



9th Ward E-News

From Minneapolis Council Member Gary Schiff

January 2009 (612) 673-2209 gary.schiff@ci.minneapolis.mn.us

Sign up to receive this newsletter by e-mail! Suzanne.murphy@ci.minneapolis.mn.us

Dear Neighbor,

The inauguration of President Barack Obama brings new hope for cities. We have in the White House a champion for an urban agenda promoting green jobs, mass transit and aide for neighborhoods that have been hard hit by foreclosures.

Earlier this month, Mayor R.T. Rybak met with President-elect Obama and members of Obama's economic team in Washington, DC and discussed the urgent need for a national economic recovery package. Obama told the group that "help is on the way" for cities and states like ours that are struggling during the recession.

Minneapolis will continue to face our economic and financial challenges head on: balancing our budget, paying down debt and redesigning city services for better results. The road to recovery won't be easy, but knowing that we have a partner in the White House gives us hope for the future.

Council considers resolution to bury power line

A proposal by Xcel Energy to place a high-voltage power line over the Midtown Greenway is facing strong neighborhood opposition amid concerns about community and health impacts.

Xcel says the power line is needed to meet growing demand for electricity and says they will submit a plan to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in the first quarter of 2009.

The City Council will vote in February to consider a resolution authored by Council Members Gary Schiff, Robert Lilligren and Cam Gordon calling on Xcel to pursue energy conservation and to bury the line below 28th Street East.

"Although only the Public Utilities Commission has the power to approve these lines, I hope the City Council will weigh in on this issue. Xcel hasn't added new power lines in the city in a long time. Whether this line is buried or not will set precedence for other neighborhoods," Schiff says.

Tim Springer of the Midtown Greenway Coalition hopes residents will be active. "Neighborhoods should know that outcomes of the proposed transmission line project will probably not be to their liking unless they become involved through policy resolutions and participating in the upcoming Minnesota Public Utilities Commission process."



An image by Xcel Energy of new power lines proposed to run down the Midtown Greenway from Hiawatha to Oakland Avenue. To learn more and get involved visit www.midtowngreenway.org.

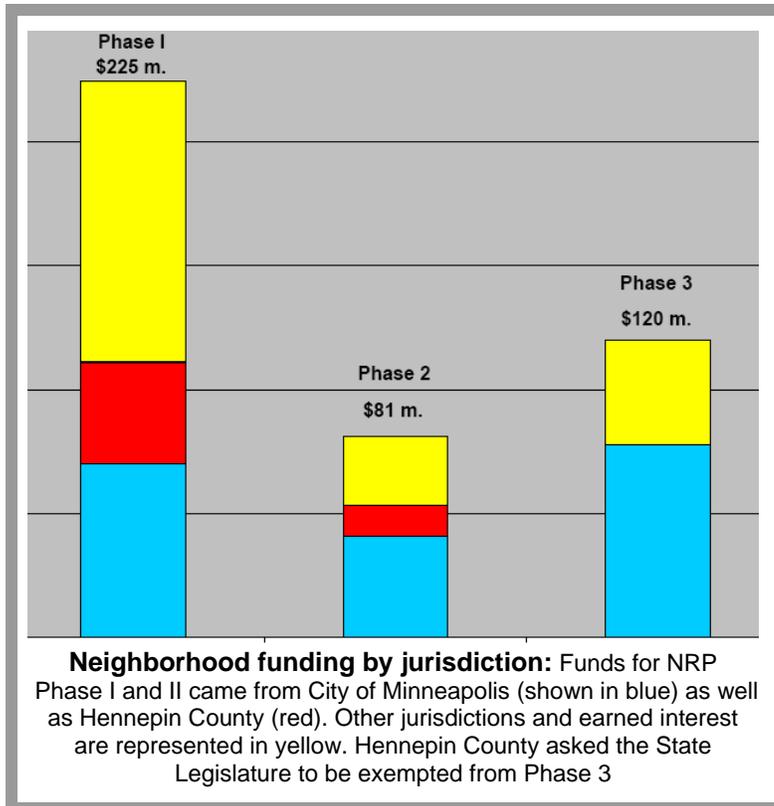
New anti-prostitution efforts get tougher on johns

The City Council approved its 2009 legislative agenda in December with new initiatives to reduce prostitution and human trafficking.

Council Member Schiff worked with the City Attorney's office to prioritize anti-prostitution efforts. "During the nomination process last year for our new City Attorney, I stressed the need for new tactics to get tougher on johns. Susan Segal heard me, and she has delivered."

The City will seek changes in State law that will make prosecuting prostitution-related offenses easier and bring stiffer penalties. The city will also seek dedicated state funding for drug treatment programs that help women get out of prostitution. In addition, the city is working with a coalition of community groups that are seeking to separate the laws regarding patrons and prostitutes into two different statutes. "State law needs to recognize the power difference between women caught in prostitution and johns. Women with drug dependency need treatment programs that work, not a court system that rotates them in and out of prison," Schiff said.

Ten more years of funding approved for NRP groups



In December, the Minneapolis City Council approved ten more years of funding for neighborhood groups that are nearing the end of the second phase of the successful Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP).

The funds were made possible by legislation introduced by State Rep. Jim Davnie in the 2008 legislative session. The funds will come from tax increment financing, the source that funded NRP Phase 1. The legislature severely restricted use of tax increment as a funding source in Phase 2.

The City Council also outlined changes to the advisory board that oversees neighborhood group funding. Neighborhood groups will appoint eight members, an increase from the four seats for neighborhoods in Phase I and II. Five residents will be appointed by the City Council, two by the Mayor and one by the Park Board.

The \$120 million in Phase 3 will be divided into four funds: *Community Innovation*—a competitive grant program for neighborhood groups, *Neighborhood Investment*—a fund that will be allocated to neighborhood groups based on poverty levels and other demographic factors, and city administrative costs. The fourth fund, *Community Revitalization* will total \$35 million and will be used for neighborhood prioritized commercial revitalization projects.

State aide reductions force large city budget cuts

Less than a month after the adoption of the 2009 budget, \$13 million in state aide cuts directed by Governor Pawlenty will send the City Council back to the drawing board in search of a balanced budget. "Making up this shortfall with property tax increases isn't a good idea in this economy," Schiff said. "We will balance this additional hole in our budget entirely with spending cuts."

In addition, the city is bracing for additional state aide reductions when the Governor proposes his biannual budget at the end of January. City budget staff has been told to anticipate a ten to twenty-five percent reduction in Minneapolis' local government aide allocation, bringing the total range of city budget cuts between \$21 and \$35 million.

"These reductions are significant, and are more serious because we must anticipate the likelihood of ongoing cuts to state aide to cities," said Mayor R.T. Rybak. A new balanced budget will be presented to the Council by the Mayor in mid-February.

"Public Safety will remain our number one priority as we make these cuts," said Schiff, who sits on the Council's Ways and Means committee. "Since public safety accounts for over half of the city's general fund, all other services and spending will be closely scrutinized. We will need the thoughtfulness of city employees and the ideas of citizens to find the best solutions."

State of the Ward and 9th Ward Awards

Friday, January 30th
7:30-9:00am at Mercado Central
1515 E Lake Street \$7 buys breakfast

Gary will deliver the State of the Ward address and will honor achievements in neighborhood activism. RSVP to save your seat at (612) 673-2209.

Join Council Member Gary Schiff for breakfast the final Friday of every month. Hear guest speakers and learn about topics important to you.

On Friday February 27th Congressman Keith Ellison is scheduled to talk about his work representing MN's 5th Congressional district.



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