

# Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to the Prospect Park East River Road Neighborhood, 7-27-09

Cam's next Prospect Park Office Hours:  
Pratt School, August 18, 9:30-11am

## Items:

- 1) Historic District – Concerns and Guidelines
- 2) Street Lighting Fee
- 3) Homegrown Minneapolis
- 4) Downtown Garbage Burner
- 5) Civil Rights Investigations
- 6) Tax Increment Financing Districts
- 7) Taser Policy
- 8) Comedy in the City
- 9) Sandwich Board Signs
- 10) Najaf Sister City
- 11) Fringe Festival Resolution
- 12) 1934 Truckers Strike Resolution
- 13) Blue Green Alliance Headquarters in PP
- 14) Openings on Boards and Commissions

- 1) My office has heard a number of concerns from Prospect Park residents about the interim historic protections that are currently in place. I want people to know that the experience of homeowners going through this *interim* process is not necessarily indicative of the experience that folks will have with the proposed local designation. Part of the process of local designation will be to craft design guidelines that are specific to Prospect Park. This may authorize staff to allow some projects to proceed without going through Heritage Preservation Commission, which is difficult for them to do while we are relying on the more general guidelines established by the Secretary of the Interior. For instance, if the guidelines are written to only apply to the front of houses, a deck project in someone's back yard would not have to go through HPC. That same deck project would likely be required to go through HPC today, because the guidelines have not been written. A subcommittee has been formed to work on coming up with some draft guidelines that includes my Aide, Robin, and Aaron Hanauer from Preservation and Design as well as PPERRIA representatives. I hope that the subcommittee will come out with draft guidelines soon, enabling the neighborhood to decide whether to move forward with local historic designation and get out of the interim process that is clearly less than ideal.
- 2) Public Works staff has proposed a new street lighting fee. Currently, the \$3 million a year needed to keep the street lights on in the city comes from the general fund, which gets around 20 percent of its money from LGA, which has been cut by \$21.3 million. I am generally hesitant to approve new fees, rather than raising the revenue we need through our established tax system.
- 3) The Council has unanimously passed a resolution I authored putting the City on record as supporting locally grown food, and creating a Homegrown Minneapolis Implementation Task Force. I will co-chair this group, which will focus on putting into action the recommendations of the Homegrown Minneapolis report:  
[www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/homegrown-home.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/homegrown-home.asp).
- 4) The HERC conditional use permit application has been held over in the Zoning and Planning Committee until August 6. No decision was made in July regarding the appeal of the Planning Commission's denial of the requested amendment to the conditional use permit that would allow them to burn more garbage. The Committee ended up not taking public testimony after learning that the County intends to agree to suspend the time limit on this matter while they work with state officials from the MPCA and the state attorney general's office to determine if an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) (which could then lead to an Environmental Impact Statement or EIS) might be required.
- 5) It is becoming increasingly clear that it is neither wise nor necessary to eliminate the investigations unit of the Civil Rights Department in order to balance the City's budget. A report from a special Task Force formed to study this has presented its findings to the Health Energy and Environment Committee. The report recommends keeping this small but important staff team that investigates cases of possible discrimination and helps protect civil rights in our city, and I will be pushing for balancing the City's budget without eliminating this important work.

- 6) In a surprise move and disregarding the recommendation of our Finance staff, the Council's Community Development committee has sent forward without recommendation the renewal of the Tax Increment Financing districts. Renewing these districts will enable us to pay for the new phase of NRP and retire the Target Center's debt. I am extremely supportive of renewing these districts, in order to create a defined and reliable revenue stream for neighborhoods.
- 7) In 2006, the Council directed the Police Department and the Minneapolis Civilian Police Review Authority (CRA) to collaborate to develop a policy on the use of Conducted Energy Devices (or Tasers) before the release of funds to purchase them was approved. I was very pleased with this process and the result, which appeared to provide careful guidance for the use of these "less-lethal" devices, intended only to be used in place of more lethal force. Then, in 2007, the policy was significantly changed by the Police Department without any consultation with the CRA or the Council. I am very concerned about both the process used to change this policy and the poor new policy that resulted from that process. Recently, the Public Safety and Regulatory Services Committee voted to direct the Police Department to "report back to us no later than July 22nd with a report on the current procedure for changing the Police Policy and Procedure Manual; and propose a process for including input from the City Attorney's Office, Police Federation, MPD Staff, the Minneapolis Civilian Police Review Board, City Council and Mayor's Office." I expect that this will come before the Public Safety and Regulatory Services committee on August 5<sup>th</sup>.
- 8) The Public Safety and Regulatory Services committee, on July 8, paved the way for more humor in the City. The City currently requires that an establishment have a class A license – the most expensive and difficult to receive – in order to feature live comedy. The proposed changes that passed the committee unanimously will allow solo live comedians to perform in venues with class D, C, B and A licenses. A class D license already allows solo musicians. I think this is a great move for both comics and the cultural landscape of Minneapolis. It also resulted in a rather entertaining committee meeting you can see on the web at: <http://www.ci.mpls.mn.us/webcasts/>
- 9) The Council has unanimously adopted a compromise amendment I introduced allowing sandwich board signs outside of downtown, but only where they don't impede pedestrian traffic. I'm glad we could find this middle ground, first crafted by my Aide, Robin Garwood, which will allow Second Ward small businesses to let passersby know more about where they are and what they offer.
- 10) I am working with the Iraq and American Reconciliation Project on an exciting proposal for Minneapolis and Najaf, Iraq, to become sister cities. I am lead coauthor, with Council Member Betsy Hodges, of the resolution creating this relationship. It will be the City's first such relationship in the Middle East, and help create a positive, peaceful, and non-imperial relationship between Najaf residents and Minneapolitans. The Najaf City Council has already signed on.
- 11) At the last Council meeting, I sponsored a resolution honoring the Minnesota Fringe Festival, which has multiple locations in the Second Ward, and declaring July 30<sup>th</sup> "Fringe Day." You can find shows here: [www.fringefestival.org](http://www.fringefestival.org).
- 12) I also sponsored a resolution marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1934 Minneapolis truckers strike, and the events coming up to commemorate it: a film and panel discussion on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, a "street festival for the working class" on July 25<sup>th</sup>, a picnic on July 26<sup>th</sup>, and a walking tour on August 6<sup>th</sup>.
- 13) The Blue Green Alliance has opened its new national headquarters in Prospect Park at 2828 University Ave. SE. I was delighted to attend their open house in June and see this unique collaboration of labor and environmentalists as a key partner in creating the quality jobs, cleaner environment and new green economy we need for Minneapolis' future. To learn more see [http://www.bluegreenalliance.org/about\\_us?id=0001](http://www.bluegreenalliance.org/about_us?id=0001)