## Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Seward Neighborhood 9-24-08

Cam's next Seward Office Hours: Tuesday, October 28, 9:30-11:00am Birchwood Café, 3311 E 25th St

## Items:

- 1) 2009 Budget
- 2) NRP
- 3) Email Utility Bills
- 4) Centerpoint Informational Meeting
- 5) RNC
- 6) Environmental Purchasing Policy
- 7) Remanufactured Toner Cartridges
- 8) Community Development Block Grant Priorities
- 9) Gang Prevention
- 10) Pre-Employment Drug Testing
- 11) Off-Street Parking Requirement Input Opportunity
- 12) Pedicabs
- 13) Soliciting by City Employees
- 14) Openings on City Boards and Commissions
- 1) Mayor Rybak has presented his proposed 2009 budget to the Council. It includes welcome new investments in infrastructure, including \$910,000 for disentangling the intersections of Cedar, Minnehaha, 20th Ave S and E Franklin, and \$2.1 million for the Hiawatha Bike Trail lighting and extension project in 2013. It also includes the first-ever dedicated bike infrastructure maintenance budget line, which will invest \$100,000 per year into keeping our off-street trails and on-street lanes in good condition. Other positives in the budget include continued attention to preventing youth violence and a smaller than expected property tax increase of 6.9% (less than the 8% increases of past years). The 2009 budget will be adopted in December. I look forward to learning and sharing more in the weeks ahead and I encourage you to share your budget priorities and concerns with me.
- 2) The Council has moved forward a motion to establish a new department of community engagement and neighborhood advisory board without recommendation. I presented a substitute motion on the board, which I developed by looking at the Framework report, the "Neighbors 4NRP" alternative and the 2007 Community Engagement Task Force report. I modeled my proposed Community Engagement Commission on our already existing Planning Commission. It is my sense for this level of importance the Planning Commission is the most comparable civic board available. My proposed Commission would include a greater number of neighborhood-appointed members, and will have expanded powers, including: review of the new CE department's budget, business plan and director; the authority to set neighborhood boundaries and empower official neighborhood groups; hear neighborhood grievances; and implement portions of the Task Force report. I am hoping that my substitute will generate some discussion both within City Hall and without. When the issue returns to us as a full City Council this Friday, September 26, I suspect that my strategy will be to introduce some, many or all of the proposed changes in the substitute in separate motions.
- 3) Save paper and money on postage by signing up to receive your utility bills online! Visit www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/forms/utility-billing, fill out the form on the back of your next billing stub and mail it in with your payment. If all Minneapolis utility customers signed up for electronic billing, each year the City would safe 44 tons of wood (equal to 302 trees) and enough energy to power seven homes. It's also a great way for us to make your tax dollars go further.
  - 4) CenterPoint Energy is holding an informational meeting, to help low-income residents of the Second Ward learn more about the programs and options available to help them afford to heat their homes on **Wednesday**, **October 1**, **6-8pm** at Matthews Park, 2318 29th Ave S, in the gym.

5) I have many concerns about the performance of MPD personnel and other law enforcement before and during the Republican National Convention, including the detention of the Glass Bead journalists and the confiscation of their equipment; preemptive raids against Minneapolis residences, and related condemnations; the seizure of an educational sustainability bus (Permibus); uses of force resulting in 'collateral damage' to nonviolent protestors; arrests of journalists, including Democracy Now! host Amy Goodman; provocative actions by MPD after the Rage Against the Machine concert; and concealment of badge numbers under riot gear.

With Council Member Schiff, I have called for a public hearing and full investigation into law enforcement actions both before and during the convention.

Last week, the Public Safety & Regulatory Services committee rejected my attempt to get more information included in the MPD's "After Action Review" of events related to RNC. I was especially interested to know about how well our officers followed the July 25th Police Policies Resolution, even when in St. Paul. I also wanted information on the preemptive raids that occurred the Saturday before the convention, and as much information as possible about the actions of other levels of law enforcement, for instance the FBI and Secret Service. I am disappointed that my colleagues have declined to ask for this information, but I will continue to do so nonetheless. This item will come back to the PS&RS committee in October.

- 6) A resolution establishing the City's first-ever Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy will come to the next Health, Energy and Environment committee next **Monday, September 29**<sup>th</sup>. I am very supportive of this action, which has gained the support of City departments through the Environmental Coordinating Team, and from the Citizen's Environmental Advisory Committee. The policy represents a serious step forward on many different fronts. For example, the City will begin purchasing 100% post-consumer copier paper for all of our regular copying needs. I am looking into ways to strengthen the resolution even further when it comes before the committee.
- 7) As part of the City's environmental purchasing work, my office will be conducting a pilot project for the use of remanufactured printer toner cartridges, with the hope that we can use them citywide, saving the City money and preventing waste.
- 8) I expect that the next HEE committee meeting will also approve funding priorities for our Community Development Block Grant proposal including youth violence prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, and maintenance of the health safety net for underserved or vulnerable seniors. I'm supportive of these priorities.
- 9) The HEE committee will also accept a grant of \$200,000 from the US Department of Justice to prevent gang involvement among youth ages 13-17. One of the more exciting aspects of this grant is that the funded position will be within the department of Health and Family Support, not in law enforcement. I see this as one of the first examples of the ongoing youth violence prevention work I have been doing bearing fruit.
- **10)** I continued to have concerns about the drug testing regime brought forward by Human Resources staff, which was so broad that it covered people who empty our parking meters. I was joined in voting against this policy by Council Members Benson, Goodman and Remington.
- 11) City Planning staff have scheduled a neighborhood-focused open house on the proposed changes to the zoning code regarding off-street parking requirements for **Thursday**, **October 16**, **6:30–8:30pm**, Martin Luther King Recreation Center multi-purpose room, 4055 Nicollet Ave. (The University District study will also likely deal with off-street zoning requirements, creating a unique set of requirements for the U District neighborhoods.)
- 12) With my strong support, the Council has loosened the regulations on Pedicabs, making it easier and cheaper for new companies to get through our regulatory hurdles, and removing the space and time limitations that have effectively regulated them out of existence until now. I look forward to seeing the growth of this unique, green industry in Minneapolis.
- 13) I was not able to support a move to allow City employees to solicit for charities while on the job that came through the Council this month. I believe that this is a problematic precedent to set, and could lead to either real or perceived conflicts of interest and favoritism in the provision of City services. I was able to ensure that the language of this new ordinance clearly required that City employees abide by the Aggressive Solicitation ordinance passed last year, which prohibits, among other things, verbal requests for money by two or more people. Though I did not support the Aggressive Solicitation ordinance, I believe it is important that we hold City employees to the same standard as everyone else.
- **14)** There are openings on the Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities (closes 10/17) and Public Health Advisory Committee (closes 10/17). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email <a href="mailto:cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us">cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us</a>.