Please find below details regarding a recent legal issue regarding our city seal. I have also attached the details for this issue.

Please feel free to contact me with questions.

Recently, the City of Buhler received a letter from the Freedom from Religion Foundation. This letter was a complaint regarding the organization's perceived constitutional violations of the City of Buhler's city seal which contains, among other things, a cross. Additionally, the compliant sighted issues with the City's updated sign in Becker Park. In summary, the compliant stated that the City was violating the United States Constitution because the city seal and sign, in their opinion, provided an endorsement of Christianity.

I have spent the last month researching the details of this issue and also met with the City Council on October 30th. At the meeting, we discussed a number of legal opinions provided to the city. We not only solicited the advice of our City Attorney, but we sought additional opinions from another local attorney as well as opinions from the Christian Law Center and the Center for Law and Justice. Unfortunately, every legal opinion we received indicated that our City has no supportable case in the event the city was sued to legally force us to remove the seal and sign. Even more disturbing was the fact that if lost, the city would be obligated to pay all the legal fees of the prevailing party. These costs could easily take substantial amounts of the city's very limited budget resources.

Because of the legal times we live in, the city is unable to disclose many of the actual opinions provided by the legal resources we obtained. Any disclosure of these opinions would likely harm our attorney-client privilege and only put the city at further risk. I know our community will still want answers so in an effort to help our residents understand this issue, I have decided to release the two outside legal opinions from the Christian Law Center and the Center for Law and Justice. These opinions will be available on the city's website and at the city office.

The City has decided that it is in the best interest of our community to redesign the city seal without specific reference to religion.

I believe I can speak for all of the members of the city council in saying that on a personal level we are utterly disappointed and frustrated by this matter. We recognize the significant and important history reflected in the current city seal and certainly want to do nothing to forget this history. At the same time, we as city leaders took an oath to uphold the Constitution. These same Constitutional rights which drew the first settlers to Buhler bring these changes to our city seal today.

Finally, it is very important to note that this decision has nothing to do with what residents of Buhler can do on private property; it is simply a decision of what can be done on public property. Additionally, I hope you take some time to review the attached legal opinions which provide substantial details that guided our decision in this matter. Please do not hesitate to call or email me with questions.

Thank you for your support on this very difficult matter.

Your Mayor,

Daniel P. Friesen