Coincidentally, I was part of a panel discussion yesterday at the MN Association of Government Communicators annual fall conference. It included five of us "more experienced" (older) professionals sharing tips we wish we'd known when we started our careers.

One of my tips was about taking photos. I shared that standing on a chair and shooting down is a good way to make sure you can see all the faces. It makes it harder for shorter people to get lost behind taller people. And I mentioned to make sure to grab a chair without wheels 😊

Dana Kazel

Communications Manager

218-725-5049 (office)

218-591-2219 (cell)

Thanks Dana. That's good to know. I just really didn't want staff thrown under the bus and I want you to know I appreciate you.

I think the chair photos show coordination and fortitude.

We also should purchase something a bit safer. :)

From: Dana Kazel <KazelD@StLouisCountyMN.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 23, 2025 7:28:48 PM
To: Ashley Grimm <GrimmA@StLouisCountyMN.gov>
Cc: Kevin Gray <GrayK@StLouisCountyMN.gov>
Subject: RE: Media message

Hi Ashley,

I appreciate you looking out for me, but I don't feel like I've been put in an awkward position. Having signed the NDA, I'm not able to comment on the conversations I've been part of. Conversely, had I not signed the NDA, I also wouldn't have been able to comment because I wouldn't have been part of any conversations. Either way, my response has been/would be to direct people to the City of Hermantown.
(The uncomfortable part now is waiting to see which unflattering photo of me Mr. Ramos selects to post with the story. My guess is it'll be one of the pictures of me standing on a chair taking a photo at a Board meeting. He likes to make fun of those.)

I'm certainly not opposed to further conversation on this topic. I agree that Board direction would be a good thing to avoid any questions in the future.

BTW, here's the response I sent to Mr. Ramos:
I was asked to sign the NDA by Darren Jablonsky, our director of Economic and Community Development. The purpose of me signing was so that I could be made aware of the situation and be part of conversations related to it.

As communications manager, I am part of the leadership team, which means I am included in many conversations. This enables me to assist with messaging when needed as well as voice the concerns that I would anticipate being raised so that we'd have accurate and helpful information ready to share should this proposal ever move beyond the evaluation stage.

My response to media inquiries has been to direct them to the City of Hermantown and their website because this is a project being considered for their jurisdiction where they are the zoning authority.

Have a good evening!

Dana Kazel

Communications Manager
218-725-5049 (office)
218-591-2219 (cell)

From: Ashley Grimm <GrimmA@StLouisCountyMN.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 23, 2025 11:35 AM
To: Kevin Gray <GrayK@StLouisCountyMN.gov>; Dana Kazel <KazelD@StLouisCountyMN.gov>
Subject: Media message

I was given a heads up about the NDA signed by Dana. I wasn't aware of this when I brought the NDA ban forward. I really hope leadership responds and takes accountability because this is not the fault of individual staff members. County admin and the county board should have clear direction for staff and for elected officials around NDAs that takes into consideration our roles to the public. In absence of that we have put our communications staff in a position she does not deserve to be in, and should not be put in again.

Ashley

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