



9th Ward E-News

From Minneapolis Council Member Gary Schiff

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Rep. Keith Ellison to talk about Middle East, stimulus

Join Council Member Gary Schiff with guest speaker Congressman Keith Ellison for this month's *Breakfast with Gary*. Representative Ellison will talk about his recent trip to the [Middle East](#) and the need for [more diplomatic efforts](#) to bring peace to the region. Ellison will also provide an update on federal legislation affecting Minneapolis residents, including the stimulus package.



Rep. Keith Ellison will speak at February's Breakfast with Gary. (Photo by Lisa Miller).

The breakfast will take place on Friday, February 27th from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. at [Mercado Central](#), 1515 East Lake Street in Minneapolis. Breakfast will be available for \$5.

March 27th's *Breakfast with Gary* will feature Minneapolis State Legislators, who will talk about the State of Minnesota deficit and their legislative efforts this session.

Stimulus package offers limited help to city deficit



The federal stimulus package signed by President Obama on Tuesday includes funds for capital investment in Minneapolis such as money to fix [deteriorating bridges in the Midtown Greenway](#), but will have limited effect on the city's 2009 budget deficit. The city is facing \$52 million in state aid cuts to its general fund.

Minneapolis will receive funding for housing energy improvements and workforce programs. Other funding will go to improve public safety programs and employment, including summer youth programs, job training and employment.

While details on the programs are not yet available, the stimulus program is intended to get people to work, improve highways and bridges, improve energy efficiency in public facilities and encourage the development of green jobs and industries. The grants are meant to be implemented quickly. For some projects, if not started within 90 days, the funding is forfeited.

Gene Ranieri, head of Intergovernmental Relations for the City of Minneapolis said, "This is one-time money and most of it must be used by September 2010. We're happy to have the additional funds, but we're not sure about the rules for expending it. The details aren't here yet."

Council passes power line resolution

On Friday, February 6th, the Minneapolis City Council passed a [resolution](#) calling on Xcel Energy to pursue energy conservation and to bury the proposed Midtown power line. The [current proposal](#) by Xcel Energy is to construct a high-voltage power line over the Midtown Greenway, from Hiawatha to Oakland Avenue. To meet a growing demand for

electricity in South Minneapolis, Xcel says they are planning to submit a proposal to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in the first quarter of 2009.

"Neighborhoods made it clear this power line will harm the Midtown Greenway. This resolution represents the first time the City of Minneapolis has gone on record to send a message to the Public Utilities Commission that high voltage lines should be buried in Minneapolis," Council Member Schiff, an author of the resolution said.

After Xcel submits the proposal, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission will decide whether or not to approve a permit for the project. During a year-long environmental review, there will be opportunity for public input. Community groups opposed to the project plan to weigh in during this process, including the [Midtown Greenway Coalition](#). Seven other neighborhood organizations have adopted resolutions calling to delay the project and explore alternatives.

Property value notices sent to city residents



Minneapolis property owners will soon receive their 2009 [valuation notice](#) in the mail by the end of March, according to Patrick Todd, city assessor. Each year, properties in Minneapolis are assessed for their estimated market value. The value will determine the amount of property taxes each property will be required to pay in 2010.

"If your property value hasn't fallen, I encourage citizens to call the city assessor and consider appealing their valuation," Council Member Schiff said. In 2008, an estimated 94% of property

owners in the City of Minneapolis saw property values drop.

One key piece of the valuation notice is the estimated market value, which is an estimate of what the property would sell for in the current real estate market. A drop in this value would have a significant impact on the amount of real estate property taxes a property owner would pay.

"We want people to call us if their assessed value is too high or if they have questions about their property value," City Assessor Patrick Todd says. If a property owner looks over the valuation notice and does not agree with the estimated value for their home, there are a number of options for the owner." Residents can attend neighborhood meetings that are listed on the value notice, or learn more on the city assessor's [web site](#). Other options are to utilize the [Board of Appeals and Equalization](#), the [County Board of Appeal and Equalization](#), or the [Tax Courts](#) as listed as options #2 and #3 on the value notice.

Ninth Ward Awards winner announced

At Breakfast with Gary on January 30th, the seventh annual [Ninth Ward Awards](#) were handed out by Council Member Gary Schiff.

Citizen of the Year – Neil Thompson

Neil Thompson started working in his father's drugstore, Nile Pharmacy, when he was 12. He eventually sold the family pharmacy and studied for a

law degree at William Mitchell in St. Paul. The old family pharmacy is now his law firm on the corner of 38th Street East and 23rd Avenue South.



Over 120 people attended the 2009 Ninth Ward Awards.

Neil Thompson started working at Walgreens eight years ago as a part-time pharmacist. Starting in 2005, Thompson worked as a government-sanctioned undercover

investigator, poring through records in the back offices of Walgreens stores. Eventually he and a co-employee [developed a case](#) that Walgreens was overcharging Medicaid by millions. In September 2009, The U.S. Department of Justice announced that the pharmacy giant would pay \$9.9 million to settle the case.

Project of the Year – Stop the Midtown Burner

This project was started by a group of neighborhood residents who put together a grassroots lobbying campaign to inform residents, neighborhood groups and people in government that the development of a wood burning eco-energy facility in the Phillips neighborhood was a bad idea. The group also prompted a new state law that requires additional study of the cumulative environmental effects of projects that cause pollution in low-income neighborhoods.

Block Club of the Year – 3400 block of 16th Ave. South

In the middle of the night last summer, residents of this block club called 911 to report that they were following two suspects who were seen tagging a garage on the 3400 block of 15th Ave. S. with graffiti. But they didn't stop with just a phone call. The witnesses, Lee and Mariana Campbell got into their cars and followed the two suspects until officers could make the arrest.

Youth Leaders of the Year – Little Earth Youth Mural

Youth living in the Little Earth community banded together with funding and support by the Phillips Youth Civic Engagement Project. They created an internship work-study program and ran the mural project as part of a summer job program. They also worked with the American Indian Chamber of Commerce to get the internships going and to pursue the sustainability of this project. The Little Earth youth mural was painted on the pedestrian bridge that provides safe passage over Cedar Avenue.

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