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**City of Duluth - Communications Office**

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**DATE: 7/26/2019**

**SUBJECT: City Announces new Planning & Development Division Hires**

**BY: Kate Van Daele, Public Information Officer**

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**City Announces new Planning & Development Division Hires**

[Duluth, MN] The City of Duluth today announced the hiring of a new Planning & Development Division manager and economic developer.

Ben VanTassel was promoted to serve as the City's manager of Planning & Development Division. Van Tassel has been with the City for the past ten years and served most recently as a senior planner within the division.

"For ten years, Ben has excelled at grant management, and community development efforts," said Adam Fulton, deputy director of Planning & Economic Development Department. "His leadership within the department continues to serve all residents of Duluth with the objective of positive outcomes and meaningful community engagement."

VanTassel has 13 years of planning experience in the public sector. After completing an undergraduate degree in Urban & Regional Studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth, VanTassel went to work at the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission. There, he worked on a variety of planning efforts including trail planning, natural resource management, comprehensive plans, and a variety of other community planning efforts. He then joined the City of Duluth in the Community Development (now Planning & Economic Development Department) where he led the Department's overall management of state and federal grant programs that were passed through to local nonprofits.

VanTassel is proud of many accomplishments that he has contributed to in his time with the City. He served as a leader in the transformational two-year process to develop the Imagine Duluth 2035 Comprehensive Plan update, in addition to several redevelopment and rehabilitation projects for neighborhood facilities throughout Duluth. He also helped with several Duluth neighborhood development and implementation plans and managed the city's community development program.

After over a decade in the public sector, VanTassel has refined skills in project management, government processes, vision development, messaging, and leadership. In 2018, he graduated with his Master's in Business Administration, with a focus in Leadership and Change.

Eleanor Bacso joins the City of Duluth's Planning and Development division as an economic developer. The Economic Developer position is one of three positions under the City's newly formed housing team within the Planning & Development Division.

"We are very excited to welcome Eleanor," said Ben Van Tassel, manager of Planning and Development division. "Her connections within the community, paired with her private and public sector work, will be a huge asset for the division. We look forward to what she will accomplish in her tenure here."

Previously, Bacso worked in the non-profit sector at the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce. She helped to organize, lead, and facilitate events for Chamber members and their employees. Bacso also has experience working within the private sector in the Twin Cities.

Both Eleanor and her husband attended the College of St. Scholastica and decided to make Duluth their home. She enjoys any outdoor activity, among her favorites, are: mountain biking, running, hiking and cross-country skiing.

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