

Dear Citizens of the Thirteenth Ward:

It has been six months since I assumed office and I want to update you on issues that last summer you told me were important.

Council Committees: A central issue in my campaign was this Ward's continuing representation on the Council Ways and Means Committee. The political minority has been represented on this committee for years, but the Council majority leadership denied me a place. I am pleased to report that I now am on this important committee. This was not due to a change of heart by the majority leadership; rather, Council Member Brian Herron elected to give me his place. I certainly appreciate C.M. Herron's leadership, but the underlying issue remains. I plan to investigate whether a Charter change would be appropriate to guarantee minority access to committees.

Budget: Although not a member of Ways and Means at the time, I attended the Committee hearings on the Mayor's budget as a non-voting participant. I did not support the budget. The tax increase was not balanced by any significant redesign of City services.

The city faces a massive cash deficit in its internal funds. A problem which, as I came to office was about \$10 million and, by 2004, could reach over \$70 million. This would represent over 30% of our total, projected general-fund revenue in 2004, a serious problem. These projections include money committed to solving these deficits in this year's budget.

I authored and received unanimous support for a resolution which starts the process of reforming how the City uses Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The City is overly dependent on this increasingly volatile source of funding. If Congress eliminated this funding, the City would face a considerable shortfall for key operations. We must have a contingency plan in place to deal with the post CDBG world.

Crime and Public Safety: We continue to enjoy a high level of police service in the Ward and our neighborhoods remain safe. Our neighborhood associations are actively working with the police on traffic enforcement and graffiti vandalism. Insp. Morris and her team at the Fifth Precinct have responded enthusiastically to several community-based initiatives including support of a major effort to slow speeds and increase compliance on 50th Street.

NRP: The majority slated NRP funds for affordable housing without reference to the NRP Phase II redesign, which is currently underway. By earmarking funds outside the NRP process, the majority was prejudging the outcome and imposing its will on this important grassroots program. I negotiated to remove this provision, leaving Phase II considerations intact. As of this month, I have been appointed as an alternate the NRP Policy Board. I will continue to fight for neighborhood control of NRP.

Affordable Housing: Affordable housing is a real problem for people in our city, but efforts to solve the problem must be fair, realistic and effective. It is fundamentally unfair to base a redistributive social program, whatever its merits, on property taxes and user fees; neither are a real measure of a person's ability to pay. Nor is it realistic or effective for the City to approach the problem alone. It is a regional problem requiring a regional response.

It was clear, however, that the majority would pass a spending package. My task was to improve the resolution, if I could. Based on key compromises, I supported the majority's Affordable Housing resolution. I obtained language protecting NRP funds from appropriation outside the Phase II redesign process. I also received an express commitment that no new taxes would be raised to fund the proposed program. This, of course, did not prevent taxes from being raised for other purposes.

Finally, I am pleased to report that we have done our fair share toward relocating the so-called “Hollman Units.” These are scattered site housing units, which we were obligated by Federal court order to place in our neighborhoods. I want to thank our neighborhood associations for their strong support of this project.

Airport Noise: I serve on the Minneapolis Airport Sound Abatement Council (MASAC) and continue to monitor developments at the Airport. I am working with ROAR, SMAAC and the Minneapolis MASAC delegation to develop a coordinated agenda for working on this very difficult issue. I opposed the Mayor’s appointment of a Northwest Airlines lobbyist to the Planning Commission. I am also supporting efforts at the legislature to find funding for neighborhood noise remediation over and above that available through the current Federal sound insulation program.

As part of my work plan for the next year, I plan to press for sound planning in our response to both the internal deficits and the possible loss of Federal funding. The key to this will be a clear, practical definition of the City’s core mission.

An equally important part of my job is addressing your individual concerns, ensuring that you have fair access to the system so that you are able to exercise your rights and attend to your responsibilities.

If you would like to contact me, there are several avenues to do so:

- The hours for the Ward 13 office are 8:30 – 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. In the event you reach voicemail, I or my staff will try to return your call within 24 business hours.
- Every month I attend the neighborhood association meetings of Ward 13 neighborhoods.

Armatage	The third Tuesday of the month, 7:00 pm, Armatage Park
Fulton	The second Wednesday of the month, 7:00 pm, Pershing Park
Kenny	The third Tuesday of every other month, 7:00 pm Coldwell Banker office, 55 th & Lyndale
Linden Hills	The first Tuesday of the month, 7:00 pm, Linden Hills Park
Lynnhurst	The second Thursday of the month, 7:00 pm, Lynnhurst Community Center
W. Calhoun	The second Tuesday of the month, 7:00, Coldwell Banker, Calhoun Executive Center

- The fourth Wednesday of every month, I meet with constituents for coffee at Dunn Bros., at 50th Street and Xerxes Ave. We begin at 8:00 am.

I submit articles and announcements (which you can request from my office) to the neighborhood newsletters. I am also updating my web site to provide more information on both my activities and to help you become involved in your neighborhood (www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/citywork/city-council/ward13.html).

Over the next two years, I am committed to trying to effect change – in how the City spends your money and how it serves you. Part of my task is doing the work at City Hall that changes how decisions get made and implemented. The other part is encouraging each of you to become more active in your neighborhoods and the City. Together, we can and will make a difference.

Sincerely,

Barret W.S. Lane