

Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Seward Neighborhood 5-27-09

**Cam's next Seward Office Hours:
Tuesday, June 23, 9:30-11:00am
Birchwood Café, 3311 E 25th St**

Items:

- 1) Garbage Burner
- 2) Meeting on Minnehaha Ave Bike Lanes
- 3) Homegrown Minneapolis
- 4) Seward History Walk Wins Award
- 5) Transportation Electrification
- 6) Rental Licensing Ordinance Changes
- 7) Taxi Fares
- 8) Bike Donations
- 9) Homelessness Prevention Funding
- 10) Pentachlorophenol Bill Passes
- 11) Seward/Longfellow Healthy Seniors
- 12) Hiawatha Trail Lighting
- 13) Green Institute Loan
- 14) Ban on Sandwich Board Signs Proposed
- 15) Openings on City Boards and Commissions

- 1) Covanta energy, on behalf of Hennepin County Environmental Services, has submitted an application to amend their existing conditional use permit for their downtown garbage burner, known as the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC). They are asking to be allowed to burn an average of 212 more tons of garbage a day. The maximum allowed now is 1000 tons so this is a 21 percent increase. It could amount to over 77,000 more tons a year. This matter will now go forward to the Planning Commission for a public hearing and a decision on **June 8th**. The staff report should be completed by June 2. The report will also likely include a recommendation. The Planning Commission is the decision making body about this issues since it is considered an amendment to a Conditional Use Permit. If the Planning Commission decision is appealed it will go the city Council's Zoning and Planning committee and then to the full Council. If this does come to the Council on appeal, I am bound to withhold a final decision until the committee meeting and to base it on the public record. So, while I will be careful not to make a final decision prematurely, I will also be very careful to encourage and heed any and all information and views provided and I will help make sure that they are made part of the public record. If you have questions that you would like to ask planning staff or if you have comments or information you would like entered into the public record you can contact Kimberly Holien, City Planner at 612 673-2402 or at kimberly.holien@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.
- 2) Public Works staff is working to schedule a meeting to discuss the plans for bike lanes on Minnehaha from 31st St E, continuing up 20th Ave S, then up 19th Ave S across the 10th Ave bridge, and following 10th Ave SE up to Como Ave SE. The tentative time and location is **June 10th**, from **6-7pm** at Augsburg College's Oren Gateway Center (2211 Riverside Ave). It will be preceded by a bike ride along the length of the planned route. Attendees should meet at the intersection of Riverside Avenue and 20th Avenue at **5:15pm**, next to the old North Country Co-op on the southwest corner. This is the first of the Non-Motorized Transportation Program bike infrastructure projects to move forward in the Second Ward. Other Second Ward NTP projects include bike lanes on Riverside and Franklin Ave, the University of Minnesota trail, bike lanes on 27th Ave SE and bike lanes on Como Ave SE.
 - 3) 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. You can 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.
 - 4) The Heritage Preservation Commission, the Minneapolis Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and Preserve Minneapolis announced the recipients of this years preservation awards this Thursday and in the Community Education and Advocacy category the Seward History walk was one of two winners. Congratulations to SNG, the History Committee and to Dick Westby for a fantastic event and for this recognition.

- 5) 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 Scharbillig in Public Works – for their excellent work to make it possible.
- 6) The Council has passed an ordinance requiring an inspection, along with a fee of \$450, for all changes of ownership of rental dwellings. I successfully introduced an amendment exempting properties that have been inspected in the past 6 months from both the inspection and fee. The Council also changed the process for dealing with the Housing Director's recommendations of denial, non-renewal, revocation or suspension of rental licenses, shifting from the existing citizen board to an administrative hearing process. We also passed changes that give the City the power to revoke all licenses held by an owner who operates without a license for a second time, require that landlords notify tenants of mortgage foreclosure, and create a new fee of \$3,000 for landlords who have had their licenses revoked to get them renewed.
- 7) In March, after hearing from a number of concerned taxi drivers, I moved to delay the implementation of the new taxicab fare formula, which had paradoxically lowered their fares during this time of economic turmoil. This move was delayed, but it finally came through Council last week. Regulatory Services staff did a great job coming up with a much more nuanced, accurate and realistic formula for setting taxicab fares in Minneapolis, which will be put in place next year. Until then, taxicab drivers will be able to charge the same fares they were able to charge before the reduction in March.
- 8) Bikes Belong, a national bicycle advocacy organization, has donated 26 bicycles, valued at \$7,250 total, 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.
- 9) 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.
- 10) I strongly supported Representative Karen Clark's successful legislative effort to 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.
- 11) Seward/Longfellow Healthy Seniors is slated to receive a 2% increase in their Community Development Block Grant funding from the City, due to an increase in federal funds.
- 12) The City has requested \$1,000,000 in federal SAFETEA_LU funding for the Hiawatha Trail lighting project. I've been a strong proponent of getting this project finished as soon as possible.
- 13) The Green Institute has paid off their more than \$3 million loan from the City by selling the Eco-Enterprise Center. They will now rent space within the Center (for Green Institute and the ReUse Center) from the building's new owner.
- 14) As part of a larger change to the way the City regulates business signage, Council Member Lisa Goodman has introduced language that would ban all free-standing signs (such as sandwich board signs) from the public right of way. This was delayed one cycle, until the next Council meeting on June 12th. I know that a number of businesses in the Second Ward use sandwich board signs without negatively impacting the pedestrian environment, and I'm reluctant to go along with this motion. I hope to be able to craft a compromise that could deal with some of Council Member Goodman's concerns (mostly regarding sidewalk congestion downtown) while also preserving the right of small businesses to let the public know where they are.
- 15) There are openings on the Family Housing Fund Board of Directors (closes 5/29), Minneapolis Workforce Council (closes 6/05), and Public Health Advisory Committee (open until filled). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.