

## **Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Southeast Como, 10-7-08**

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

### **Items:**

- 1) Community Engagement and NRP
- 2) Household Hazardous Waste Facility – Info Meeting
- 3) Ranked Choice Voting in 2009
- 4) Low-Heat/No-Heat Now in Effect
- 5) RNC
- 6) I-35 Bridge Now Open
- 7) Environmentally Preferable Purchasing
- 8) Evidence of Progress Towards Sustainability
- 9) U District Moratorium
- 10) Openings on City Boards and Commissions

- 1) The Council has voted to establish a new Department of Neighborhood and Community Relations, and a new City commission, the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission. These lay the foundation for what will likely be a similar, but significantly different, neighborhood revitalization program and a potentially much more effective City community engagement system.

The department will function under the supervision of the City Coordinator and is intended to both serve residents directly and support all other City departments to engage the community. It will be charged with strengthening our City's quality of life through vigorous community participation, promoting resident involvement in neighborhood and community organizations, and supporting clearly defined links between the City and these organizations.

The Commission will provide overall direction to a next phase of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, and be responsible for the review of neighborhood plans and recommendation of their approval to the City Council. It will also make recommendations on, and monitor the distribution and use of the basic Citizen Participation Services funds and the new Neighborhood Investment Fund. It will also help guide and improve all aspects of community involvement and civic participation in the City and carry forward the work Community Engagement Task Force's recommendations started last year. The Commission will be made up of at least 16 city residents. Eight of these will be selected by the City's officially recognized neighborhood organizations through a process that is yet to be defined by those officially recognized neighborhood organizations. Seven will be appointed by the City and one by the Park Board.

I supported both of these actions, but also attempted to improve them throughout the process. I was able to change the name and, I hope, the authority of what had been called an "advisory committee." Working with my colleagues, I was able to grant the Commission, modeled on the existing Planning Commission, significantly more power and secure a place for a Park and Recreation Board appointee. We also preserved the possibility for the County and School Board to also have representatives on the commission. I was also able to require that all meetings will be open to the public, televised (when possible), and subject to the requirements of the Minnesota Open Meeting Law.

We were unable to convince a majority of Council Members to support giving the Commission the power to appoint (with Council approval) the Director of the new department, the authority to set neighborhood boundaries and hear neighborhood grievances.

Even with these setbacks, however, I think this is an important step forward for the City. Through these actions and the identification of a funding source for a new Neighborhood Investment Fund that will be used by neighborhoods to implement their plans, the Council has made clear that support for neighborhood groups, both in terms of administrative funding and project-based dollars, is an essential City responsibility. Still, there is a great deal of work to do to make sure that the new commission is effective; that the new department improves civic participation, that it supports, empowers and improves the ability of neighborhood organizations to improve their communities; and that there are sufficient funds to make sure that neighborhood-driven planning is as inclusive, inspiring, accountable and effective as possible. Paramount to this will be creating trusting relationships of mutual respect and improving how we work as a city government in partnership with all residents, neighborhood groups and all our community stakeholders to make this a better City for everyone.

- 2) Along with Paul Ostrow, I am hosting an informational meeting about the possible household hazardous waste facility on Industrial Boulevard, on **Thursday, October 23**, at 6:30pm at Van Cleve Park. Staff from Minneapolis Public Works and Hennepin County Environmental Services plan to attend to provide information, answer questions, and hear any concerns. The County has produced an informational video, which you can find here: [http://hennepinmn.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish\\_id=11](http://hennepinmn.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=11). They are also offering a bus tour of the existing similar facility in Bloomington, for anyone interested.
- 3) The Minneapolis Elections Director has recommended that the City implement ranked choice voting in the 2009 municipal election, by using a combination of our existing machines and a hand count. This recommendation came at the same time she rejected both proposals to machine-count the vote next year. I'm thrilled by this historic opportunity, and I believe that the hand count will be an open, transparent celebration of democracy. There will likely be a delay on reporting final results for some close races, but in my opinion this is more than offset by the benefits of not paying for new equipment, not holding the costly, low-turnout nonpartisan primary, and implementing ranked choice voting in a timely manner – responding to the more than 65% of Minneapolis residents who voted for the IRV charter amendment in 2006.
- 4) A resolution establishing the City's first-ever Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy has passed the Health, Energy and Environment. I was 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 attempted to strengthen the policy in two important ways – by covering products not specifically called out in the policy and by adding an annual report back to Council – but lost both votes on narrow margins. I will continue to work to make this policy as strong and measurable as possible.
- 5) Minneapolis has been ranked the **seventh** most sustainable large city in the US by SustainLane.com, up from #10 last year. Additionally, according to the census, we are within .1% of being the US city with the highest bicycle mode share – we're up to **3.8%**, just behind Portland's 3.9%.
- 6) Starting October 1, landlords in Minneapolis are required to keep interior temperatures at 68 degrees or above. If you're a renter, and your unit is cooler than 68 degrees, you can call 311 and make a complaint to housing inspections. My office spearheaded the effort to get this new ordinance passed, replacing the old, complicated external-temperature formula that was so difficult for our staff to effectively enforce.
- 7) Last month, 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.
- 8) The new I-35W bridge has reopened, hopefully bringing traffic back to the pre-collapse levels. Additionally, the bike/ped tunnel under the new bridge approach will cost about \$841,500, less than the City's preliminary estimate of \$900,000 and is well below the \$1.2 million appropriated. The tunnel will open when the City secures funding to build the remaining portions of the bike and pedestrian trail between Bridge 9 and 13thAve/2nd St, and the lighting and other security features (like call boxes) necessary to make sure this will be a safe and well used pathway for years to come.
- 9) The Zoning and Planning committee has unanimously approved keeping in place the University District moratorium on demolition and new construction of 1-4 unit residential properties. This action, which the committee took despite hearing some complaints from area developers, will give our staff and District residents some breathing space to work on a U District zoning and land use study.
- 10) There are openings on the Civilian Police Review Authority (closes 10/17/08), Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities (closes 10/17/08), Public Health Advisory Committee (closes 10/17/08), Senior Citizens Advisory Committee Vacancy (closes 10/17/08), and Youth Violence Prevention Executive Committee (closes 10/31/08). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email [cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us).