

# Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Seward Neighborhood 7-22-09

**Cam's next Seward Office Hours:  
Tuesday, July 28, 9:30-11:00am  
Birchwood Café, 3311 E 25th St**

## **Items:**

- 1) Pedestrian Master Plan
- 2) Proposed Street Lighting Fee
- 3) Homegrown Minneapolis
- 4) Downtown Garbage Burner
- 5) Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission
- 6) Civil Rights Investigations
- 7) Tax Increment Districts
- 8) Taser Policy
- 9) Hiawatha Transmission Line
- 10) Comedy in the City
- 11) Ranked Choice Voting
- 12) Sandwich Board Signs
- 13) Najaf Sister City
- 14) Xcel Tree Trimming
- 15) Fringe Festival Resolution
- 16) Truckers Strike Resolution
- 17) Openings on City Boards and Commissions

- 1) Public Works has presented a draft of the City's first Pedestrian Master Plan to the Transportation and Public Works committee. You can read the plan here: [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/pedestrian](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/pedestrian). This marks the first time that the City has taken a comprehensive look at how our infrastructure and planning affect the walkability of our neighborhoods. I'm hoping that it will help us improve on the existing strengths in our pedestrian system, and close some of the gaps that I know are out there. I will be working to make this plan as aggressive as possible.
- 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 City Planning Commission has denied Covanta Energy's application to amend the conditional use permit for the downtown's Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC). Covanta has appealed this decision to the Council, and this will come before the Zoning and Planning committee tomorrow, July 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- 5) The membership of the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (NCEC) has been decided. Cooper resident and Longfellow Community Council President Marcea Mariani is the neighborhood representative for District 8, which includes all of the neighborhoods in Ward Two. You can also find information on the NCEC at: [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/ncr/NCEC\\_Home.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/ncr/NCEC_Home.asp). It's my hope that this commission will help lead to better communication and community involvement in all City decisions, improved and consistent funding to build the capacity of our neighborhood organizations, and effective oversight of the City's new Neighborhood and Community Relations department.
- 6) 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 is expected to come before the Health Energy and Environment Committee on July 20. I am hopeful that they will recommend keeping this small but important staff team that investigates cases of possible discrimination and helps protect civil rights in our city.

- 7) The Community Development committee has forwarded without recommendation the staff recommendation to renew the Tax Increment Financing districts that 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.
- 8) In 2006 the City 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. At the time I was very pleased with the process and the result, which appeared to provide careful guidance for the use of these dangerous 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 City 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."
- 9) Xcel has applied to the Public Utilities Commission to move forward with a project that includes two substations, (one adjacent to the Greenway on the east side of Hiawatha) and an above ground high voltage transmission along the Midtown Greenway. I serve on a committee formed by the Public Utilities Commission to make recommendations for the required Environmental Impact Statement. I am opposed to the current proposal and am on record supporting burying the line if one is determined to be needed. The Council has authorized filing a petition that will give the City "intervener status" and put us in a better position to present our case to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.
- 10) 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/>
- 11) The Council, with my strong support, has voted to use ranked choice voting for this November's municipal election. This was made possible by the unanimous decision by the Supreme Court on June 11<sup>th</sup> that ranked choice voting is constitutional. My office has worked hard since 2006 to make this happen, and I'm excited to move forward.
- 12) 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.
- 13) 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.
- 14) Many of the boulevard trees in the Second Ward have been trimmed to make room for the electric lines the run above and through them. The results have been shocking and disturbing to many residents. I am working with Xcel, the City's Tree Advisory Committee, the Park Board and the Seward Neighborhood Group to explore ways to improve this in the future.
- 15) Last Friday, I sponsored a resolution honoring the Minnesota Fringe Festival, which has locations in Seward including the Playwrights' Center, and declaring July 30<sup>th</sup> "Fringe Day." You can find shows here: [www.fringefestival.org](http://www.fringefestival.org).
- 16) Last Friday, 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>.
- 17) There are openings on the Minneapolis Commission on Civil Rights (closes 7/24), Public Health Advisory Committee (open until filled), Youth Violence Prevention Executive Committee (closes 07/17). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email [cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us).