

Second Ward June 2013 E-newsletter

News from Cam Gordon
Council Member, Second Ward
June 2013

<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/council/ward2>

Storm Response. On June 21, Minneapolis was hit by a strong storm, and many of us are still recovering. Since then the Minneapolis Park Board and the City have been working to clear city streets and remove boulevard trees from homes, garages and other structures. The Park Board has also begun to remove additional boulevard trees that fell during the week due to winds and saturated soils. Park Board crews will collect homeowner yard tree debris that can be brought to the boulevard beginning July 1 through July 12 (excluding July 4 and 7) for properties affected by the storm. Please move larger limbs, branches, and trunks to the boulevard area in front of your house and Park Board crews will pick up and dispose of these items at no charge. Property owners adjacent to tree debris placed on the boulevard are asked not to park vehicles near the debris, to help crews in the removal process. Watch for No Parking signs that may be used. If you have large tree debris in your back yard, it should be brought to the street for collection. If that is not possible, you may call 311 weekdays to request an alley pickup. The City will check the location to determine if the needed equipment can access the site. If collection is not possible, the City will advise you, and you will then be responsible for disposal. If alley collection is possible, debris needs to be moved as close to the alley as possible so crews can remove it, since City crews cannot go onto private property to do removal. If you have small branches and pieces of brush, you can use the regular weekly Solid Waste & Recycling yard waste collection service to have them picked up. Crews will pick up tied bundles of brush and small branches that are less than three inches in diameter, less than three feet long and weigh less than 40 pounds. Robin, from the Ward 2 office, has gone out throughout the ward to identify and help address ongoing problems and people should feel free to call us here with questions or concerns (**673-2202**) in addition to the numbers for Xcel (**1-800-895-4999** for downed power lines, **1-800-895-1999** for outages) and the Park Board (**612-313-7710**). I am very grateful for all the hard work of our park and city staff, as well as utility workers, and all the neighbors and community volunteers who have pitched in and cooperated to help with the recovery.

Municipal Power. On June 28, the City Council voted to hold a public hearing on **August 1, 2013**, to discuss placing a question on this fall's general election ballot regarding the City's energy future. If passed by the voters of Minneapolis, this question will authorize the City to form a municipal power utility. I view this as a necessary step to meeting the City's aggressive climate change mitigation goals. Approximately two-thirds of the greenhouse gas emissions in Minneapolis come through our existing electricity and natural gas utilities. A vote to authorize the creation of a municipal utility will not *require* the City to form one, but will give us that option – which I think will help in the ongoing electrical and natural gas franchise negotiations with Xcel and Centerpoint. I will work hard to make sure that Minneapolis will only form a municipal utility after we make certain that we can provide energy services as or more affordably and reliably as the incumbent utilities, and with a greater focus on renewable energy, energy efficiency and local generation. For more information, visit: <http://www.minneapolisenergyoptions.org>.

Climate Action Plan. The Council has unanimously passed the Minneapolis Climate Action Plan (<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/sustainability/climate>). The Plan, subtitled “a roadmap to reducing citywide greenhouse gas emissions,” offers goals and potential strategies to help achieve a 15 percent reduction in emissions by 2015 and a 30 percent reduction by 2025 from 2006 levels. The strategies are grouped into four categories: improving the energy efficiency; increasing our use of local, renewable energy; reducing vehicle miles traveled in Minneapolis and reducing waste. The Plan includes many intriguing recommendations for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including the use of property-assessed and on-bill financing to fund energy efficiency and renewable energy retrofits for residential and commercial building; encouraging net zero buildings; creating more walkable “complete neighborhoods;” constructing 30 miles of on street, protected bike facilities by 2020 and identifying products and packaging that are neither recyclable or compostable. This plan is a great step in the right direction and I look forward to helping implement many of its ideas and strategies in the years to come.

Funding for Streetcars. The Council has voted to establish a Value Capture District to finance our first streetcar line, on the Central Ave-Nicollet Ave route. This was enabled by the legislature's creation of the Value Capture District funding mechanism, which grants authority to the City to establish a project area including one block to either side of a streetcar line, and place certain taxable parcels into the Value Capture District. The future tax revenues from these parcels may be used to fund the construction of the streetcar line. One of the reasons for taking this action at this time was to enable the City to request – and hopefully receive – federal transit funding to help us build this first streetcar line.

Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (NCEC). On July 18, 2013 there will be a public hearing in the City Council Chambers in City Hall to consider five appointments to the NCEC for two-year terms to be effective July, 2013 through June, 2015.

Neighborhood Policy Amendments. The Department of Neighborhood & Community Relations has recommended adopting a new policy for Preparation and Processing of Neighborhood Priority Plans, and revising the existing NRP Policy on Changing Approved Action Plans. I have some concerns about what the reports considers evidence of broad neighborhood support and also about the provisions that would allow the department director to approve plan changes of up to and over \$100,000 without bringing them to the NRP Policy Board and the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission. Because of these concerns I am considering bring forward amendments when this returns to the Council for final approval on July 19. You can find the full recommendations here:
<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/meetings/cow/WCMS1P-101777>

National Night Out. The 30th Annual Minneapolis National Night Out will be Tuesday, August 6. National Night Out is an annual nationwide event that encourages residents to get out in the community, hold block parties and get to know their neighbors as a way to encourage crime prevention. You can [register your event](#) online or through 311. If you want to block your street, you can do so for free through July 23. Not all streets can be blocked, depending on traffic flow. From July 24 through August 1, there is a \$100 fee. After August 1 no applications for blocking off a street will be allowed. To register and for more information see <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/nno>.

Foreclosure Numbers. As you can learn here: http://www.minneapolismn.gov/foreclosure/foreclosure_mortgageforeclosuremaps, the number of foreclosures, although declining, continues to be a problem in Minneapolis. In May there were no foreclosures reported in Ward 2 and 66 city wide – the lowest number since we started tracking this in January of 2007.. For this year so far (from January through May) there have been 460 foreclosures in the city. There were 588 in Minneapolis last year at this time, 762 in 2011, 937 in 2010, 889 in 2009, 1,419 in 2008 and 1,136 in 2007.

Energy Future Options Study. The City Council has approved hiring the Center for Energy and Environment to draft a report that explores the various paths the City could take to achieve its energy goals, including examination of potential utility partnerships, changes to how the City uses energy utility franchise fees, and municipalization of one or both energy utilities. The study will help frame the future franchise negotiations with Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy. The City has utility franchise agreements with Xcel Energy for electricity and CenterPoint Energy for natural gas that were signed in the early 1990s and expire at the end of 2014. The Center for Energy and Environment is charged with drafting “energy vision” goals and an overview of the various paths the City could take to achieve them. The study should include a review of the current legislative and legal landscape; an examination of existing municipal utilities in Minnesota and across the country, a report on a “municipalization pathway,” to include a description of the process, schedule and preliminary cost estimates for forming a municipal utility under Minnesota law. The report will also include information about forming utility partnerships, as well as potential state legislative or Public Utilities Commission regulatory changes. More information can be found at www.minneapolismn.gov/energyfranchise

Comments to Public Utilities Commission regarding Xcel's Annual Report. The Council has formally submitted comments regarding Xcel Energy's Annual Report. These highlight ongoing concerns that surfaced clearly for me when Xcel was seeking approval of a new high voltage power line on the

Midtown Greenway. The required report is supposed to cover safety, reliability and service quality performance of the preceding year. Unfortunately, the report does not include any Minneapolis specific data which makes it very difficult to use. We suggested that the Commission require Xcel to provide annual information down to the at least the city level. We also expressed interest in understanding how Xcel is planning on adapting its infrastructure to meet significantly increased generation within the city and its plans to implement “smarter” technology within the city to better manage distributed energy and maintain reliability. We expressed concern that sufficient resources by Xcel Energy be allocated for the ongoing operation and maintenance of the local distribution lines in the Minneapolis which appears to have been neglected for decades. According to the a recent report by the Electric Power Research Institute most electrical outages are due to problems in the local distribution system and that in many areas we have some of the most aging infrastructure. A modern, state-of-the-art electric system will be critical to the City’s economic future and our ability to keep and create more jobs in the city.

Nicollet Mall Design Teams. Four finalists have been selected in a competition to redesign and reconstruct Nicollet Mall in downtown Minneapolis. The design teams selected will provide the City with multiple visions for the mall, which hasn’t had a major reconstruction since the late 1980s. A final team will be chosen in September and may be hired by the City to develop a final concept design for redesigning and revitalizing this pedestrian and transit mall. The Nicollet Mall Design Competition is a partnership with the City and the Minneapolis Downtown Council. The purpose: develop a new vision and concept design for the mall to ensure it remains the leading center for business in the metro area and Minnesota and helps spur growth for decades. A total of 21 urban design teams submitted their qualifications to the City. The finalists are Daoust Lestage, James Corner Field Operations, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, and the Tom Leader Studio. On July 2, the four teams will be issued a design brief and request for proposals. They will then have eight weeks to complete and submit their design visions for Nicollet Mall and a proposal for full design services. Each team will receive a stipend of \$30,000 to defray some of the costs of participating in this process. The four concepts will be revealed in September, and a final team will then be selected. Once a final design team is selected, there will be a larger public conversation that will help to guide the selected design team as they develop a more detailed design for a new Nicollet Mall. More information is available at www.minneapolismn.gov/nicolletmall.

Car Sharing Pilot Expanded. The City Council has voted to add Hourcar and Zipcar to the city’s new two-year car sharing pilot program. These companies, along with Car2Go, will have car-sharing vehicles throughout town using on-street parking spaces as well as off-street ones. There is no City funding in this expansion of car sharing options and the three car-sharing companies will need to pay for use of each on-street parking space.

Voter Ambassadors. The City is looking for volunteers to work in the community to raise awareness and engage voters about the election in November. Voter ambassadors will create a network of community volunteers who will provide resources and information about this year’s election directly to their neighborhoods and civic circles. Ambassadors will be trained in election law fundamentals, voting procedures, and how ranked-choice voting works. Each ambassador will be supplied with maps to polling places, pamphlets, sample ranked-choice ballots, and guides to answer frequently asked questions about ranked-choice voting. In addition, ambassadors will have access to videos that show how to vote using a ranked-choice ballot, receive regular updates about the election, and be asked to make presentations within their community about the municipal election. Anyone interested in volunteering for this program should contact the program coordinator, Anissa Hollingshead by at anissa.hollingshead@minneapolismn.gov.

New Initiative to Help People with Housing Violations. Two City departments have teamed up to help residents who are elderly, disabled, or low-income to address housing violations on their properties. The Housing Inspection Services division of Regulatory Services is dedicating a full-time employee to assist the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department in helping property owners navigate through the steps they are required to take when there are housing violations at their property. Housing Inspection Services plays an important role in making sure that housing in the city meets basic standards so everyone has a safe, quality place to live. Sometimes that involves taking enforcement action to require

owners to bring their properties up to code. However, enforcement and fines can be a hardship for home owners when they are elderly, disabled, or low-income. The City wants to help folks avoid escalating fines and take care of serious problems so they don't lead to the condemnation of their property. That's why this position has been created within the Neighborhood and Community Relations department, effective June 17, 2013.

One Minneapolis One Read. This year's One Read is "A Choice of Weapons" by Gordon Parks. One Minneapolis One Read is Minneapolis' community read where everyone in town is invited to read the same book. This will be the third year of the citywide "read," where the entire community is encouraged to read a single book and join in a community conversation. Gordon Parks was a photographer for Life magazine, a writer, composer, artist, and filmmaker, and was only 16 in 1928 when he moved from Kansas to St. Paul, Minnesota, after his mother's death. This compelling autobiography, first published in 1966, tells how Parks managed to escape the poverty and bigotry around him, and launch his distinguished career, by choosing the weapons given him by "a mother who placed love, dignity, and hard work over hatred." For more information, see: <http://oneminneapolisonearead.com>.

Sister Cities Day. The sixth annual Minneapolis Sister Cities Day Celebration will be held Sunday, July 14. 1 – 5 p.m. at the Nicollet Island Pavilion, 40 Power Street This free event and ice cream social will include entertainment, activities, and information about each sister city. Each of the Minneapolis Sister Cities is invited to perform and share insight into their culture. The event brings together people from all over the world. Minneapolis' Sister Cities are Santiago (Chile), Kuopio (Finland), Ibaraki City (Japan), Novosibirsk (Russia), Tours (France), Harbin (China), Uppsala (Sweden), Eldoret (Kenya), Cuernavaca (Mexico), and Najaf (Iraq). More information is available at www.minneapolis.org/sistercitiesday.

Grow North. The Council has voted for a proposal called Grow North, developed by the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED). Grow North is a targeted financial incentive package to attract jobs-intensive business investment specifically to North Minneapolis, funded at the level of \$400,000 per year for the next two years. CPED staff estimates that over 1,000 jobs will be created on the Northside over the next five years through this program. In addition to existing financing tools and resources available throughout the city, Grow North would include forgivable loans for capital investments such as acquisition, building improvements, and new construction; workforce training and recruitment assistance; and homebuyer down payment assistance targeted to employees of recruited businesses wishing to purchase a home in North Minneapolis through the Minneapolis Advantage program. These incentives would be available to for-profit businesses that commit to bring at least 75 jobs to North Minneapolis, offer a significant number of jobs to Northside residents, and to pursue a high level of green construction for new construction or building renovations. For more information, go here: www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/GrowNorth.

Organized Collection. The Council has voted to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for our organized solid waste and recycling collection program, and to include a labor peace provision in the RFP. This could result to a change in the private haulers who know collect from roughly half of the homes (all outside of ward 2) in the city as part of a city contract. The current company, MRI, however, is expected to submit a proposal again and could be awarded the contract.

Above the Falls Plan. The Council has approved the Above the Falls Plan Update, and has changed the City's Comprehensive Plan to include its recommendations for bringing parkland and housing to the upper river. I am very excited about this plan, which promises to green and revitalize the river. One of the impacts of this plan will be the closure of the Upper Harbor Terminal, which will get us one step closer to being able to close the Saint Anthony Lock and Dam, the best thing we can do to prevent the spread of the invasive Asian Carp into the rest of Minnesota.

Plain Language Charter. The Charter Commission has approved two amendments to the Council to be on this fall's ballot that will, if passed, change the City Charter to make the language plainer and more up to date. The purpose of these amendments is not to make substantive changes to the Charter. The Council will be drafting ballot language that I expect to be approved in July. You can find the full report

here: <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@clerk/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-110247.pdf>

Report on CPED Grants and Awards. The Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) department has presented a report to the Council that makes clear that the City has been very successful at securing funds from outside sources for redevelopment projects in Minneapolis. In 2012, the City sought \$36.9 million and received \$25.3 million in funds from Hennepin County, the Met Council, and the State of Minnesota. From 2009-2012, the City has received development grants exceeding \$55 million. I commend the success of CPED at bringing these funds into the City of Minneapolis, to build jobs and housing.

Beehives on City Hall. Last month, we changed the beekeeping ordinance to allow people to more easily install beehives on the second or higher story of a building, so that we could add a beehive to the City Hall green roof. In June, the Mdwakanton Sioux donated beehives to the City, and they were installed on the green roof. I think this is great, both for the green roof and the pollinators themselves. As you may know, bees are suffering a population decline, and that's a big problem. A large percentage of the food we eat is pollinated by bees. Everything we can do to increase their numbers will help.

Spay/Neuter Initiative. Animal Care and Control has had a major success with a new spay/neuter initiative. Every dog, cat and rabbit that leaves the animal shelter through adoption or transfer to one of our 46 animal rescue partners is now spayed or neutered. In the past, all animals were sterilized within 30 days of adoption, but this responsibility fell to the new pet owner. Animal Care and Control was able to accomplish this through a 2012 partnership with Minnesota Spay Neuter Assistance Program (MNSNAP).

Firefighter Turnout Clothing. The Council has authorized a routine increase in the contract for the Minneapolis Fire Department to buy turnout clothing for firefighters. When this came to committee, I had an opportunity to ask where this clothing is made, and under what labor protections. I was pleased to hear that the Fire Department contracts with a local retailer of goods manufactured in Canada in fair-labor facilities. I hope that this can be a model to other City departments that it is possible to get a good deal for taxpayers while not buying sweatshop-produced goods.

New Polling Locations in Ward 2 Area. The Council has approved changing the polling places for 3 precincts in the Seward, Cedar Riverside and University neighborhoods for this fall's elections. Voters in precinct 6-2, who voted at Seward Square Apartments in 2012, will instead vote at Seward Tower East. Voters in precinct 2-9, who voted at Seward Tower East, will vote in the Augsburg College Oren Gateway Center. And voters in Precinct 2-4, who voted at the Coffman Memorial Union, will instead vote at the Weisman Art Museum.

Bluff Street Bike Trail Project. With City Council approval given this month of the agreement s with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to operate and maintain portions of the Bluff Street Trail on property within their jurisdictions it looks like construction of this trail will move forward in August. In 2008 we identified an opportunity to connect the on-street bicycle trail on 2nd St. to the off-road trail over Bridge #9 & the Mississippi River by the including a pre-cast concrete box culvert under I-35W as part of the new bridge construction. This will provide an off-road trail from Bridge #9 through Bluff St Park, under I-35W and on to the 2nd Street S on-street bike lanes. Construction should begin in early- August and be completed in October 2013.

10th Ave SE Mississippi River Bridge. The Council has approving moving ahead with hiring SRF Consulting Group, Inc. for Bridge Rehabilitation Engineering Services to rehab the deteriorated 10th Avenue SE River Bridge over the Mississippi River. This link between the west and east banks of the River provides an important connection for motor vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians, and bus transit between the East & West In 2009 Public Works hired a consulting firm to perform a structural evaluation and provide a report detailing the bridge's existing conditions. This report helped Public Works solicit and receive both federal and state funding to assist with the bridge rehabilitation costs of over \$12 million.

Design is anticipated to begin in July and is scheduled to be completed early in 2014. Construction will begin in the summer of 2014 is projected to be completed in the summer of 2015.

8th St SE Street Design. In June the City Council approved entering into an agreement with the University of Minnesota for the design of 8th St SE, from 15th Ave SE east to the dead end a few blocks east. Under the terms being discussed a new, and much needed, roadway would be constructed. The University would pay all of the costs except what the City would normally assess to affected property owners using our uniform assessment rate. Once the final terms of the agreement are worked out, Public Works staff will be conducting a survey and reaching out to the community for feedback on a design. I am hopeful that a new road can yet be built this year, but it may not be able to be constructed until next.

Sidewalk Work. This year's sidewalk work in Ward 2 has resulted in a great deal of discussion and some concerns about this city program. In the past weeks I have worked closely with individual property owners to address their concerns and sidewalk inspections staff to ensure that we are following a clear, fair process that is consistent with city policy. I greatly appreciate everyone's efforts to make sure that this once-a-decade process is both reasonable and improves the pedestrian safety for years to come. Improving the pedestrian experience for all types of users is especially important now as we work to maximize the use of local businesses and recent transit investments and make sure that our sidewalks works for everyone. It might be helpful to remember that as you enjoy the safe and accessible sidewalks throughout the city, it is in part due to the past investments those property owners have made as part of our sidewalk maintenance program. Years ago we determined that the best way to maintain our sidewalks was to make it the responsibility of each property owner to cover the costs of keeping them open and maintained, and that the City would be charged with making sure sidewalks met certain standards and using our assessment process to pay for them. In the months ahead I will be reviewing this policy. I am concerned that it may burden those of us on limited or fixed incomes unfairly and that it might be worth exploring alternative funding options so that costs could be shared more widely.

Seventh and Fifth Street Ramps. The City has won a \$6.7 million Transportation for Economic Development (TED) grant from the state Department of Transportation to build a new 7th street entrance ramp from I-94 into Downtown Minneapolis. This will improve access to downtown for drivers from the East Metro and improve circulation on the East side of downtown, facilitate Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on the I-94/Gateway corridor, and allow the City to repurpose the existing 5th Street ramp into a needed new street and pedestrian connection between downtown and the West Bank.

Gas Main Work in Seward and Cedar Riverside. This summer, Centerpoint Energy is replacing a natural gas main on the West Bank and in Seward. They are installing 1.4 miles of new steel pipe under 19th Ave S from the 10th Ave Bridge to I-94, and 20th Ave S down to Franklin. Work is planned to occur until August. After construction, streets, sidewalks, boulevards and lawns will be restored to their original condition, typically within five to seven business days after construction is completed. You can find out more on the Second Ward Blog or at Centerpoint's construction website: www.centerpointenergy.com/community/inthecommunity/constructionzone/MN/. If you have particular questions or concerns, you can contact Centerpoint's Construction Activity Information Hotline at 612-321-5329. For restoration inquires, call 612-321-5042. Area Manager Kevin Joyce is available at 612-861-8572.

Minnehaha Ave. As you may have heard, Hennepin County has delayed the reconstruction of Minnehaha Avenue until 2015. The county staff has set two public meetings to present both the cycle track (or protected bike lane) layout and a more standard bike lane layout. The first on **Thursday, July 11** and **Wednesday, July 17**, both will run from 5 to 7 pm. The meetings will be held at Minnehaha Communion Lutheran Church, 4101 37th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN. The purpose of the Open House is to provide information about the Minnehaha Avenue design concepts and to give residents and businesses the opportunity to ask questions and discuss project concerns with staff from Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis. They will likely be coming to the City Council for a layout approval late this fall. I continue to support the cycle track concept, and believe that it can be implemented without the impacts to trees and parking that the current County cycle track layout has. I would welcome a formal

position from greater Longfellow residents and the Longfellow Community Council on preferences between the cycle track and bike lane concepts. You can find more information with links to the two layouts here:

<http://www.hennepin.us/portal/site/HennepinUS/menuitem.b1ab75471750e40fa01dfb47ccf06498/?vgnnextoid=3cb8da6e23e16210VgnVCM20000048114689RCRD>

Kao Xiong Sentenced. West Bank resident Kao Xiong, the father of 2-year-old Neengco Xiong, who was accidentally killed by his older brother last December with a loaded gun that was left under a pillow, has been sentenced to 10 years' probation, yearly community service, and a condition that he never own a gun again. I think this is the best outcome to a terribly tragic incident, and I thank Mr. Xiong for clearly taking responsibility for his son's death, and Judge Moreno for showing clemency. This case continues to be a clear example of the dangers of having a gun in one's home, and of guns in our society generally. If you have a gun in your home, I hope you will consider getting rid of it. If you choose to keep it, please lock it securely, and keep it unloaded.

Seward Senior Housing. The Council has approved the bonds for CRS Housing, also known as the Snelling Apartments Project, at 2304 Snelling Ave. This bonding will help Seward Redesign and CommonBond build a new 60-unit apartment building for low-income seniors, in the Bystrom Brothers redevelopment area.

Memory Lanes License. The Council has approved an amendment to the Memory Lanes liquor license business plan that includes outdoor volleyball and a new bar area.

Apply to Serve on a Boards or Commission. There are openings on the Arts Commission, Police Conduct Oversight Commission, Police Conduct Review Panel, and the Minneapolis Telecommunications Network. To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@minneapolismn.gov.

Ward Office Hours. Every Tuesday morning I hold "Office Hours" in the Ward from 9:30-11:00am. Please feel free to call for an appointment or just stop by.

1st Tuesdays, Hard Times Café (West Bank/University);
2nd Tuesdays, Muddsuckers Coffee, 1500 Como (SE Como);
3rd Tuesdays, Pratt School (Prospect Park);
4th Tuesdays, the Birchwood Cafe (Seward/Longfellow).

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