

News from Cam Gordon
Council Member, Second Ward
May 2009

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

Homegrown Minneapolis. The Homegrown Minneapolis initiative has completed its draft recommendations for how the City can increase the amount of locally and sustainably grown food both produced and consumed in Minneapolis. They will be holding two public meetings to solicit input from members of the public who have not yet been involved in coming up with the recommendations. The first is on **Tuesday, May 12th, 6:30 – 8:30pm** at North Commons Recreation Center, 1801 James Ave N. The second is on **Monday, May 18th, 6:30 – 8:30pm** at the Martin Luther King Recreation Center, 4055 Nicollet Ave S. Healthy snacks will be provided at both events. You can also find the draft recommendations and send comments electronically here: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/homegrown-home.asp>. I expect that these recommendations come before the Health, Energy and Environment committee in mid-June. I'm extremely supportive of this initiative, and have dedicated a significant amount of my staff's time to helping lead it.

Bike/Walk Week. My aide Robin is again leading a Bike/Walk to Work Day ride from the Birchwood Café on **May 14** at 7:30am. Birchwood is offering free coffee and baked treats. Other Second Ward businesses offering free breakfasts and/or specials include the Hub Bike Coop, Freewheel Cycle, and Pizza Luce. The downtown celebration will be held at Government Plaza again, from 6:30-9am. For more information and to find a ride to join, please visit www.bikewalkweek.org/.

Transportation Electrification. City staff has been working with Ford Motor Company and Xcel Energy on an exciting application that would help us move towards a transportation system run on electricity. Together, we're seeking funds from a federal program to buy several electric vehicles and install "charging stations" both in City-owned parking ramps and at special parking meters. I'm very excited by the possibilities this first step represents, and thank our great staff – including Dan Huff in Environmental Services and John Scharfbillig in Public Works – for their excellent work to make it possible.

Economic Recovery Website. The City has launched a new website about our economic recovery strategy. It will help us be as transparent as is possible about how Minneapolis is pursuing federal economic stimulus dollars, and how we are putting taxpayer dollars to work to create jobs and get our economy moving. Please check it out at: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/recovery/>.

Park Dedication Fee. Council passed a new Park Dedication Fee ordinance on April 10 that will require future developers to either dedicate land near their development site for public open space or to pay a Park Dedication Fee. State law requires that the same ordinance be adopted by the Council and the Park Board. The Park Board has yet to pass this ordinance. I am very supportive of this effort and worked for a fair compromise that will give us this tool (that is already in place in St. Paul and many suburban communities) to get needed funds to create new park space and make capital improvements to existing parks close to new developments. If approved by the park Board it will go into effect January 2011.

2009 Greenprint. The 2009 Minneapolis Greenprint was released on April 13. It provides a framework for measuring our progress towards improving our natural environment based on 11 key environmental indicators and goals, and allows us to track our successes and ongoing challenges. This year a new indicator that focuses on green jobs was added to the report. Challenges include the need for increased solar power to meet energy goals, maintenance and growth of the urban forest while battling insects and disease, and improving air and water quality.

Beekeeping. The Council, with my strong support, has approved a new ordinance amendment that allows and regulates beekeeping in Minneapolis. The proposed ordinance includes an application process similar to that which is required for the keeping of chickens with the exception that 100% of the immediate neighbors must approve the request. I successfully moved a small amendment to the action today to strip out what I felt to be an unnecessary requirement that beekeepers indemnify the City for any lawsuits that result from keeping bees. As we look to increase the amount of local food being consumed in the city, this is a good step in the right direction, both for the honey that bees produce and for their help in pollinating vegetable gardens.

Trader Joe's. I opposed and spoke against supporting legislation that would allow Trader's Joes to get a liquor license in a location (2309 Lyndale Ave S) that does not conform with current City policies. Unfortunately, it passed (7 to 6), so the City is now on record supporting state legislation to allow a liquor license at this address. It can still be stopped either at the legislature or when it returns to the Council when they apply for the actual license.

Diversity Audit of City Boards & Commissions. I am initiating a Diversity Audit project of all the City's Boards and Commissions that include individuals appointed by the Mayor and/or the City Council. Working with the City Coordinator's office my office will inventory the gender, racial/ethnic and age make up of over 40 Boards and Commissions. I expect this work to be completed next fall.

Minneapolis Twitters. You can now get info on news and events happening in City government through Twitter. You must first have your own Twitter account. Click the "Follow us on Twitter" link on the City's home page, or visit www.twitter.com/CityMinneapolis and click the "follow" button underneath the City of Minneapolis logo.

Free WiFi for Nonprofits. City of Minneapolis is accepting applications for 100 free wireless internet accounts intended for non-profit organizations that provide free computer access to the public. Applications (available at http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/wirelessminneapolis/WirelessMinneapolis_WhatsNew.asp) are due by **Monday, May 18**, and will be reviewed by staff and the Digital Inclusion Advisory Board, which will make recommendations to the City Council on which organizations will receive free accounts in 2009. The accounts will be good through 2010.

Vacant Commercial Registration. The proposed vacant commercial registration program and fee will come forward for a public hearing on May 13, at 1pm. I have serious concerns about this proposal. The commercial property registration fee that was passed by the Council early this year is overly burdensome to small businesses, and I will be working to prevent this program from having the same effect. I have also heard very good criticisms of this proposal's unnecessary breadth.

Proposed Rental Licensing Changes. Council Member Johnson is proposing to require an inspection, along with a fee of \$450, for all changes of ownership of rental dwellings. Council Member Schiff is proposing to change the process for dealing with the Housing Director's recommendations of denial, non-renewal, revocation or suspension of rental licenses. The proposal would shift from the existing citizen board to an administrative hearing process. Council Member Samuels is bringing forward some proposals as well, to give the City the power to revoke all licenses held by an owner who operates without a license for a second time, requiring that landlords notify tenants of mortgage foreclosure, and creating a new fee of \$3,000 for landlords who have had their licenses revoked to get them renewed. There will be public hearings for all of these proposals on May 13.

Taxi Fares. Another hearing on May 13 will deal with my proposal to go back to the taxi fare rate that existed before this March, and work to come up with a fare rate formula that more accurately reflects all of the costs of doing business as a taxi driver in Minneapolis.

Climate Change Grants. Congratulations to Second Ward recipients of the 2009 round of Climate Change Grants: Seward Neighborhood Group, which will buy down the cost of energy audits and encourage people to walk to local businesses; and Bedlam Theater, which will encourage attendees of its shows to take the Minnesota Energy Challenge and use bikes and transit to get to the show. See more at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/.

Youth Violence Prevention Forum. Mayor Rybak and Congressman Ellison convened a congressional forum on May 1st that highlighted the Minneapolis Blueprint as an adaptable model for other communities as well as to identify a role for the federal government to partner with localities on youth violence prevention.

Foreclosure Resolution. I worked with Council Member Glidden on a resolution calling on mortgage lenders to allow renters and former owners to stay in their homes with a rental initiative policy. The resolution was approved by the City Council on Friday May 8.

Great Streets Grants. Congratulations to the great Second Ward organizations who have been chosen to receive 2009 Great Streets Grants. African Development Center will receive \$50,000 to work on business planning and workshops on bookkeeping and accounting in the immigrant community. The West Bank Business Association will receive \$50,000 to work on public safety activities, branding and marketing, and special events. Seward Redesign will use \$50,000 to work on business recruitment, merchandising and design services, business organizing and branding, and will use an additional \$40,450 to develop a tenant recruitment packet, recruit businesses, and create a business directory.

Bike Donations. Bikes Belong, a national bicycle advocacy organization, has donated 26 bicycles, valued at \$7,250, to the City of Minneapolis. We will use 12 of them for the Bike Walk Ambassador Program, with up to 6 being used as prize giveaways for Bike Walk to Work Day. The Council has directed Public Works to explore using the remaining bicycles as a city bicycle fleet for employees, and return to City Council with a potential plan for said bicycle fleet.

Homelessness Prevention Grants. To make the City eligible to receive \$5,520,902 in federal stimulus dollars relating to homelessness prevention, we needed to make an amendment to our consolidated plan. I hope our grant application is accepted, and we can put these badly needed resources to work combating homelessness in Minneapolis.

A Ranked Choice Voting test election is being conducted at the Elections warehouse (732A Harding St. NE) by city elections staff. As of Friday, May 8, elections staff have finished counting the single-seat races and expects to begin multi-seat counting Monday. People are welcome to stop in any time from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Elections staff have also set up a mock polling place where the public can go through the Ranked Choice Voting process and offer feedback on the process and ballot design. There is also a presentation you can view on RCV. This test election is an opportunity for staff to put their proposed procedures to the test and to learn what things work, what needs to be changed and how the process can be fine-tuned as much as possible.

RCV in Court. The Minnesota Supreme Court will hear arguments in the case of the Minnesota Voters Alliance v. The City of Minneapolis and FairVote Minnesota May 13, 9:00 - 10:00 am, in Courtroom 300 at the Minnesota, Judicial Center, 25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul.

A Charter Revision Workgroup has been established by the Council study the Charter Commission's proposed revisions to the City Charter. The workgroup will: A. Review the proposed Charter revisions; B. Determine the implications of the proposed Charter revisions for current City functions; and C. Provide a report to the Intergovernmental Relations Committee (IGR) summarizing the review and analysis. It will also consult with the Mpls Park & Recreation Board and Board of Estimate & Taxation as to their direct input to the Charter Commission. The Charter commission is asking that these be considered unsubstantial changes and be approved

on a 13 – 0 vote by the Council. For more information about this major Charter re-write see <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/charter-commission/>

The Charter Commission's Community Meetings about the Ostrow, Remington, and Samuels Charter amendments have concluded. I testified at one of these expressing my strong opposition with putting any of these proposals on the ballot this year.

Penta Study Legislation. I strongly support Representative Karen Clark's legislative effort that would require the Minnesota Department of Health to conduct a full analysis pentachlorophenol in newly installed Xcel Energy utility poles in Minneapolis, including several located in the Second Ward. On May 8th Council Members Benson, Lilligren and I sent her a formal letter of support.

Spring Jam Riot. I was dismayed to learn about the riot that took place Spring Jam weekend. I believe that the University District Partnership Alliance should address both this specific event and future U-related events that may create similar situations. I will be interested to hear an after-action report from the Police Department, to help me assess the appropriateness of their response and the amount of City resources expended. I also challenge the University to hold their students accountable for their off-campus behavior and potentially review whether Spring Jam is a net positive for the greater University community. I will be working with Council Member Hofstede to pressure the University to collect a security surcharge on each ticket sold at the new U Stadium, part of which should go to the Minneapolis Police Department to be spent on increasing safety and addressing negative behaviors in the U-area neighborhoods.

Central Corridor Federal Funding Request. The Council has voted to submit a request for federal funding for the traffic mitigations necessitated by (but not funded by) the Central Corridor LRT project. This request includes the connection between E River Pkwy and Main St SE, the improvements to the intersection of Franklin Ave SE, 27th Ave SE and E River Pkwy, the completion of Granary Road and better access to I-35W to relieve pressure from University and 4th St SE. I strongly supported this application, and hope that it will be fully funded.

Bystrom Brothers Site. On May 8th the City Council voted to move forward with the Bystrom Brothers site redevelopment. This is part of a larger Franklin Light Rail Transit Station Area Redevelopment Plan and includes approving land acquisition by the City using Transit Oriented Development Program set-aside and LAAND funds, and authorizing a redevelopment contract with Seward Redesign. We also approved amending the Franklin LRT Station Area Redevelopment Plan to identify 14 properties located near E 22nd St & Minnehaha Ave as property that may be acquired by the City, and authorized the borrowing up to \$500,000 in LAAND funds from the Metropolitan Council, for the acquisition of property by the City. I'm supportive of this action, and glad to see this project making progress.

Chindian Café has applied for a beer/wine class E license. Residents who spoke at the public hearing were very supportive of owner Nina Wong's application, while expressing some concerns about hours, parking, graffiti and other issues, and encouraging Nina to keep her current, neighborhood-supportive business model. I plan to support the application when it comes before committee and the full Council, and share residents' hopes that Chindian will be successful.

Sporty's Pub. I have heard from Sporty's Pub owner Joe Radaich that he is seeking an upgrade to his liquor license from his current 3.2 license. He is not interested in renewing the Charter beer and wine license due to the more stringent requirements regarding service of food with every drink and the 70/30 revenue requirement. This is the only City license available to him, due to the small size of the commercial node at Como and 22nd Ave SE. Therefore, he is seeking a license directly from the State and I understand that he is working with Senator Pogemiller on this. I am working to insure that any legislation will include a local approval clause which should give us the leverage we need to work with the owner and neighbors to make this a win-win.

Palmer's Bar is seeking a liquor license upgrade as well, which would allow them to have live music. I am considering continuing this an additional two weeks or moving their application forward without recommendation at the Public Hearing on May 13th, to give the West Bank Land Use Committee a chance to discuss the matter before it comes before the full Council on May 22nd.

Dania Site. I am working with City staff to finalize next steps for the city-owned parcel at 5th and Cedar Ave on the West Bank. The draft timeline we are considering includes the following steps: In May we hope to organize an advisory committee of stakeholders in the neighborhood interested in Dania Hall; in June, to convene the advisory committee to discuss marketing options (RFP, RFQ, LOI, etc.), and specific community requests based on our first meeting in January; by the end of June post a draft to website and email to advisory committee for a formal comment period ; complete final draft process by end of July; issue marketing documents for given period of time in August and review proposals received in community meeting in late 2009 and make a recommendation to the City Council in late 2009 or early 2010.

Augsburg College's application to vacate all of 7th St S between 20th Ave S and 21st Ave S to accommodate a proposed new science building and green space was approved by the Planning Commission and will move forward to the City Council later this month. Nine votes are required to approve the street vacation and it will likely be subject to the reservation of easements for Xcel, Center Point Energy, and the City of Minneapolis so that power, water and sewer infrastructure will continue to operate underground.

Openings on City Boards and Commissions. There are openings on the Family Housing Fund Board of Directors (closes 5/29), Workforce Council (closes 5/22) and Public Health Advisory Committee (open until filled). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

Yours, in peace and cooperation,

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