

## Successful visit by the mayor of Axum- Ato Hagos Gebrewahid

### **Day 1:- June 23, 2010**

The Mayor of Axum Ato Hagos Gebrewahid was invited by Axum Alumni to be a guest of honor and speaker in the association's 4<sup>th</sup> re-union in Las Vegas. Mr. Hagos flew thousands of miles to address the association that is working to improve the quality of education in Axum and its environs.

On Wednesday June 23, 2010 the mayor attended Axum Alumni's member's annual meeting. Prior to the opening of the session the mayor was greeted by the members and welcomed by the audience. Afterwards, he addressed the attendees with all developments that are going on in Axum in particular and Ethiopia in general. In fact, the all time concern and question of every Axumites is, the issue of water shortage in Axum. It seem to be getting solution according to the mayor's explanation; Water pipes are buried on the 25 kilometer stretch, water reservoir tanks built ( we even have seen the reservoir on the videos and picture brought with the mayor). Thus the water problem of the area will get a sure answer in a few months time according to the mayor.

The mayor also discussed the roll of Diaspora in helping their home of origin in education, tourism, and business development. He called upon all to be good ambassadors to their native country and help Axum to have an influx of tourists. Attendees had raised many valuable questions such as the cities preparedness to attract tourists and to make their stay pleasant, the weakness of the tourism industry in Tigray in general, and the lack of advertisement in different mechanisms to attract tourists to the holly city. The mayor responded on the cities preparedness to attract tourists. He also elaborated on the preparations undergoing to improve tourist attraction by the city and tourism commission.

## Day 2:- Saturday June 26, 2010



Mayor Hagos & Sister City President Flora Dupree exchanging gifts

On this day, the mayor, Mr. Hagos Gebrewahid, flew from Las Vegas to Denver Colorado by the invitation of the Axum Sister City International. At 11:30 am the mayor was welcomed by most Axum Sister City members and Mr. Noel Cunningham for a welcome luncheon at Strings restaurant. At the luncheon mayor Hagos had presented a gift which is map of Axum that shows development & historical sites of the city and a certificate of appreciation to the Axum Sister city international committee.

Axum Sister City also presented a gift to the mayor's office. After the exchange of gifts there was a discussion and sharing of ideas by all attendees. Many interesting questions were raised by Mr. Noel Cunningham who is the owner of the strings restaurant and a man with good heart who is doing a wonderful charitable work in Ethiopia through Project Merci and Ethiopia Reads. Mr. Noel Cunningham had asked mayor Hagos many questions. To mention a few of the questions raised: if there is a term limit in the mayoral position, what his vision is for the city of Axum in the coming 20 years, that education is a key for development so what the mayor and his office are doing to improve the quality of education particularly to develop the habit of reading by

youngsters and children, what the office of the mayor did and plan to do to attract tourists, and if Ethiopia is prepared to accept a booming development challenges when Chinese products become expensive. The mayor clearly and equivocally addressed all questions. In addition, on this day many Ethiopians met the mayor in group and on individual basis to discuss on some business opportunities in Axum.

### **Day 3: Sunday June 27, 2010 meeting with Ethiopians of Axum Origin.**



.AAA Members receiving a gift from Mayor Hagos

The mayor had a hot discussion with residents of Denver of Axum Origin and other Axum sister city international committee members at Axum-Africana-2 restaurant on Sunday June 27, 2010 from 5 pm to almost 9 pm. In this meeting different issue were raised to strengthen Axum Alumni Association and the development work the association is doing in Axum. In addition, the need for a septic truck was one of the crucial discussion points. The purchase of a septic truck project began around eight years ago and the project was on hold due to shortage of fund. The Axum Sister City International and the committee for purchase of the septic truck told the mayor that there is a fund in the amount of close to twenty thousand and an additional fund of one thousand four hundred forty that was collected from different axumites in the Las Vegas re-union by one sister's effort. The mayor told the attendees that Axum needs this septic

truck. It is important and is becoming so vital more than any time else. This said, the mayor, is due to population increase and lack of trucks in the area to suck latrines. The city needs this septic truck so that all clinics, hospitals, hotels and individual house hold latrines can be sucked. As it is now when latrines are full they either will be closed or a septic truck by the help of Red Cross will render service. Residents are paying up to one thousand birr for such service.

It is known that the fund that is in the bank for the purchase of the septic truck is raised from Ethiopians that reside in Denver. And when the mayor underlines the need for the truck the Denver residents of Axum origin again pledged six thousand dollars toward the purchase of the truck. It seems likely to have the truck soon if the momentum continues as such. The project coordinator committee had prepared a pledge form and mailed it to mayor Hagos's contact in Washington DC. The committee hopes some funds will be raised from DC metropolitan area.

The mayor was asked if there is a waste treatment area when the septic truck is purchased and delivered to Axum. Attendees have raised this question out of concern for the health of the community. The mayor responded to the audience and to Axum Sister City International committee members that there is a plot of land assigned for treatment and that land preparation for treatment will be completed soon before the arrival of the truck. He stated that no waste will be dumped in an open area since such waste is a health hazard.

**Day 4: Monday June 28, 2010**



Mayor of Denver Co and Mayor of Axum at Axum park Denver Co.

The Mayor of Denver, Mayor John W. Hickenlooper, and his counterpart Mayor of Axum Mr. Hagos, other city dignitaries, and Axum Sister City international members met at Axum Park for ground breaking ceremony for the renewal of Axum park project. At 9:30 am in the Morning Mayor of Denver welcomed the Mayor of Axum and present him with a replica of Axum obelisk that will be erected at the park. After receiving the present, the Mayor of Axum in turn present certificate of appreciation, map of the city of Axum, and a wooden craft replica of the Axum Obelisks to the mayor of Denver. After the exchange of gifts and welcome ceremony all attendees see the \$600k plus renovation project design of the park.

Axum Africana Café-2 owners had a free breakfast service to all attendees to honor both city mayors as well as the Axum Denver sister city relationship.



Mayor Hagos with Ali Thobhani, executive director of the Office of International Studies and chair of the African and African American Studies Department

On the same day at 11:30 am Mayor Hagos had met Metro State College staffers at the Metro college Central class room. The meeting with coordinated by Dr. Ali Thobani who is the head of the International Studies at the college. The mayor had an excellent opportunity to strengthen the relationship that is going on between Metro State and University of Axum. He also learned about the 7 tones of books collected via book drive to benefit Axum University and its students. These books will be shipped soon to Axum. The mayor also met the 2008, 2009 and 2010 delegates of Metro State College to Axum that had visited Axum University. He had also met with the professor, Stuart Monroe, who is going to Axum University to teach next year for one year as a visiting professor. Dr. Thobani had also mentioned that there is a grant request with the U.S. department of education and if that fund is approved Metro State will send students and professors to Axum University in 2011 and 2012. During this luncheon Mayor Hagos had presented a certificate of appreciation to Provost and VP for academic affairs Vicki Golich. At the same time Mayor Hagos had received a gift from the provost a desk clock, tote bag, and Metro state college flag. The meeting was so informative and educational. At this meeting Dr. Ali Thobani confirmed that the president of Metro State College will be a guest of honor & speaker at Axum University for the coming 2011 graduation ceremony.



Mayor Hagos with Denver water staff

On May 28, 2010 Mayor Hagos had a very fruitful meeting with the Denver mayor's staff at Wellington Web building. Mayor Hagos had very nice slides of power point presentation to show & present to the attendees. Except the Ethiopians who were in the presentation most attendees had no clue about the developments going on in Axum. The presentation gives them a true understanding of all developments in healthcare, education, tourism, housing, and industry. Most attendees showed interest to visit the historic city of Axum and the Mayor assured them to make their visit pleasant and a life time memory. This concludes Mayor Hagos's Las Vegas and Denver visit. Early morning Tuesday 29, 2009 the Mayor was seen off to Washington DC.