

## Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Southeast Como, 3-10-09

Cam's next Southeast Como Office Hours:  
Tuesday, April 14, 9:30-11:00am  
SECIA Office, 837 15th Ave SE

### Items:

- 1) March Roundtable
- 2) 2009 Revised Budget
- 3) Commercial Building Inspections Program
- 4) Cradle to Prison Pipeline Study Session
- 5) Granary Road and Pond
- 6) City/State Financial Relationship
- 7) Non-motorized Transportation Projects
- 8) University Master Plan
- 9) Crown Hydro
- 10) Climate Change Grants
- 11) Transfers of Animals
- 12) Beekeeping Ordinance Proposed
- 13) Binge Drinking
- 14) Alliance Report and City Funding
- 15) Earth Hour
- 16) Openings on City Boards and Commissions

- 1) Please join me, along with Park Commissioners Annie Young and Scott Vreeland and School Board Members Carla Bates, Pam Costain and Jill Davis for a **Roundtable Discussion: "Our Parks, Our Schools, Our City"** tomorrow, **March 11, 7-8:30pm** at **Pratt School**, 66 Malcolm Ave SE. The future of our city depends on world class parks and schools. How can the independent elected boards and the City work better together? Please come share your ideas.
- 2) Mayor Rybak has presented a revised 2009 budget to the Council. I am mostly supportive of his proposals, and I share his relief that the Obama Administration's stimulus package will help us fund 57 police officers this year. However, I have some concerns about some specific proposals that the Mayor has brought forward. The Mayor proposes enacting a street lighting fee that was also voted down by the Council in the past few years. The proposed budget would also completely cut Civil Rights investigations in 2010, relying instead on the State for this service. I have heard from the Civil Rights Commission that they strongly oppose this idea. I have not decided to support any of these proposals, and I would welcome your input.
- 3) Over my objections and dissenting vote, the Council has voted to put in place the Commercial Building Inspections Program and associated fee that many Second Ward business owners have contacted me to oppose. The program will now charge businesses from \$50 - \$910 every year for a comprehensive fire inspection once every five years. This passed the Council in large part because the revenue it is expected to raise – approximately \$950,000 every year – will prevent laying off about 21 firefighters. While I support finding funding to retain all of our firefighters, I have opposed this program since it first came to the Council, for three main reasons. First, no one has been able to make a convincing case that this program is necessary to prevent fires. This makes it very clear that the program is being put in place simply to fill an existing budget hole, and I do not believe this is responsible or fair. Second, I am opposed to the increasing reliance of government on fees and fines for our revenue, rather than relying on progressive taxation. Third, and most importantly, the fee structure passed by the Council puts a much, much larger burden on small businesses than large ones. In fact, the smallest building owners will pay almost **40 times** as much per square foot as the largest building owners. Even if the fees will be less than \$100 a year for the smaller businesses, this is simply the wrong time and the wrong way to add to the costs of doing business in Minneapolis.
- 4) I am convening a special City Council Study session this Friday on The Cradle to Prison Pipeline. Marian Wright Edelman, president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund and Judge Pamela Alexander, director of the MN Council on Crime and Justice will address Council Members and Mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul as well as Minneapolis School Board Members and Park Board Members and share strategies for how we can better develop policies that can change the patterns that drive too many of our poorer youth towards violence, crime and incarceration. The session will be recorded and broadcast live at 10am on Friday.

- 5) The Community Development committee has authorized staff to acquire - through negotiation with property owners or through condemnation - portions of the properties to be used for Granary Road and the adjacent pond portion of SEMI/University Research Park infrastructure.
- 6) As directed, City staff has produced a good report on the changing nature of the City's financial relationship with the State of Minnesota. The State continues to take a larger and larger amount of money from property and sales taxes in Minneapolis while reducing the amount they return to the City in Local Government Aid. To learn more, see here: [http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2009-meetings/20090306/Docs/State\\_Fiscal\\_Relations\\_Staff\\_Dir.pdf](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2009-meetings/20090306/Docs/State_Fiscal_Relations_Staff_Dir.pdf).
- 7) This week, Transit for Livable Communities decided to award federal non-motorized transportation dollars to two projects that are very important to Ward 2. They allocated \$1.75 million to the Bicycle Sharing program, which will include the University area. Second, they gave the University of Minnesota \$525,000 for a bike center in the Oak Street Parking Ramp, as well as a Radio Frequency Identification program to validate bicycle commuters. I'm thrilled that both of these great projects are moving forward, and hope to see them up and running soon.
- 8) The City submitted some strong comments to the University's Draft Master Plan. We asked the U to be more specific in their commitments to better community engagement, advocated against demolition of historic buildings, asked the U to put more emphasis on Granary Road, and strongly urged the U to develop a clearer communication of their present and proposed future boundaries.
- 9) The Council has voted to formally oppose, through our legislative agenda, the attempt by supporters of Crown Hydro to circumvent the local control of the City and Park Board over the use of public lands for the proposed small hydropower facility. While I am generally supportive of small hydro, I have concerns about this specific project and strongly support the principle of local, democratic control, so I voted for this legislative agenda change.
- 10) The Mayor's amended budget proposal keeps funding for the 2009 round of climate change grants. These grants have been quite successful in mobilizing citizens to take measurable actions to reduce their carbon emissions, and I support funding them again this year. Staff hopes to send out the Requests for Proposals by mid-March. I encourage SECIA to again apply for this funding.
- 11) Animal Care and Control staff proposed an ordinance change that would have prevented all transfers of all dogs declared either dangerous or potentially dangerous. I was concerned that this went too far, having known of animals whose behavior improves after a positive change to their environment. I pushed through an amendment that allows staff to control whether a transfer is granted, along with a staff direction requiring them to report back in a year on how many people have applied for transfers, whether the transfer was allowed and what happened to the dog in question.
- 12) Council Member Scott Benson has introduced an ordinance establishing new regulations to allow people to keep bees in the city. I believe that the regulations will be similar to the current ordinance on chickens in the city, which require that a large majority of neighbors agree to having this activity nearby. Allowing bees could bring two main benefits to the city: locally-produced honey, and an increase in pollination, which can help increase the yields of gardens.
- 13) I am supporting a recommendation by the City's Public Health Advisory Committee to create a task force to study what role the City can play in reducing binge drinking. Despite what has been reported on WCCO, City Pages and elsewhere, there is no proposal to "ban happy hour" in Minneapolis. I am interested in exploring effective ways we could reduce the negative health effects of binge drinking.
- 14) The Council has recommitted to help move the University District Partnership Alliance's work forward. The City's legislative agenda continues to support the goals and strategies of the Alliance. The Community Planning and Economic Development Department has also appropriated \$50,000 to support the Alliance's Homebuyer Incentive Program.
- 15) The City of Minneapolis is again participating in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund in Earth Hour, a global statement of concern about climate change and of our commitment to finding solutions. We will turn off the lights on the Stone Arch Bridge and the external lights on City Hall. Several downtown buildings will also go dark. I encourage everyone in the Ward to participate by turning your lights out on **Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, from 8:30-9:30pm.**
- 16) There are openings on the Latino Advisory Committee (Closes 3/13). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email [cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us).