

Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to the West Bank, 5-20-09

Cam's next West Bank Office Hours:
Tuesday June 2, 9:30-11:00am
Hard Times Café, 1821 Riverside Ave

Items:

- 1) Dania Hall Advisory Group
- 2) Downtown Garbage Burner
- 3) Homegrown Minneapolis
- 4) Bluff Street Park Wins Preservation Award
- 5) Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference
- 6) Transportation Electrification
- 7) Rental Property Licensing Changes
- 8) Taxicab Fares
- 9) Bicycles Donated to the City
- 10) Homelessness Prevention Grant
- 11) Pentachlorophenol Bill Passes
- 12) Palmer's Bar
- 13) Augsburg College Street Vacation
- 14) Ranked Choice Voting
- 15) Openings on City Boards and Commissions

- 1) The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) is inviting West Bank organizations to participate in the process of redeveloping the Dania Hall site. They are asking that WBCC, along with other organizations, appoint a representative to what they are calling the "**Dania Hall Advisory Group**," to help build off of the initial community meeting last January. Please respond by **May 29th**. This group will be charged with representing their organization in an advisory role as we discuss options for formally marketing the Dania Hall site. The goal is to produce a document (possibly a Request for Proposals or something similar), that represents the needs and desires of the community and City. Additional public review will be built into the process beyond the advisory group; this is just one step in the process. The first Advisory Group meeting is slated for **June 10th, 3-5pm** at the Brian Coyle Center, and the group will determine if additional advisory group meetings are necessary at that meeting.
- 2) 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.
- 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) Congratulations to the Bluff Street Park Task Force for receiving a "Good Luck and Godspeed" Minneapolis Preservation Award. I've been very supportive of their good work to preserve, protect and improve this historic park space. I hope that this award will help the Park Board decide to make the investment that Bluff Street will require to succeed.

- 5) The 15th annual International Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference is taking place at Augsburg College in Minneapolis on May 21st-24th. It focuses on the work of educators, activists, artists, and community organizers and challenges oppressive systems by promoting critical thinking and social justice. A Legislative Theatre workshop was held in the Minneapolis Council Chambers yesterday, in which I participated.
- 6) 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.
- 7) Council Member Johnson is proposing to require an inspection, along with a fee of \$450, for all changes of ownership of rental dwellings. I am working on an amendment to exempt properties that have been inspected in the past 6 months from both the inspection and fee. Council Member Schiff is proposing to change the process for dealing with the Housing Director's recommendations of denial, non-renewal, revocation or suspension of rental licenses. The proposal would shift from the existing citizen board to an administrative hearing process. Council Member Samuels is bringing forward some proposals as well, to give the City the power to revoke all licenses held by an owner who operates without a license for a second time, requiring that landlords notify tenants of mortgage foreclosure, and creating a new fee of \$3,000 for landlords who have had their licenses revoked to get them renewed. All three of these proposals passed the Public Safety committee last week, and I expect them to pass the Council this Friday.
- 8) 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 has finally come through committee. Regulatory Services staff has done 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.
- 9) Bikes Belong, a national bicycle advocacy organization, has donated 26 bicycles, valued at \$7,250, 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.
- 10) 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.
- 11) 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.
- 12) Palmer's Bar is seeking a liquor license upgrade from the Council this Friday, which would allow them to have live music. I understand that the West Bank Land Use Committee has had a chance to discuss the matter, and that the response was mostly positive. My office has heard concerns from the Dar Al-Hijra mosque, and is working to set up a meeting between representatives of the mosque and the owner of Palmers.
- 13) Augsburg College's application to vacate all of 7th St S between 20th Ave S and 21st Ave S to accommodate a proposed new science building and green space was approved by the Planning Commission and will move forward to the City Council later this month. Nine votes are required to approve the street vacation and it will likely be subject to the reservation of easements for Xcel, Center Point Energy, and the City of Minneapolis so that power, water and sewer infrastructure will continue to operate underground.
- 14) The Council is moving forward with a potential Charter amendment to put back the nonpartisan primary that Ranked Choice Voting replaced, in the event that the Supreme Court rules against us before the June deadline. I will only support this step away from ranked choice voting if we lose in court. I am also pleased to say that the ranked choice voting test went well, and has helped show that our Elections staff can successfully implement ranked choice voting this fall.
- 15) There are current openings on the Family Housing Fund Board (closes 5/29), Minneapolis Workforce Council (closes 5/22), Public Health Advisory Committee (open until filled) and Rental Dwelling License Board of Appeals (closes 4/24). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.