly to Fargo for the nice places to eat. I buy my vehicles in Fargo, my recreational trailer was bought

in Fargo, my bicycles were bought in Fargo, I go to the big Scheels in Fargo and for some unique groceries we go to Fargo and get great gas prices there also.

About half of the teaching staff in Moorhead live in Fargo. There are a number of businesses spaces that are not filled in Moorhead. Retail businesses rotate in and out of Moorhead. Downtown Moorhead is starting to look nice and then you drive by Coaches and that spoils the view along with 2 foot weeds that grow on the main streets.

For 20 years 4 major studies by Moorhead have repeatedly stated the citizens want multi-use paths. The citizens want to be connected with the multi-use paths to downtown Moorhead, Fargo, Dilworth and to the other parks and that has not happened. The dog park is out of the way for most people and it is boring compared to what it should be like. The parks are nice but are not exciting when you compare Fargo with its skateboard park, fun basketball court which is located just a couple of blocks from the outdoor swim pool which is by a wooded park and you can rent bikes to ride on the trails.

Fargo has retail businesses, industrial industries, year round theater and updated movie theaters. They also have a wide variety of fast food chains, specialty restaurants, hospitals, the Fargo Dome, and the Redhawks. Fargo has been recognized nationally for its business climate, its friendly bike atmosphere, the Fargo Marathon, technology and the list goes on. Moorhead is known for the Viking ship that a teacher built and as my brother-in-law says, we are good at sandbagging.

Moorhead city counsel has done an excellent job for flood protection, putting in the quite railroad zone, the city is working on the underpass by the high school, and trying to put back the off ramp on 94 so people can exit to get to Menards and other businesses. However, all of that has to do with being reactionary it is not developing a vision to give the citizens a 'Wow' feeling for its city.

MB Johnson Park and other parks are having new buildings put up because it needs to and funding became available. A mountain bike trail is being developed by Paramount Sports of Fargo at MB Johnson Park and is not being done by the city. I started 'Friends of MB Johnson Park' to clean up the place after the flood leaves because the city does not keep the trail clean of logs and branches. I wrote a \$23,000 grant with PENS to hopefully receive cross-country skis for the city and the school district because there are no skis to rent. I will also be writing a \$50,000 grant to hopefully build two bridges at MB Johnson Park to expand the trails. The outdoor swim pool is nice and used a lot but it doesn't compare to other updated swim pools. The parks are adequate and that is it.

The city counsel has a great comprehensive plan but give no vision for the citizens to follow and believe in. The counsel has not put in place a strategic plan that includes higher education, businesses, engineers, and citizens. The cities comprehensive plan did not include those people. My relatives who live in the Twin Cities hear about why people should move to Barnseville they don't hear anything about Moorhead except for

the flooding. The only thing my relatives who live in Atlanta know about Moorhead is we make a lot of sandbags. Even with acres of land that is ready for businesses to move in nothing has happened other than Menards and a couple of restaurants. Where are the industrial enterprises that can pay people a wage to pay for homes, cars, fun, and education?

The counsel has done a poor job of informing the citizens of the 1.7 million debt the city will be in if major changes don't happen. The latest mailing coming from the city (a couple of weeks ago) didn't mention at all of the fiscal issues at hand. The city will be reacting to citizens outrage rather than pulling them in to find solutions. Again, another example of not having a vision, planning, and implementing goals for the city as a whole.

The reasons I want to be on the counsel is to implement a strategic plan that looks at a 2 year, 6 year and 10 year plan. The reason to use strategic planning means a commitment to complete the goal. The following are strategic goals that must be met and why I want to be on the city counsel:

Goal one: The city needs to complete the multi path system so it: 1. Has paths that go to downtown. 2: To complete all segments so they are connected. 3: To have the path system united with Fargo, West Fargo, and Dilworth. Committees have made recommendations and thousands of dollars have gone into surveys for over 20 years. Multi paths have been a number one priority by the citizens of Moorhead for two decades it is time to get this done.

Goal two: Mayors, city councils, and businesses of Moorhead have missed out over and over again of getting light industry to our city. City officials have admitted that even though there has been requests and discussions to get light industry to our committee it has not happened. City officials have said they could have done a better job in advertising. There are great opportunities that have not been put together to make this happen. A team from the universities, businesses, public school, the city, and citizens need to be formed to get this done.

Goal three: How things look are important. Even with revitalized and new buildings along the river buildings like Coaches ruin the look of downtown. Even with new sidewalks and with some businesses starting to take care of their property there are blocks of 1-3 foot weeds growing out of the sidewalks that is unacceptable. Again a team needs to get together to get our downtown cleaned up.

Goal four: New housing have been built in Moorhead but when you look at student enrollment for the public schools it has been stagnate. Why does the housing industry have concerns of building in Moorhead? Why is there a negative feeling of dealing with the city for housing by the developers (stated to me by developers)? Even with the city documenting that taxes and infrastructure is on par with Fargo and other cities their continues to be a problem. Again, we need a total team to develop a plan that brings in housing with families.

Goal five: To continue the process of flood protection and to get federal permission to rebuild the off ramps off highway 94 to get to businesses like Menards.

Goal six: The above goals must be met. Even with having to reduce the city budget the city must work with its citizens to reshape the budget. The city must meet the above goals and realign other programs to meet the budget short fall and to increase taxes as needed to meet the budget deficit.

What previous experiences do you feel has prepared you for this office?

I was an airborne military policeman, teacher, assistant principal, principal at public and private schools. Which in part means I have worked with federal, state, district, and private budgets. I have worked with the city, businesses, higher education, and volunteer groups. I have been involved with sports, recreation, hired and dismissed employees, fund raiser, created programs for students and schools and I have written \$500,000 worth of grants for Moorhead Schools. I have know how to brings diverse groups together, plan, create, implement, support, review, and make changes as needed to have successful programs. My background gives me what it takes to help Moorhead to become a great city. I have heard people say and I agree that Moorhead is now the little sister of Fargo, West Fargo, and even Dilworth. Moorhead should be leading not following like it has for the past 22 years that I have been here.

Issues

**How would you encourage job creation and retention in the Moorhead area?
Please describe the model, tools, incentives that you could support to boost economic development.**

Business people have stated to me and confirmed by city officials that Moorhead has an image issue of wanting to help business be successful in Moorhead. There are already tax incentives, grants, low interest loans, and infrastructure. Still, retail business come and go in Moorhead. Having said that, what is making the retail/restaurant businesses who are succeeding what makes them successful? I would pull business leaders together, with city officials, higher education, and citizens to come up with a strategic plan to address this problem. Part of the plan will include advertising a positive image of Moorhead (radio, TV, WEB and other media sources), develop an information pamphlet that a business person would need to understand why they should move to Moorhead, and have people available to meet and discuss with prospects of why their business should come to Moorhead. Review the process, make adjustments, set time frames and attack the issues again.

In you opinion, what makes Moorhead unique that poses either challenges or advantages for business?

I have seen retail businesses come and go for 22 years in Moorhead. My question is why haven't you and the city gotten this done? I do congratulate the city in having Menards come to our town but it is a retail business not light industry. Also, there are 3 new restaurants coming to town and I expect they will be successful. But there are too many buildings with empty spaces. It is a bad image to have.

In a recent meeting with city officials they agreed with me the city has not done a good job in advertising to get business. One counsel person said they asked the president of Moorhead University to keep the proposal of Division 1 hockey in town and not go over to Fargo. The counsel person had good intention just a poor presentation for not presenting a strategic plan to develop a Division 1 hockey rink for Moorhead University with the city.

There are no unique advantages by living in Moorhead or having a business in Moorhead. If there was then why isn't there light business (not retail) and an influx of families that would increase student population for the school district? There are no unique recreational opportunities. No hospitals. There are already appropriate tax incentives and infrastructure as stated by the city that compare with other nearby cities. There are roads to the highway and railroad access. Moorhead still has empty buildings, weeds, and no light industry.

Here lies a part of the problem. Again I say, there is no cohesive strategic plan or commitment. You don't go over to the university president without a plan let alone by yourself. As stated above the city needs a strategic plan that includes city officials, educators, business people and citizens. Include time frames, review, and adjust as needed and changes will come to Moorhead. Towns the same size and smaller than Moorhead with the same fiscal issues have used strategic planning to make a dull town to wow town. We need to use their examples to make positive changes for our town not excuses.

Given the state budget constraints, how would you ensure the preservation of essential city services such as public safety, parks, streets and water the citizens expect? What cuts would you support or new revenues could be created?

The federal government and the state have done a disservice to our cities. Having said that we need to deal with the budget. 20% of the cities budget are items (examples are: paper and equipment purchases) while 80% has to do with people. First, you take the advice of the department head to reduce items in their budget. You also need to increase fees. There will be a need to freeze hiring. From a meeting with the department directors the hiring freeze in my opinion will not harm essential city services.

If the reduction of budget items and hiring freezes does not help to stop the budget deficit then further personnel freezes or reductions need to be done and probably programs will need to be reduced.

I believe a big problem the mayor and city counsel will have is the none support by the citizens. The reason for negative public support is the city government has done a poor job of informing the public of the cities financial crisis. A couple of weeks ago a pamphlet went out by the city which covered a variety of items but not one word was mentioned about the deficit the city has. It will be very difficult to pass any tax increase because the public has not been properly informed nor involved in the budget process. There is no appropriate time frame to address a 1/2 cent increase to the public of why this will be needed. I believe it must be done if the other budget cuts, reductions, and fee increases do not reduce the deficit.

How much of a priority do you see securing permanent flood protection if for Moorhead and the region? What challenges do you foresee and what solution would you propose?

For the past 10 years the city has done a great job in securing permanent flood protection. What is going to be a challenge is working with North Dakota to work on the regional problem of flood protection. The issues will be compounded by working with the federal government. However, I believe at this time the federal, state, and local governments will come to an agreement for a plan that will still take 10 years to complete. Continued meetings and contracts need to be signed before the actual works begins. There is no indication the flood retention plan will not happen at this time.

What would be your three top priorities as a council member?

1. A plan is needed to reduce the deficit but find ways to increase revenue for specific programs such as having a 1/2 cent tax to be used to complete the multi-use paths.
2. A strategic plan is needed to bring in light industry.
3. A strategic plan is needed complete the multi-use pathway.

Is there anything else you would like Chamber members to know about you or your candidacy?

I am the person with a background that:

- * Worked with Moorhead School District and built programs for students and teachers
- * Volunteer
- * Worked with business people to create programs for students
- * Worked with higher education professors to create programs for students and teachers
- * Understands how strategic planning works and will get it done for the city of

Moorhead

- * Understands and works with budgets to stay out of deficits, create revenue, and plan for the future
- * Understands how to keep the public informed, to get public input, and follow-up with the information to move the city in a positive and productive direction