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City of Duluth - Communications Office

411 West First Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-730-5230 | www.duluthmn.gov | Emily Larson, Mayor

For more information contact Pakou Ly, Public Information Coordinator 218-730-5309

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SUBJECT: City of Duluth Combining Departments for Greater Impact

BY: Pakou Ly, Communications Office

City of Duluth Combining Departments for Greater Impact

[Duluth, MN] – With a commitment to customer service, further reducing red tape and better aligning efforts in high-impact customer areas, the City of Duluth is combining two departments - Business & Economic Development and Planning & Construction Services – into one. Effective today, Planning & Economic Development will operate under the direction of Keith Hamre, with his appointment pending final confirmation by the Duluth City Council at their Dec 10th council meeting.

Keith Hamre has been serving the City of Duluth for 21 years in a variety of roles – most recently as Director of Planning & Construction Services. Hamre will hold this position and work to transition the two departments into one cohesive work group until his retirement in August 2019. A broad candidate search will commence in the spring of 2019 for his replacement.

“I have been committed to providing the best quality services since I started working with the City in 1997. Our staff does phenomenal work, and they take great pride in finding new and better ways to achieve real and meaningful results. Under this arrangement, we aim to build on that excellent history, where the public will experience better customer care, improved communications, greater consistency in the project development process and overall stronger alignment between mission and vision of our organization,” said Hamre.

Mayor Emily Larson is eager to get to work with this new configuration, “Duluth is on the front edge of important economic and community growth, and it’s time for us to more fully build out an integrated staffing approach to development. From supporting the launch of our Medical District projects to harnessing the full potential of Opportunity Zones, it is critical that we are integrating the values and vision of our comprehensive plan, Imagine Duluth: 2035, into all that we do, and responding to the call for greater efficiency, clarity and interdepartmental communication to better benefit our development and business community.”

The change was well received by the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce. “I am delighted that Mayor Larson and Noah Schuchman selected Keith Hamre to lead this transition. I have worked alongside Keith for over twenty years. He is a talented, intelligent and hard-working leader who will successfully lead this important effort. Mayor Larson’s leadership team can count on the Chamber to partner with them as they bring structure to their enhanced economic development initiative,” said David Ross, President & CEO of the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce.

This is the first organizational announcement made with Noah Schuchman as the City of Duluth’s Chief Administrative Officer. “At the City of Duluth, our focus is on serving the best interests of the community. By merging these departments, our staff will be able to increase communication across divisions and continue to remove barriers for the public. I thank them for their hard work and dedicated service. Special thanks to Keith Hamre for taking on this additional responsibility – his retirement will be a loss to the City of Duluth, but his energy and vision will be critical to moving this new department into the future.”

The newly formed Planning & Economic Development department will include 33 team members in the divisions of Economic Development, Construction Services & Inspections and Community Planning. This change brings the City of Duluth into alignment with major Minnesota cities in closely tying economic development and community planning staff to better serve the community. The department is located in room 110 of Duluth City Hall with Economic Development staff temporarily housed in Room 402.

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