

## Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Seward Neighborhood 8-26-09

**Cam's next Seward Office Hours:  
Tuesday, September 22, 9:30-11:00am  
Birchwood Café, 3311 E 25th St**

### Items:

- 1) Seward Challenge
- 2) EPA Begins Final Arsenic Cleanup
- 3) Central Corridor Gets Federal Funding
- 4) 2010 Budget Proposed
- 5) TIF Districts
- 6) Park Board Charter Amendment
- 7) Hiawatha Transmission Line
- 8) Proposed Garage Requirement
- 9) Police Policy Manual
- 10) Downtown Garbage Burner
- 11) Neighborhood Policing Plans
- 12) 2008 Bicycle Counts Released
- 13) Ranked Choice Voting
- 14) New Sister City: Najaf
- 15) Openings on City Boards and Commissions

- 1) The Seward Civic and Commerce Association (SCCA) is sponsoring a "Be SEWARD Challenge." It's an effort to help ensure that the places that help make Seward great continue to thrive, and it's your chance to host a fun event, or think up some other creative way to support the local businesses that are vital strands in the fabric of our community. If you decide to host an event, tell the SCCA about it and they may stop by, take pictures, and write about it in the SCCA newsletter. If your event is chosen as the most creative, you'll win a gift certificate at your favorite Seward business: \$100 for the winner and two \$50 runner-up prizes. I will be hosting my own Be Seward brunch event at the Seward Café. Please join me **Sunday, August 30<sup>th</sup>** at 1:00pm.
- 2) The Environmental Protection Agency is beginning the final phase of cleanup in the arsenic contamination site. This will involve removing arsenic-contaminated soil from 487 residential properties, including some in west Seward. The work is slated to take about two years. If you have any questions about the work, you can call 1-800-621-5122 or email Cheryl Allen at [allen.cheryl@epa.gov](mailto:allen.cheryl@epa.gov).
- 3) The Federal Transit Administration has released the Record of Decision on the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit project, which means that the project will go forward. Negotiations will continue with the University around vibration and electromagnetic interference, but this action by the FTA makes clear that this critical project will now move forward.
- 4) Mayor Rybak has delivered his 2010 budget address. As expected, the budget is severely strained due to significant cuts in State aid (cut by \$40 million in 2009-10), mounting pension obligations (\$25 million in 2010) and growing health insurance costs (\$48 million in 2009). I am happy to see that the Mayor is keeping our commitment to jobs, an especially important issue in this time of high unemployment and financial turmoil. The mayor has proposed a total of \$19 million in cuts to the general fund since last December and this will lead to about 225 position eliminations. My largest point of disagreement with the Mayor relates to the funding of our neighborhood organizations. He is recommending that we reduce overall neighborhood funding by at least 25% from the levels we committed to last year (which were, for me, a significant compromise in themselves). I will be working throughout the budget process to bring whatever cuts we must make to neighborhoods more in line with the cuts we're willing to make to our city departments.
- 5) The Council has voted by a narrow margin to delay a decision on whether or not to renew the Tax Increment Financing (or TIF) districts that were established in 1979, to continue to fund our neighborhood groups and debt relief for the Target Center. This was a compromise between those Council Members, like me, who want to keep the agreement we reached during the last budget negotiations and renew the TIF districts, and those who want to "preserve our flexibility" to not renew the districts. I strongly support renewing the districts. You can read more about the history behind this decision and further analysis at my blog.

- 6) As you may have heard, the Park Board and citizens who support an independent park board have submitted a valid petition to place a question on the ballot this fall, which if passed would give the Park Board more financial independence from the City Council and Mayor. The City Attorney and Charter Commission have both opined that the proposed charter amendment is unconstitutional and preempted by state law, and should therefore not be placed on the ballot. This matter will come to the full Council on Friday.
- 7) After three meetings, the Hiawatha Transmission Line Advisory Task Force, on which I served, adopted a resolution that recommends prohibiting some routes and substation locations if the lines go in, and addresses other issues including exploring energy conservation and other alternatives. In addition to the Environmental Impact Statement as a tool for the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to evaluate Xcel's permit request for the lines, there will be hearings before an Administrative Law Judge because the project has been defined as a contested case, with the City joining as an "intervener." The judicial hearings will take place from January 2010 through early March 2010. There will also be opportunities for the public to comment and there is still more time for parties to petition to become interveners. I am growing more convinced that more effort should be made to determine if this line is necessary and if there are conservation and renewable energy alternatives we could use instead.
- 8) Council Member Schiff has proposed a requirement that new single family homes and duplexes must have a detached garage. This passed committee, and I plan to support it at the full Council. There will be a variance process for this new requirement, which will allow houses to be built without garages where a genuine hardship can be proven. I will also be advocating with staff that we change the Administrative Review portion of the Zoning Code to reflect that detached garages are no longer optional. I hope this will allow us to require higher quality design throughout the city.
- 9) The Police Department will make a presentation on September 2<sup>nd</sup> to the Public Safety and Regulatory Services committee about including more input from non-MPD sources in future changes to their Policy and Procedure Manual. After several changes for the worse have been made in recent years, including changes to the Taser policy that I believe endanger the public, it is vitally important that people outside the Department, including the Council, the Mayor's Office, the Civilian Review Authority and the Attorney's Office, have an opportunity to weigh in before future changes are made.
- 10) The HERC conditional use permit application has been held over in the Zoning and Planning Committee until early September. No decision was made in July regarding the appeal of the Planning Commission's denial of the requested amendment to the conditional use permit that would allow them to burn more garbage. The Committee ended up not taking public testimony after learning that the County intends to agree to suspend the time limit on this matter while they work with state officials from the MPCA and the state attorney general's office to determine if an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) (which could then lead to an Environmental Impact Statement or EIS) might be required.
- 11) Residents in every Minneapolis neighborhood have unique opportunities to work with police to help shape their Neighborhood Policing Plan. These plans are updated each year, so you'll have a chance later this year to attend a meeting in your neighborhood to create the 2010 policing plans.
- 12) The 2008 Bicycle Count Report is now available. Among other things, the study found that the number of bicyclists *increased 15% between 2007 and 2008*. More info is available at [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/bicycles](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/bicycles).
- 13) This fall, Minneapolis voters will be able to rank our choices for Mayor, City Council, Park Board and Board of Estimate and Taxation. To learn more about the system and see a sample ballot, please check out <http://voteminneapolis.org>.
- 14) The proposal I worked on with Council Member Betsy Hodges to form a new sister city relationship between Minneapolis and Najaf, Iraq, has passed the Council unanimously. I look forward to meeting with elected officials from Najaf and strengthening this relationship over the coming years.
- 15) There are openings on the Zoning Board of Adjustment (closes 09/25) and Public Health Advisory Committee (open until filled). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email [cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us).