

News from Cam Gordon
Council Member, Second Ward
December 2008

<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/ward2/>

Good News on Election Night. I was pleased with many of the election results last month, including two local ballot initiatives that passed. Minneapolis voters chose to change the way that we elect school board members by passing the Accountable, Balanced, and Connected amendment. I actively supported this initiative throughout the year, and I'm thrilled that it passed. I believe that it will help us elect a school board that is more geographically, ethnically and politically diverse, and that will result in better policy. The Strong Schools, Strong City ballot initiative that also passed will provide a necessary funding increase to help us close the academic achievement gap, improve early reading skills, enhance math and science programs, provide up-to-date technology and textbooks, and keep class sizes small.

2009 Budget. We recently learned that, due to the current economic conditions and past decisions made by the Legislature and previous City Councils that have burdened the City of Minneapolis with pension obligations over which we have no control, we are faced with an additional \$38 million pension obligation next year. Because of this, the Council, with the Mayor's support, is likely to increase the property tax levies for 2009 by 2.6 million dollars, up to the 8% maximum increase allowed by the Board of Estimate and Taxation. This is also, regrettably, up from the Mayor's proposed levy increase of 6.9%. (The Truth-In-Taxation statements recently mailed are already based on the 8% maximum, so that information is still accurate.) I have been working to keep the property tax increase as small as possible, but may end up reluctantly supporting this. I will also push for reform at the Legislature to ensure that, even as we make sure to have the funds to fulfill this \$38 million obligation, we can merge this group of closed pensions within the larger, less risky state retirement fund that is used by nearly all the other Minnesota public employees pensions.

Somali Youth Violence Prevention. I am working with the Mayor and Council Member Schiff to transfer \$75,000 within our Youth Violence Prevention Plan from funds for a Youth Hotline to fund Somali youth violence prevention efforts. While I am still supportive of an anonymous Youth Hotline, as called for in the plan, I am hopeful that another jurisdiction, foundation or agency can be found to fund this. I am convinced that it is critical that we put more targeted resources into youth violence prevention in our Somali communities next year.

Neighborhood Funds. Part of this year's budget discussions include setting policies that will impact neighborhood funding for next year and beyond. Regarding next years funding, I am strongly opposed to any efforts to cut the \$500,000 the Mayor has recommended to support, in part, neighborhood organization administrative costs. Discussions are also underway about how to use potential funds from a new Tax District expected to be available to pay the Target Building debt and to establish a Neighborhood Investment Fund (NIF) for a next phases of NRP in 2010 and beyond. I am opposed to efforts, initiated by some Council Members, to use the NIF funds for other purposes and am pushing to make sure that any new funds available be split equally between Target Center debt relief and neighborhood investments, including some for administrative support.

Alliance Press Conference. The University District Partnership Alliance will be holding a press conference on **December 15th** at 1pm to celebrate the purchase of the first single family home through the Demonstration Project's Home Ownership Preservation Program and announce the rollout of the new Homebuyer Assistance program, which will offer down payment assistance for people purchasing new homes in the Cedar Riverside, Southeast Como, Prospect Park East River Road and Marcy-Holmes neighborhoods.

Homegrown Minneapolis. I am working with the mayor's office on a new initiative we're calling Homegrown Minneapolis. Its purpose is to increase the amount of locally produced food being

eaten and grown in our city. A large stakeholder group will hold its first meeting on December 10th, and will then break into subcommittees in which most of the work will be done. These smaller groups will focus on 1) increasing the number and successfulness of farmer's markets in Minneapolis, especially in underserved communities; 2) helping more people garden in community spaces, school properties, and their own backyards; 3) increasing the use of locally-grown foods in Minneapolis restaurants and grocery stores and; 4) fostering small business urban agriculture. I am thrilled that this is moving forward, and I have dedicated my Aide, Robin, to staff one of the subcommittees.

National Night Out – Minneapolis #1 Again. For the sixth time in the past eight years, Minneapolis had more people come together at National Night Out parties than any other large city. We continue to be a role model for how NNO events are planned and ways to increase community involvement. I'm proud of the role interns from my office played in helping the West Bank to organize the gathering at Currie Park, and I commit to helping similarly in the future.

Noise Ordinance. The new noise ordinance I've sponsored has passed the Public Safety and Regulatory Services committee unanimously. It will give us the capacity to regulate indoor noise (which we can't currently do), and use a "C weighting" that will enable us to much better regulate bass-heavy noise from bars.

Target Center Green Roof. The Community Development committee has voted to contract with Stock Roofing Company to install a green roof on the Target Center. The roof type is called "Green-Green," because it will be 2.75 inches deep over the whole area of the roof, with a deeper 3.5 inch deep green roof perimeter, which dramatically increases storm water retention. This contract will cost \$5,322,922, including installation and a 20-year warranty and maintenance agreement. I made the motion in a previous committee meeting to require that the new Target Center roof have a green roof, and I am extremely excited to see this moving forward.

Neighborhood Stabilization Funds. The Council has approved using \$5.6 million in federal Neighborhood Stabilization funds to acquire and redevelop foreclosed properties in neighborhoods hardest hit by foreclosures. I am hopeful that this effort will help us weather the foreclosure crisis and stabilize the neighborhoods that have been hardest hit.

Binge Drinking Work Group. I am supportive of the Public Health Advisory Committee's (PHAC) recommendation that the City create a work group to examine the problem of binge drinking. Possible topics the group would address include current zoning and licensing standards, resources for and impact of current enforcement efforts, possible collaborative efforts between the City, neighborhood groups and schools, and possible legislative initiatives that would reduce binge drinking. This proposal was delayed until January, for the PHAC to meet with representatives of the hospitality industry to discuss common ground issues. I opposed this delay. It was unnecessary, since liquor industry representatives would have been included on the group. I look forward to when this group will be formed, and be able to start meeting.

Working Capital Guaranty Program. The City is also offering a new finance tool, the Working Capital Guaranty Program, designed to help assist businesses secure financing through private banking institutions by providing a guaranty on financing. For more information, contact Jessica Green at 673-5232, or Becky Shaw at 673-5066.

Hennepin Ave Layout. I am concerned about the impact that staff's proposed layout for Hennepin Avenue in downtown, which includes shared bike/bus lanes will have on cyclists. I am working with my colleagues and with staff to keep bike-only lanes on Hennepin, if possible.

2009 Non-Motorized Transportation Solicitations. By next Friday, the Council will have to come to consensus on our 2009 round of solicitations for Non-motorized Transportation Project funding. The three competing interests at this point are citywide pedestrian improvements, more bicycle infrastructure projects, and the Mayor's proposed bike sharing system. There is not

enough funding to cover all three needs, so we'll have to make some tough choices. Ultimately, however, the funding decision is in the hands of Transit for Livable Communities.

New Rental License Ordinance. I support a proposed ordinance strengthening the City's capacity to revoke or not renew rental licenses when landlords fail to take appropriate actions to ensure that their tenants do not commit crimes and disrupt their neighbors' lives.

Animal Care and Control Advisory Board. I supported a new ordinance creating an Animal Care and Control Advisory Board, which will help advise and assist our Animal Care and Control department in developing animal-related policies and processes, and do public education and outreach on such issues.

Newspaper Box Ordinance. Council Member Remington has introduced an ordinance that would regulate outdoor newspaper boxes. I share his concerns about the poor upkeep of these boxes, and especially about the fact that in many locations, sidewalks are cluttered to the extent that they do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. A public hearing on this ordinance will come before the Transportation and Public Works committee on **December 2**, at 9:30am.

NRP Phase II. Phase II of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program is in significantly better financial shape than we expected. Total 2007 income was more than \$2 million over last year's estimate, and the total Phase II funding is more than \$8 million above last year's estimate. This is a result of a small increase in 2007 tax increment collections, significant interest savings related to 2006 refinancing of Common Project general obligation debt, and unexpected one-time revenues from a number of projects located in the Common Project. This puts NRP on track to fund more than 90% of the amount approved for all neighborhood Phase II plans.

New Police Officers. 17 police recruits have graduated from the Police Academy. With the addition of these new officers, the Minneapolis Police Department now has 893 sworn officers. I am also pleased to report that the MPD is at its highest overall diversity level in its history, with people of color making up 18.5% of its workforce and women making up 15.8%.

Campaign Signs. This is just a gentle reminder that City ordinance requires that residents take down campaign signs within ten days of the election. This doesn't change if an election goes into a recount. If you still have a lawn sign up in your yard, please take it down as soon as you can.

Pierce County. My Aide, Robin, traveled to Pierce County, Washington to observe their first-ever ranked choice election this fall. He will be preparing a report to the Council with recommendations for next year's ranked choice election.

CPED Sector Liaison Teams. The Community Planning and Economic Development Department has created five new geographic sector teams to enhance project coordination and make it simpler to solve problems and deliver services. The team for Prospect Park, Southeast Como and the West Bank is made up of Haila Maze in Planning (673-2098), Jerry LePage in Housing (673-5240) and Kevin Carroll in Economic Development (673-5181). The team for Seward and Cooper is Paul Mogush in Planning (673-2074), Dollie Crowther in Housing (673-5263) and Mark Garner in Economic Development (673-5037).

LED Streetlights. The Public Works department is testing Light Emitting Diode (or LED) streetlights on Washington Avenue. I'm very excited by this pilot project, which could prove that this new technology is right for Minneapolis streets. LEDs use much less energy than standard incandescent bulbs, even less than fluorescents. Given that streetlights consume more electricity than any other single service provided by the City, this could result in major energy savings in the future by reducing both the financial burden and the ecological costs of streetlights.

Pentachlorophenol-Treated Power Poles. Working with the Seward Neighborhood Group and Xcel Energy, my office helped organize a meeting to discuss residents' concerns about new utility poles treated with pentachlorophenol (penta), a toxin banned for nearly all uses in the US but utility poles and railroad ties. I have serious concerns about Xcel's plans to install 600-800 new poles treated with this substance, and I will be working with neighbors to find possible alternatives. Additionally, I am looking into whether the City can do more to limit, restrict or eliminate the need for poles treated with penta, both for our internal use and for utility use within the city.

Central Corridor and Washington Ave Ramps. The Central Corridor Project Office and City staff continue to explore modifications to the ramp configurations at Washington and Cedar Avenues on the West Bank as part of the Central Corridor LRT planning. The favored option at this point would eliminate the off-ramp from eastbound Washington Ave, to Cedar Ave. and would implement a two-way ramp in the northwest quadrant of the Washington and Cedar intersection. This would require a new traffic signal at that location. The status of the on-ramp from Cedar Avenue to eastbound Washington Avenue is still being discussed. The Project Office has scheduled a meeting to discuss this on **December 11th**, 6-8pm at the Brian Coyle Center.

Granary Road. I am working on amendments to the budget that would help fund planning and engineering work Public Works for road improvements necessary to help mitigate traffic concerns near the Central Corridor LRT in the University area. This includes planning and engineering for the improvements to East River Road and construction of the new Granary Road.

Bluff Street Park. After years of good work by the Bluff Street Task Force, Park Commissioner Scott Vreeland and some help from my office, last night the Park Board's Planning Committee voted to preserve the Bluff Street parcel as parkland and explore options for developing a sustainable park there. I'm thrilled that all of the community effort is beginning to pay off, and commit to help keep the momentum for this park going in whatever way I can.

Franklin Station. The Council is poised to accept a \$500,000 award from the Metropolitan Council Land Acquisition for Affordable New Development Program for the Franklin Station Project and set aside \$600,000 from the Minneapolis Hiawatha LRT Corridor Transit Oriented Development Program for property acquisition near the station.

2nd Precinct Update. The State of the 2nd Precinct Address will be **Saturday, February 21**, 10am–noon, at University Lutheran Church of Hope, 601 13th Avenue SE. The 2nd Precinct will request ideas and specific plans – from block clubs, neighborhood associations, contacts we have in the community, residents, businesses and students to help create these plans – to assist in the creation of the 2009 Neighborhood Policing Plans.

SECIA Wins Governor's Award. Congratulations to the Southeast Como Improvement Association for winning one of this year's Governor's Awards in the partnership category. This underscores the good work SECIA has done with local industry to set up stakeholder dialogues and reach Good Neighbor Agreements, including this year's agreement with Greatbatch Globe Tool to reduce trichloroethylene emissions. The two previous agreements were with Ritrama, Inc, and Rock-Tenn Company, both of which reduced their emissions by over 92% over the course of the project. Please see the SECIA website for more info: www.secomo.org.

Campus Pizza. My office has been working to help the owner of Campus Pizza and the neighborhood develop a set of conditions on his proposed liquor license that all sides can agree to.

Openings on Boards and Commissions. There are openings on the Animal Care & Control Advisory Board (closes 12/12/08), Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission (12/05), Minneapolis Telecommunications Network (12/19), Public Health Advisory Committee (12/19),

and Youth Violence Prevention Executive Committee (12/12). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

Please feel free to contact me and my office anytime if you have any questions or concerns. We welcome your thoughts and feedback on any of these issues and my positions.

Yours, in peace and cooperation,

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