

# Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Seward Neighborhood 1-28-09

**Cam's next Seward Office Hours:  
Tuesday, February 24, 9:30-11:00am  
Birchwood Café, 3311 E 25th St**

## **Items:**

- 1) February Roundtable
- 2) 2009 Budget Woes
- 3) Mayor's Community Meetings on Budget
- 4) Crime Down Citywide
- 5) Composting Pilot May Come to Seward
- 6) Ranked Choice Voting – City Wins Lawsuit
- 7) Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission
- 8) Bands for Band!
- 9) Franklin Station Façade Grant
- 10) Great Streets Grants
- 11) Historic Resource Survey Meetings
- 12) Parking Regulation Changes
- 13) Commercial Property Registration
- 14) Internal Affairs Audit
- 15) Xcel Hiawatha Line Resolution
- 16) Openings on City Boards and Commissions

- 1) Please join me for a **Roundtable Discussion** on priorities and challenges for 2009 on **February 11, 6-8pm** at Matthews Recreation Center. In this time of economic uncertainty, how can we work better together to keep making progress towards our shared goals? Come discuss your hopes and concerns for our city.
- 2) Shortly after we approved our 2009 City budget we learned that the Governor was "unalloting" **\$13.1 million** of the \$41 million Local Government Aid (or LGA) payment we were anticipating in December. This cut alone represents the equivalent of paying for 120 police officers, or 150 firefighters. This required the City to dip into our reserves, which must now be replenished. There are several other fiscal issues facing the City, including:
  - Our closed pension funds (that are no longer open to new retirees) suffered losses due to the stock market downturn, expected to exceed **\$38 million** over the next 5 years. Unless the state is willing to reform its pension laws and merge these few older pensions into the larger state pension plan, the City must cover this loss.
  - Under the Governor's budget proposal, Minneapolis would be cut by **\$17 million** in 2009 and **\$35 million** in 2010. This represents a nearly **40%** permanent cut to Minneapolis. To put that cut in context, \$35 million is equal to Minneapolis' entire budget for all street and bridge maintenance and repairs, traffic operations, street lighting and maintenance of our malls and plazas.
  - The Governor is recommending reducing the renters' credit appropriation by **\$50 million** in the second year of the biennium. This would heap financial pain on the most vulnerable in our society, including a large number of Second Ward residents.
  - The budget proposes a \$650,000 reduction in the summer youth employment programs, which funds City and Park Board work. In a worsening jobs climate with dramatic increases in unemployment, this is exactly the wrong direction to go in.

All of these changes mean that we will likely need to make significant changes to our budget in 2009. The Mayor has already asked City departments to submit plans for cutting from **10 - 20%** of their approved 2009 budgets, and the City has instituted a hiring freeze for all new employees. City Intergovernmental Relations staff will also fight hard at the Legislature for smaller LGA cuts and reform of the pension system. I urge you to **contact your legislators** and advocate for balancing the State budget without harming local government's ability to provide essential services.

- 3) To gather public input about these budget challenges, the Mayor has scheduled two community meetings. **Mon, Feb. 9, 7-8:30pm** at the Martin Luther King Park Recreation Center, 4055 Nicollet Ave S; and **Tues, Feb. 10, 7-8:30pm** at Eastside Neighborhood Services, 1700 Second St NE.
- 4) We've seen our second straight year of major reductions in crime. Violent crime in Minneapolis was down 13% citywide in '08 when compared to '07 and down 24% compared to '06. Homicides were down 22% from '07 and down 39% from '06. Robberies decreased 18%, aggravated assaults are down 8%, and juvenile crime dropped 17%. Violent crime fell 11% in the Third Precinct, which includes Seward.

- 5) Public Works has expressed some interest in starting a curbside organics collection and composting pilot project in Seward. I'm very excited about this opportunity, but will wait for a formal action of SNG requesting to participate before I give staff the green light.
- 6) The City, supported by FairVote Minnesota, has won the lawsuit regarding Ranked Choice Voting brought by the Minnesota Voters Alliance (a suburban-based, right wing group opposed to nonpartisan elections). Hennepin County Judge McGunnigle clearly and forcefully rejected the plaintiff's claims, including that Ranked Choice Voting is unconstitutional and that the City is preempted by State law. This is a great vindication for those of us who strongly support ranked choice elections. However, the Voters Alliance has appealed this decision which may potentially force the City to delay first implementation of our ranked choice election.
- 7) On February 6, the Council will make our final appointments to the new Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (NCEC). The Park Board will also appoint a member and 8 additional members will be selected by neighborhood organizations in a process that is yet to be determined. I'm disappointed that none of the outstanding applicants from the Second Ward (including three from Seward) has been brought forward as finalists, and that there is little ethnic diversity among the finalists. However, I'm very pleased that there is such great interest in – and so many qualified applicants for – this important commission. I am considering trying to create more seats for Alternates, to make the group more inclusive and diverse.
- 8) Please join me at the 2009 "Bands for Band!" benefit for Anne Sullivan, Sanford and Seward School bands, on Saturday, Feb. 21, 3-9pm, at the Eagles Club (2507 25th Street East, Mpls). Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 6yrs and older, and \$25 for families.
- 9) African Development Center has been recommended for a Great Streets Façade Improvement program contract for \$50,000 to administer grants for façade improvement in the area of the Franklin LRT Station.
- 10) The 2009 Great Streets Business District Support Grant Request for Proposals (RFP) has been issued. There is \$500,000 available to fund activities that revitalize and strengthen business districts. Eligible activities may include technical assistance for businesses, marketing, planning, market studies, promotional events, and more. The target grant amount is \$5,000 - \$50,000. **Proposals are due by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, February 27.** The Request for Proposals and more information are available at <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/rfp.asp>. Questions can be directed to Kelly Hoffman at [kelly.hoffman@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:kelly.hoffman@ci.minneapolis.mn.us) or 612-673-5079.
- 11) City staff has scheduled some community meetings for the Historic Resource Survey in the Seward and Longfellow. The first meeting is **February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6-7:30pm** at Matthews Park. The second will be on **March 24<sup>th</sup>, 6-7:30pm**, at Becketwood Chapel, 4300 W River Pkwy.
- 12) In early January the City Council amended the City's standards for the number of off-street parking and loading spaces that must be provided when establishing or expanding land uses in Minneapolis. Parking requirements for residential uses outside of downtown will not change. The changes will reduce the financial burden on new small businesses, give the City the tools we need to prevent overly-large seas of parking, and help to discourage auto-oriented development in favor of more walkable, community-oriented commercial areas. It will also help reduce unnecessary work – over 90% of parking variances over the last four years have been granted.
- 13) A majority of Council Members joined me in voting to send the proposed commercial property registration and inspection program back to staff for more work. I argued against moving this forward because I am not convinced that this is the right time to initiate this new program and think other approaches need to be studied. I was especially concerned that the funding plan placed an unfair and unwarranted burden on small and good businesses. Thanks to all the business owners and organizations who've communicated with me on this matter.
- 14) In 2006, the Civilian Review Authority work group I helped establish issued several recommendations that were approved by City Council. One called for an external audit of the MPD Internal Affairs Unit. In 2008 the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) was awarded the contract to conduct the audit. It is now complete and offers several recommendations that might improve our complaint investigation process and better inform and educate the community. I succeeded in convincing my colleagues to require that the MPD come back to the Public Safety and Regulatory Services committee on a quarterly basis to report on their progress on implementing these recommendations.
- 15) The Health Energy and Environment committee has passed a resolution I coauthored, calling on Xcel Energy to do more study about the need for new substations and, if still needed, bury the proposed high-voltage power line under 28<sup>th</sup> Street East from Hiawatha to I-35W, rather than implementing any overhead option or putting the line down the Greenway.
- 16) There are openings on the Latino Advisory Committee Vacancy (Closes 2/27) and Minneapolis Public Housing Authority Board of Commissioners (2/13). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email [cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us).