

## Second Ward May 2020 E-newsletter

News from Cam Gordon

Council Member, Second Ward

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

<http://secondward.blogspot.com>

[www.facebook.com/camgordonward2](http://www.facebook.com/camgordonward2)

**Coronavirus COVID-19 Pandemic.** The Council, Mayor and City staff continue to operate under emergency conditions with modified procedures while maintaining basic city services and a fully functioning city government. The daily rate of City employees working is consistently between 89% and 91% of the total workforce with 79% of workers working remotely. We are beginning to look forward to a long recovery and re-opening phase in the weeks and months ahead. Our City Office of Emergency Management will lead the coordination of these efforts across the city as we adapt to the changes coming from the Governor's office, and slowly return our City government operations to more normal, pre-pandemic, levels of activity. The Mayor and Council will be reviewing recommendations for how and when this might happen in the weeks ahead. For more information on the coronavirus response visit

<http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/coronavirus/>

**State of the City.** The Mayor's annual State of the City Address was taped and released April 29. The speech focused on the impacts of COVID-19, the challenges this is posing to the city and our efforts to protect public health while continuing to deliver high quality basic city services. It highlighted newly approved funding for emergency rental assistance for low-income households and support for some small businesses. The Mayor also stressed budget concerns we will be facing due substantial reductions in anticipated revenue coming to the City. The video of the speech is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ef6Mg-BkgU>.

**Cost Containment.** The City is temporally halting any new hires and many discretionary spending decisions. These two cost savings mechanisms are expected to save around \$29 million dollars. We have also instituted delays of large purchases and a wage freeze for all non-union position that will likely save \$6 million dollars this year.

**Amended City Budget Coming.** In response to the pandemic and to further contain costs in the face of declining revenue, the Council is preparing for significant amendments to this year's budget in June.

**Local Emergency Regulations.** The Mayor and Council have enacted 11 emergency regulations since the Local Public Health Emergency was declared on March 16. Two of these have been rescinded since then. The remainder relate to bar and restaurant closures, waiving late fees on renewals of food, taxi, liquor, wine, beer or catering licenses, paid leave, not allowing commercial pedal cars, and limiting group activities at congregate care facilities.

**City Specific COVID-19 Data.** As of May 11, in Minneapolis there have been 1,235 total positive cases, 294 total hospitalizations, 272 recoveries and 87 deaths reported due to the COVID-19 virus. To see the more details on positive COVID-19 cases in Minneapolis see <http://minneapolismn.gov/coronavirus/dashboard>.

**Contact Tracing.** Beginning this month, the City Health Department will undertake case investigations and contact follow-up for individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 in Minneapolis.

**Videos on Physical Distancing.** Minneapolis Youth Congress leaders have collaborated on a video series with the City's Health Department about COVID 19 and the importance of physical distancing to slow its spread. They can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcXRLpb89JU&feature=youtu.be>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9iS-JTBgGM&feature=youtu.be> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMs2z638YQQ&feature=youtu.be>.

**May is Mental Health Month.** Now more than ever it is important to take steps to care for your mental health. The pandemic has increased isolation and disrupted routines for many, if not all, of us. This means it is very important to pay attention to our mental well-being and the mental well-being of others. Please see a guide from Minnesota Department of Health you can find here <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/mentalhealth/support.html> for more information about supporting mental well-being during COVID-19.

**Emergency Mental Health Funds.** The City has awarded \$200,000 from the COVID-19 Emergency Mental Health Fund to 29 community organizations providing mental health care to the community. The City's Division of Race & Equity established the fund to provide short-term relief to those who are experiencing crisis and whose ability to receive in person help is either limited or not available. Providers will receive between \$2,500 and \$7,500 to help meet these needs. To learn more about the COVID-19 Emergency Mental Health Fund and for a list of providers receiving funding, visit <http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/coordinator/Equity/recastminneapolis/>.

**Transportation Plan Online Open House.** There will be an online open house at [11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Thursday, May 14](#) to get input on the draft Transportation Action Plan. The plan will guide future planning, design and implementation of transportation projects for the next 10 years. You can join us to hear about the plan and interact with staff at [go.minneapolismn.gov/get-involved](http://go.minneapolismn.gov/get-involved). The comment period officially ends May 22.

**Funding Applications for Infrastructure.** Public Works has brought forward a number of grant applications for infrastructure projects. The 2020 Metropolitan Council Regional Solicitation for federal transportation funds request is for a citywide signal retiming and a major repair and renovation for the Nicollet Avenue bridge over the Minnehaha Creek. In line with the Complete Streets and Vision Zero policies and the 2040 Plan, the signal retiming "will incorporate strategies to improve transit efficiency and reliability, to better manage speeds on the city network and to enhance bike and pedestrian comfort and safety." You can find out more here:

<https://lims.minneapolismn.gov/RCA/6111>. The MnDOT Metro Local Partnership Program application will support the reconstruction of Dowling Ave at the entrance to the Upper Harbor Terminal redevelopment site. You can find out more about that here:

<https://lims.minneapolismn.gov/RCA/6086>. And the MnDOT Metro District 2020 federal Highway Safety Improvement Program application is focused on five corridors (Lyndale Avenue N, LaSalle Avenue and Nicollet Avenue, 26th St W and 28th St W, and Broadway Street NE) at intersections where the most crashes occur. The traffic signals selected as part of the proposed applications were identified as locations with the greatest potential for crash reduction, based on some or all approaches lacking overhead traffic signals and an identified need for improved pedestrian accommodations. You can find out more about this here:

<https://lims.minneapolismn.gov/RCA/6055>.

**Street Sweeping.** City crews have started the City's spring street sweeping program. To make sure the crews can do the most complete job possible please keep your car off the street the day it is cleaned. Look for a phone call and temporary "No Parking" signs that used at least 24 hours in advance to help you make sure streets are clear of parked vehicles. You can use the "look up" web tool at <http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/publicworks/streetsweeping/> to see when your street will be cleaned.

**Pedestrian Push Buttons.** The City has transitioned traffic signals to reduce the need for pedestrians to push the button at more than 400 signalized intersections. Crews are placing signs on the signal post notifying people that the signal will change automatically. The button can still be used to activate the audible features.

**Pick-up Only Permits.** The City has issued permits for and installed more than 50 pick-up only zones for businesses. The pick-up zones allow parking for up to 10 minutes for people picking up take-out food or other items.

**Street Closures for Recreation.** The City has implemented 11 miles of what we are calling "Stay Healthy Streets" routes to support more space for walking, biking and rolling while social distancing. Three separate loop routes will mostly follow local residential streets. This includes a loop of one closed lane one along the Mississippi River Parkways in Minneapolis and Saint Paul which has been opened to walking, biking, and rolling from the U of M and downtown areas to over the Ford Parkway Bridge. For more details on Stay Healthy Streets see <http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/publicworks/trans/WCMSP-224120>

**New Speed Limit Signs.** The City continues to roll out new speed limits of 20 mph for local residential streets; 25 mph for larger, arterial city-owned streets; and 30-plus mph for a few city-owned streets. The 25-mph speed limit on individual streets will go into effect as soon as they are signed. Once the busier streets are signed, the cities will then install "gateway signs" at entry points in both cities, indicating the citywide speed limit is 20 mph unless otherwise posted. The 20-mph speed limit goes into effect as soon as the gateway signs are installed. The cities expect the sign installation to be completed by this fall. To follow along on our progress visit [www.visionzerompls.com](http://www.visionzerompls.com) and [www.stpaul.gov/speedlimits](http://www.stpaul.gov/speedlimits).

**Hygiene Stations** New public “hygiene stations” have been set-up and identified since the closure of many public restrooms in the City. Some are open in park buildings and some consist of a port-a-potty, hand-washing station, syringe drop-off container and trash bin. The city was able to use a \$31,396 grant from the MN Department of Human Services’ COVID-19 Emergency Response to offset the cost of 4 of these stations established in April. For locations and more information see <http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/groups/public/@communications/documents/webcontent/wcmssp-223936.pdf>.

**Free Virtual Home Energy Audits.** Home Energy Squad now offers virtual cost-free energy assessments that comply with health and safety guidelines introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the online-only visits, Home Energy Squad helps identify opportunities for energy savings, and advice for future projects. Customers complete a questionnaire prior to the virtual visit, which lasts 45 minutes to an hour. The audio/video home walk-through results in a report with recommendations and next steps. To participate in this program, you must be an Xcel Energy and/or CenterPoint Energy customer and a smartphone or laptop with Internet access is needed for the full experience, but a simplified virtual visit can be conducted via telephone. For more information visit <https://www.mncee.org/solutions/homes/home-energy-squad/>.

**2020 Affordable Housing Trust Fund.** The City Council has approved modifying our Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) Program Policies and Procedures for 2020 and has officially given notice of Trust Fund availability. The program administration is guided by Minneapolis 2040, the Unified Housing Policy and the HUD Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development. It involves three funding sources: city property taxes, federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, and federal HOME Investment Partnership Program funds. The most notable changes include adding the Single Room Occupancy/Shared Housing Pilot from 2019 as a regular part of the program. This allows resources to be awarded on a ‘per sleeping room’ rather than on a per unit basis in projects that specifically utilize single-room-occupancy or shared housing models, to the extent allowable through current zoning options. This is one of the most cost-effective ways to provide deep affordability. We are also changing the developer fee calculation to match the existing Housing Tax Credit program calculation, and adding a new scoring criteria as outlined in the new Sustainable Building Policy to promote enhanced energy efficiency through the Minnesota Green Communities criteria and revising categories and points to align with priorities in the adopted Minneapolis 2040 Plan. The formal Request for Proposal should be posted soon at [http://www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/cped\\_rfp](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/cped_rfp).

**Encampments.** We are working closely with County, State, nonprofit agencies and others to keep all our residents, including those that are sleeping outdoors, safe during the pandemic. Several camping areas have formed in recent week, including a large encampment of 30-60 tents near Hiawatha Ave and 28<sup>th</sup> Street just outside the border of Ward 2. Fire, Health and Police department staff are involved in managing this encampment that is on Metropolitan Council property. The Governor’s Stay at Home Executive Order exempts individuals without a

home, which means they may move between emergency shelters, drop-in centers and encampments. Recently the ordinance was updated to clarify that local governments and law enforcement are not prohibited from taking immediate action to address trespassing or to protect life, prevent injury, or preserve evidence within encampments or among people staying outdoors. It also clarifies that under certain circumstances state or local governments may restrict, limit, or close encampments that have reached a size or status that is a documented threat to the health, safety, or security of residents. City staff continue to collaborate with regional partners, including the County, MnDOT, Met Council, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and street outreach teams on developing coordinated strategies for encampment responses.

**Supporting People Experiencing Homelessness.** I was glad to see that Hennepin County is providing motel and hotel rooms for more than 277 people experiencing homelessness who are at high risk or suspected of having COVID-19. The City, Hennepin County and Downtown Improvement District (DID) have partnered to provide handwashing and portable toilets at downtown locations. The Salvation Army Harbor Lights Center, DID, MAD DADS, the City and Hennepin County have partnered to open a safe space at Currie Avenue and 10th Street designed to help people experiencing homelessness safely comply with the state's stay-at-home order. A private organization is also doing work in one of these areas and has a tented structure for American Indian people experiencing homelessness to connect with services and support from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Learn more about the City's COVID-19 response: [minneapolismn.gov/coronavirus](https://minneapolismn.gov/coronavirus).

**Emergency Housing Assistance Package.** The City received more than 7,800 applications for the recently reallocated \$3 million to provide rental housing emergency assistance. In most cases, the maximum amount of assistance will not exceed \$1,500 per household, but could go up to \$2,000 under extraordinary circumstances. Eligible expenses include rent payments, utility payments and/or other housing stability related costs. Payments will be made directly to the rental property owner, utility company or the housing cost payee. Based on the current funding available, we anticipate serving 1,500 households. Learn more at <http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/coronavirus/gap-funding>.

**Small Business Forgivable Loan Program.** Only 800 applications, out of the 1,228 we received, have been determined to be eligible for the \$2.2 million dollars set aside to help small businesses. This was due to geographic and other restrictions placed on the program by the Mayor. Of those 800 businesses, \$110 million in losses have been reported due to the pandemic. The City will use an anonymous randomized selection process to determine who will receive the forgivable no-interest loans in fixed amounts of \$5,000 or \$10,000, depending on need.

**Emergency Relief Donations.** The City is accepting donations from private individuals or entities for the Gap Funds for Housing and the forgivable 0% interest loans for Small Business Program. Please contact the City if you are interested in donating at <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/55fd25cc1d2a4c5d9824a2518ddc8ba3>

**Other Resources for Small Business Relief.** There are several potential federal, state and other resources to help small businesses during the pandemic. The federal government approved new funding for small business relief through a Paycheck Protection Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan programs you can learn about at <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/coronavirus-relief-options/paycheck-protection-program> and <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/disaster-assistance/coronavirus-covid-19>. Other resources include the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance providing unemployment benefits for those who do not typically qualify such as independent contractors and self-employed people; The State of Minnesota Small Business Loan Guarantee program to help Minnesota lenders provide capital to small businesses in Minnesota; a Hennepin County has offered forgivable loans up to \$7,500 and the LISC Small Business Relief Fund found at <https://www.lisc.org/covid-19/small-business-assistance/small-business-relief-grants/>, with grants of up to \$10,000. The next round will open May 14. The City expanded Business Technical Assistance Program services to offer an expert to talk to about specific situations. You can contact our Small Business Team at 612-673-2499 or [smallbusiness@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:smallbusiness@minneapolismn.gov).

**Violence Prevention Survey.** Take the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/M8879YY> to help guide the City's violence prevention priorities for the next three-five years. Your feedback will help develop a citywide approach to addressing violence in a new strategic plan. If you'd like to use the survey in an alternative format or a different language, email [research.health@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:research.health@minneapolismn.gov).

**Enforcement of Stay and Home Order.** There have been no citations or arrests related to violation of new social distancing orders. The focus continues to be on education and **Regulatory** Services Traffic Control Agents are serving as the lead to respond to 311 complaints of groups congregating. There are currently 9 Volunteer Traffic Control Agents conducting this work, responding to public areas with educational materials around parks, on school yards and other areas identified by 311 for proactive outreach.

**Recreational Fires.** Many residents are enjoying outdoor fires this spring while others are finding them to be offensive and even, at times, detrimental to their health. Here are the rules we have in place to help find a balance to allow people to have such fires while also trying to address the legitimate concerns raised by others: fires that use only dry untreated wood and are at least 25 feet away from a structure are permitted between 9:00am. and 10:00pm that are less than three feet in diameter and two feet high. Fires are not permitted when winds exceed 10mph or when Minneapolis is under an air pollution advisory announced at <http://mn.enviroflash.info>.

**Property Tax Refunds.** The Minnesota Department of Revenue offers property tax refunds to homeowners and renters who qualify based on their income and property taxes. Find more information about qualifying and how to file at <https://www.revenue.state.mn.us/property-tax-refund>.



**Farmers Markets.** We expect about 22 farmers markets to open this year in Minneapolis. They are considered essential grocery providers and can stay open under specific conditions that help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Shoppers can expect to see safety precautions set up at farmers markets and are advised to send only one person into the market to shop, wear a cloth face covering, maintain a 6-foot distance from anyone else, not touch products until the vendor hands you your purchase and preorder online if possible. You can Find a map and schedule for farmers markets in Minneapolis at <http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/sustainability/homegrown/farmersmarkets>

**Foster Pet Program.** Minneapolis Animal Care & Control (MACC) is preparing for a possible influx of animals due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To avoid shelter overcrowding, staff hope to recruit members of the community for emergency foster homes. MACC will provide the supplies and the homes will need to commit to take an animal for at least four weeks, have reliable transportation to pick up the animal and supplies and keep the animal separate from any other animals in the household. To learn more and apply go to <http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/animals/emergencyfosterprogram>

**Special Election Charter Amendment.** The Council has referred a proposed charter amendment relating to conditions for special municipal elections to the Charter Commission for likely placement on the ballot in November. If approved by a majority of voters, it would address conflicts and better align our Charter with state election laws in order to comply with uniform special election dates. This issue was brought to light following the resignation of Council member Warsame as we worked to schedule a special election to fill that now vacant seat.

**State Elections Bill.** I was happy to learn the Minnesota House of Representatives passed HF 3429, known as this year's "compromise election bill, in May." If passed by the Senate and signed by the Governor, it would provide over \$1.4 million in Help America Vote Act funds to support efforts coordinated by the Secretary of State to promote safe election procedures and practices in 2020. This includes a grant program to disburse funds to counties and cities for local efforts for certain COVID-19-related efforts. Even more importantly, it would extend the time period for absentee voting, from 14 days before Election Day to for 3 days after polls close on Election Night. I hope that the Senate will pass a companion bill soon. You can find the House version at <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/bill.php?f=HF3429&b=house&y=2019&ssn=0>

**Vote by Mail Starting May 13.** All Minnesota voters are eligible to vote early by mail (also known as no-excuse absentee ballot). Starting on May 13, you can apply online for your ballot. The State Primary election day will be on August 11, then the General Presidential Election on November 3. For more information about voting by mail by see <https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/other-ways-to-vote/vote-early-by-mail/>.

**Human Rights Violations in India.** At the request of local Muslim leaders; following the lead of Seattle, Cambridge, Albany, New York City and St. Paul; and, in response to what The New York

Times has called India's "worst sectarian bloodshed in years," I am authoring a resolution opposing recent human rights violations in India. If approved, it would affirm the City Council's formal opposition to the extremist actions of the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, including the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Amendment Act in India which are discriminatory to Muslims, Jews, indigenous peoples, the LGBTQ community and others who are being targeted for discrimination, violence, and the denial of basic human rights. For more see <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/12/world/asia/india-police-muslims.html>, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/01/world/asia/india-modi-hindus.html>. <https://cbs6albany.com/news/local/albany-becomes-the-third-city-in-the-us-to-condemn-persecution-of-muslims-in-india>

**Rapist Suspect Apprehended.** In April, the Police Department announced that an arrest has been made of a suspected serial rapist who has likely been perpetrating violent crimes in the U of M area for the past 7 years. The suspect has been charged with multiple burglary and sexual assaults and has been linked to 9 other assaults and burglaries that occurred between 2013 and 2020 in the Marcy Holmes and Dinkytown area as well as in Anoka County, where he lived.

**University and 4th Street Online Open House.** I invite you to participate in the online open house that Minneapolis Public Works and project partners have organized to gather public comment on the University Avenue and 4th St SE project, from Oak Street to 35W. You can learn more about the project and provide comment here: [https://srfconsulting.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=4a0226b44c574af0b1f21e6456b8d713&fbclid=IwAR2B\\_jjiK27BijdOXQQ8\\_oINaZOPaQWPPUqO9n9Pdwzt3iOZ1kCPYCB\\_eXDE](https://srfconsulting.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=4a0226b44c574af0b1f21e6456b8d713&fbclid=IwAR2B_jjiK27BijdOXQQ8_oINaZOPaQWPPUqO9n9Pdwzt3iOZ1kCPYCB_eXDE). The current plan is to keep this open house going from now until the end of May. I am especially interested to know what ideas people have for making these streets safer for people walking, biking, and taking transit. There are some good options being discussed, and I hope that folks will take the opportunity to think about them and weigh in.

**Towerside District Energy System.** The Towerside Innovation District, in partnership with Ever-Green Energy and Wall Companies, have applied to use the City's Common Bond Fund to capitalize the Towerside District Energy System. It's based on Aquifer Thermal Energy Storage (ATES) system, which uses groundwater as a source of energy for both heating and cooling. I am very supportive of moving forward, because I see this as one of our only good options to reduce and even eliminate carbon emissions from building heating, in a time when we know that natural gas is the largest source of carbon emissions in our city. I also see this project as a potential example and inspiration for green district energy in other redevelopment districts in our city. I'm thankful to the project team for not only having put this idea forward, but having done so much to reduce and even eliminate the risk to the City, which will make it much more likely to pass. I am currently working with City staff and my colleagues to move this through the Council as soon as possible.

**Arthur-Williams Walkway.** Construction of the new retaining wall for the walkway between Arthur and Williams is complete. I am very grateful to the neighboring property owners for their tolerance and patience during this construction period.



**National Register of Sound 80 Studios, 2709 E 25th St.** In May the Heritage Preservation Commission approved the National Register nomination for the Sound 80 at 2709 East 25th Street, and direct staff to transmit a letter summarizing the report to the State Historic Preservation Officer. The property was identified in the 2009 Historic Resources Inventory of Seward as potentially meeting local designation for its association to a significant event or period. It was also highlighted in the 2018 Minneapolis Music History, 1850–2000: A Context as home to Sound 80 one of the top recording studios in the metro area at the time with recordings made there by Prince, The Suicide Commandos, and Bob Dylan as well as the 1980 number 1 hit single “Funkytown” by Lipps, Inc. You can find the staff report and more information at <https://lims.minneapolismn.gov/Board/Agenda/HPC/1620>.

**City Update Sign-Up.** You can subscribe to get City updates on a variety of topics by email or text at <https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/MPLS/subscriber/new>

**Jobs with the City.** The City has several job openings among more than 900 different job types. To learn more and view current openings see <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/jobs>

**Office Hours in the Ward.** My Community “Office Hours” in the Ward have been **suspended** for the month of May. Please reach out online and over the telephone.

Cam Gordon  
Minneapolis City Council Member, Second Ward  
673-2202, 296-0579  
[cam.gordon@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:cam.gordon@minneapolismn.gov)  
<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/ward2>  
<http://secondward.blogspot.com/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/camgordonward2>