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Understaffed sex crimes unit prompts Council response

In response to a [City Pages article](#) reporting an understaffed sex crimes unit and falling case closure rates, Council Member Gary Schiff has requested a report from the Police Department on case closure and staffing rates of other investigative units.

"It doesn't make sense for a city to under staff investigative units in favor of claiming there are more cops on the street," Schiff said. "Justice for crime victims and their families must remain a priority for a safe city." The City Pages report used data from the City to determine that the total number of sexual assaults has increased in recent years, while arrests and closure rates have fallen.

The issue will be up for discussion on Wednesday's Public Safety and Regulatory Services committee.

As rental properties foreclose, city feels budget pinch

Over two thousand housing units are now vacant in Minneapolis due to foreclosures, representing just over 2 percent of the city's housing stock in numbers released today by Council Member Gary Schiff's office. "Almost every City departments is feeling the effect, from boarded buildings to unpaid water bills," said Schiff.

More vacant homes mean fewer payers for city services. Two thousand empty homes translate to a \$500,000 hole in the sanitation budget, according to Susan Young, Solid Waste and Recycling Manager. "The Inspections Department has really felt the squeeze over the past year," Inspections Supervisor Greg Simbeck adds. "The City's boarded registry has 686 properties, up from 291 in 2006. Our staff have had to double their work loads, without adding resources."

In Minneapolis' 9th Ward, 88% of foreclosures have affected rental properties," Council Member Gary Schiff said. "In Phillips, we're seeing the effect of speculative property investors who purchase with little money down, pay few or no mortgage payments, and collect rent until the property forecloses. The City is left with unpaid water bills and a boarded property."

The City of Minneapolis has created a [web site](#) where residents can get information to help them stay in their homes and keep their neighborhoods intact. To report an abandoned or vacant property, contact the [Ward 9 office](#). Please make sure to immediately report any suspicious, criminal or nuisance activity to the police or Minneapolis 311.

Avoid a tow and save energy this winter



[Over 300 foreclosed homes](#) were auctioned off at the Minneapolis Convention Center this past weekend.



Don't get towed: [Click here](#) to find out when your street will be swept.

As residents are cleaning up yards and gardens in preparation for the winter freeze, remember not to rake leaves and other debris into the street. Bag up leaves and put them out to be picked up during weekly garbage pickups. Starting this week, Minneapolis Public Works will begin the big task of curb-to-curb sweeping and leaf collection on streets throughout the city. City crews will post "No Parking" signs at least 24 hours before sweeping any streets. Anyone who parks on the street may be ticketed and towed. [Click here](#) to sign up for automated notification and to find out when specific streets will be swept.

Minneapolis is considered one of the greenest cities around, and easy steps can be taken to help keep it that way. Installing a programmable thermostat can decrease temperatures inside the home by 5 degrees and reduces heating bills and the impact on global warming. Each degree below 68 cuts the home heating bills by about 3 percent. Opening the curtains when the sun is shining results in free solar heat and natural lighting. It is a simple way to reduce heating and electricity bills. On cloudy days or once the sun sets, close the shades to keep heat inside.

Taking the energy challenge is an easy way to learn how to reduce personal energy use and global warming. The Minnesota Energy Challenge gives residents the tools and information to reduce energy, learn more about available resources, and calculate individual contributions to CO2 emissions in Minnesota. [Click here](#) to find more information on the Minnesota Energy Challenge and other ways to help our environment.

Minneapolis approves restrictions on fake guns

In time for the holiday shopping season, Minneapolis is enacting new restrictions on gun replicas. "These so called "fake guns" have been used in very real crimes in Minneapolis," Council Member Gary Schiff said, "and by treating these replicas seriously, we hope to decrease the chances of police error." In 2004, 15 year old [Courtney Williams](#) was shot by Minneapolis police after brandishing a facsimile gun designed to look like a .45 caliber handgun.



Cigarette lighter "guns" are among those now restricted in the city of Minneapolis.

According to the new ordinance, carrying or having a facsimile firearm in a public place is prohibited. Facsimile firearms must be transported in the same way as real firearms, secured in a closed container and locked in the trunk of a vehicle. Facsimile firearms cover all types of replicas, from those that fire BBs or pellets to those that fire blank rounds or nothing at all. The ordinance does not prohibit toy guns that do not closely resemble real weapons, such as fake guns that are colored white or another bright color, or that are transparent. It also does not apply to replicas or toys that have a permanently-affixed blaze orange extension on the muzzle.

In 2006, the Minneapolis Police Department recovered 294 replica guns, including 47 that had been used in crimes. In the first half of 2007, more than 130 of those guns had been recovered, including at least 29 that were used in crimes. According to police, those guns were used in a wide variety of crimes, including 47 assaults or threats and 14 burglaries, as well as dozens of auto thefts and several kidnappings.

October Breakfast with Gary: Al Franken



Al Franken grew up in
St. Louis Park, MN

On Friday, October 26th, join Council Member Schiff for Breakfast with Gary featuring United States Senate Candidate Al Franken. Franken is challenging Senator Norm Coleman in one of the most watched races in the nation. Franken recently surpassed Senator Norm Coleman in quarterly [fundraising](#) reports.

Al Franken is an Emmy Award–winning comedian, actor and author. He is noted for his work on Saturday Night Live and on Air America Radio. Franken will talk about his solutions to America’s healthcare crises, tools for renewable energy and his approach to immigration. He will also take questions from the audience.

Breakfast with Gary is a monthly event held 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. the final Friday of the month at Mercado Central, 3016 Bloomington Avenue South on the southwest corner of Lake Street and Bloomington Avenue. Five dollars buys breakfast, from [La Loma](#). Please contact [Heidi Quezada](#) with questions.

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