



# Meet your Cologne elected leaders

January 2025



## **Mayor Matt Lein:**

Lived in Cologne for 23 years. Served as Mayor for 11 years (including new re-elected); served 4 years on the City Council, 6 years on the Planning Commission.

**Q: In your opinion, what is Cologne's greatest strength as a community and what is our greatest need/opportunity within the City?**

**A:** Our greatest strength is the same reason today as it was when I moved to this City, "the small town feel." From the Hollanders Baseball to Glad Days to the fundraising events – all bring out the community as one to help and have fun. There is a sense of pride living in Cologne; you can always rely on your neighbor to help with anything. Our greatest need would have to be new volunteers. It can feel like you're moving a mountain to make any one of these events appear seamless. With many hands the largest task can be broken off into bite-sized chunks. The Cologne Lions, Glad Days Committee, Hollander games and Bountiful Baskets are all great opportunities to volunteer.

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**Q: Top strategic priorities for the City of Cologne?**

**A:** My goal has always been to "fix Cologne." We had a real issue with most of our infrastructure. From the tools that City staff were using down to the sewer lines running under our deteriorating roads needed help. The last thing on the agenda is a WasteWater Plant redesign. Our capacity has almost been reached with our current system. If Cologne wants to grow, this will need to be addressed. The final design is being completed and then we need to go out for bids. With a project this size, we will need help to offset the cost. Cologne is too small to afford the upgrade, but won't grow without it. After that, we will need to plan on how to grow Cologne in a responsible way as to not diminish the "small town feel" of Cologne.

**Q: As taxpayers, how can city residents become more informed/engaged with the City of Cologne, issues and funding priorities?**

**A:** On the City website are a phone number and an email that I can be reached directly. I have a Mayor page on Facebook that goes into detail about many issues in Cologne. I can also be messaged there. If you have a bigger issue, then staff can do some research into your issue before you address the Council. The best way to be informed is to sit in on our regular meetings, even if you don't have anything to say. There are several that are there twice a month to see firsthand what is coming. I am also always available if you see me out, feel free to walk up to me and say "Hi." I am happy to help.

**Jeri Bowers, City Council:**

Lived in Cologne just shy of 10 years, 31 years in Carver County. Newly elected to the Council, 1 year on the Planning Commission.

**Q: In your opinion, what is Cologne's greatest strength as a community and what is our greatest need/opportunity within the City?**

**A:** Acceptance. We need to rejuvenate Main Street.

**Q: Top strategic priorities for the City of Cologne?**

**A:** Wastewater treatment plant, re-service some of the streets

**Q: As taxpayers, how can City residents become more informed/engaged with the City of Cologne, issues and funding priorities?**

**A:** Website, newsletter to residents.

**Sarah Bruss, City Council:**

I have lived in Cologne for 11 years. I have served on the City Council for 8 years, beginning my third term in 2025, which will mark my ninth year. In addition, I have had the honor of serving as Acting Mayor and active member of the Personnel Committee, contributing to decisions and strategies that strengthen the City's workforce and operations.

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**Q: In your opinion, what is Cologne’s greatest strength as a community and what is our greatest need/opportunity within the City?**

**A:** In my opinion, Cologne’s greatest strength is the sense of community. Our residents are deeply engaged, supportive and committed to making our city a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. Our greatest opportunity lies in expanding infrastructure and resources to support our growing population while preserving the small-town charm and close-knit community spirit that makes Cologne unique.

**Q: Top strategic priorities for the City?**

**A:** Infrastructure development – Enhancing roads, utilities and public spaces to accommodate growth and improve quality of life. 1. Economic growth: Attracting new businesses and supporting local entrepreneurs to strengthen the local economy. 2. Community engagement: Promoting programs and events that foster civic pride and inclusivity.

**Q: As taxpayers, how can City residents become more informed/engaged with the City of Cologne, issues and funding priorities?**

**A:** Attend City meetings: Residents are encouraged to attend City Council and committee meetings to stay informed about decisions affecting the community. Access online resources: Utilize the City website, social media platforms and newsletters for updates on projects, budgets and initiatives. Engage with leaders: Reach out to City Council members and participate in public forums to share concerns and ideas. Volunteer for Committees: Join City committees or taskforces to contribute directly to planning and implementation efforts. Participate in surveys: Provide feedback through surveys and community discussions to help shape the City's priorities.

I am deeply honored and grateful to serve you for the next four years. I remain committed to listening to your voices, addressing our shared challenges and building on the strengths that make our City of Cologne so special. Thank you for allowing me to represent you and serve you.

### **Selmer Olson, City Council:**

I have lived in Cologne for almost 19 years and was elected to the City Council in November 2024. I have not served in any other roles for the City of Cologne.

**Q: In your opinion, what is Cologne’s greatest strength as a community and what is our greatest need/opportunity within the City?**

**A:** We are a growing small town on the rise. A great place to raise a family and “settle” down. Centrally located, with a bright future for growth/expansion, with the ability to maintain our small town charm. Greatest need/opportunity: A strategy for future growth – what do we want Cologne to look like?

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**Q: Top strategic priorities for the City?**

**A:** A priority of mine is to work with the Mayor and other council members to not only look to the future growth/expansion, but to develop a long-term plan for reinvesting in our current infrastructure and amenities to continue to provide quality services to all of Cologne's residents.

**Q: As taxpayers, how can City residents become more informed/engaged with the City of Cologne, issues and funding priorities?**

**A:** Get involved, no one person or group has all the answers; join a group, attend meetings, ask questions. I have a lot of pride in Cologne and I know I'm not alone. I look forward to serving the residents.

**Carol Szaroletta, City Council:**

Council member for 10 years; 2 years remaining in term. Planning commission for 10 years, 1 year remaining.

**Q: In your opinion, what is Cologne's greatest strength as a community and what is our greatest need/opportunity within the City?**

**A:** Cologne's greatest strength is its people. Cologne, like a lot of small towns, has community-minded people who are more than eager to jump in when needed. This is what the Communities of Belonging is all about. Our greatest need is land to build our City upon, to be able to attract companies and businesses. Also, we could maybe work on a tax credit incentive program to attract these businesses.

**Q: Top strategic priorities for the City?**

**A:** As part of the City's strategic planning, we repaired the City streets/sewers for future growth. We have worked with the State Legislature to help fund our expansion of our Waste Treatment Plant. We are already working on a strategic plan to revitalize our downtown area. The Planning Commission has begun to locate buildings that need addressing.

**Q: As taxpayers, how can City residents become more informed/engaged with the City of Cologne, issues and funding priorities?**

**A:** I think we have done a better job of keeping citizens informed over the last year. We have a website that is up-to-date and the new newsletter. Our Mayor and City Administrator have kept the Council informed on what they are working on from week to week so we can pass that information to citizens. It must be working because more citizens are attending Council/Planning meetings and our citywide functions are well attended. It's nice to see more citizens becoming involved.

