

**News from Cam Gordon
Council Member, Second Ward
December, 2009**

<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/ward2/>

Municipal Election. In November, I was honored to be reelected City Council Member for Ward 2. I am very grateful to have this opportunity to serve the people of the Second Ward and Minneapolis for another four years. I was pleased to see how well our first ranked choice voting election went this fall. From all accounts, voters had a clear understanding of how the ballot worked and election judges were well prepared. I commend our interim Elections Director Pat O'Connor, his able staff, and our partners on the campaign to educate voters this year, Tipping Point Strategies and FairVote Minnesota. I am glad that Minneapolis has been able to take a leadership role in moving election reform forward so successfully. I was also pleased to see that voters rejected the Charter amendment that would have abolished the Board of Estimate and Taxation.

2010 Budget. The 2010 budget that we approved in December has been the most difficult I have had to consider since taking office in 2006. Faced with significant cuts from the state, we were forced to balance a desire to keep taxes from escalating while still providing quality city services. On top of this, we learned late this year that the Police Department had overspent its 2009 budget by a \$3 million, increasing the deficit we had to fill.

Unfortunately, we were forced to cut almost 100 City jobs from many departments including 25 police officers and 30 civilian employees of the police department. The police cuts were especially hard for me because the Police Department had made great progress in terms of recruiting a diverse class of new officers, and these are among the first who will be cut. I will be paying closer attention to the 2010 Police Department budget, to prevent a repeat of this year's poor fiscal discipline.

Fortunately, since passing the budget we were able to modify a federal Hiring Recovery Program grant to allow us to re-hire 13 laid-off officers. Six of those officers had previously been serving in the Patrol Division and the other seven are from the recent graduates from the Police Academy. Additionally, two more officers will be rehired as part of the Regulatory Services budget to work on problem properties and Animal Control enforcement. In total, 15 of the 25 officers that received lay-off notices are being re-hired and we will continue to look for other funding to rehire the remaining 10 officers.

But as bad as it was, the 2010 budget situation could have been much worse. A legal victory in a lawsuit with the Police pension saved us nearly \$10 million, which helped us keep the levy increase to 7.3% rather than 11% and reduces the average tax increase for a Minneapolis homeowner from an estimated 6.6% to 2.1%... The Council started out talking about much deeper cuts to staffing in the Police Department, as well as layoffs of firefighters, but we managed to keep these cuts as low as possible and keep all our fire fighters.

I was pleased with some specific outcomes below:

- On a 7-6 vote, the Council rejected a move that would have, in my opinion, decimated the Complaint Investigations Unit of the Civil Rights Department. This gives us time to more carefully come up with a solution that will deal with the complaint backlog and set our Civil Rights Department on a more successful path.
- I was able to convince my colleagues to continue support of Restorative Justice programs, albeit at a much lower level than in last year (\$20,000 this year versus \$75,000 in the past).
- Almost all of our Crime Prevention Specialists, the City's most important community policing strategy, retained their jobs.
- We saved the Arts Coordinator position, moving it to the City Coordinator's office.

- Though we had to take some funding from it, the Affordable Housing Trust Fund was held to a smaller cut than I had anticipated
- We were able to provide more support this year to Park infrastructure and to needed and overdue maintenance to bridges and streets including funding to resurface many residential streets in Prospect Park in 2010 and to reconstruct Riverside Avenue from Cedar to Franklin, with design work to begin in 2010 and reconstruction in 2011 and 2012, construction of a new alignment of 22nd St in Seward, and lighting for the Hiawatha LRT trail. (You can read more about these is below.)

In December we also voted on using Tax Increment Funds to pay for neighborhood revitalizations and Target Center debt. I wish that we had been able to fund neighborhoods more, but, due to the decision to recertification of only half of the Tax Increment Financing districts this will likely be closer to 4 or 5 million dollars a years for all 81 neighborhoods, and not the 10 we had hoped for. Also, due to the other pressing issues, especially the proposal to gut the Complaint Investigations Unit, it was clear that my motion to increase the Civilian Review Authority investigators would not have been successful, so I put it off another year.

All in all, though, we were given an incredibly difficult job to do in crafting this budget. The mayor made a strong proposal; we put a great deal of work into it and did a good job balancing priorities. So, in the end I voted for the budget that passed. To learn more, the 2010 budget should be posted here www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/finance soon.

Internal Audits. I voted against a move to take the City's audit functions away from the Board of Estimate and Taxation and move them to a newly-created (and I think redundant and unnecessary) "Audit Committee" made up of three Council Members and three citizen appointees, one from the Council, one from the Mayor and one from the Park Board. This was, in my opinion, an ill-advised action for the Council to take, for three main reasons. First, I believe that it is preferable to have our auditors report to a more independent body, like the Board of Estimate, rather than to what will be, in effect, a completely Council-controlled body (the Council will, in effect, control four of six seats on this body). Second, the voters just rejected, less than two months ago, a proposal to scrap the Board of Estimate. One of the main arguments used by the pro-BOE side was that it houses the City's audit function. The Council appears to be disregarding the will of the voters. Third, the Council rejected a common-sense amendment I offered that would have made this bad proposal a little less bad, by adding a seat for an elected member of the BOE to this new, unnecessary audit committee. I am extremely disappointed in my colleagues' decision to ignore the will of the voters and further centralize power in the hands of the Council.

Council Salary and Auto Allowance. I voted against the controversial Council Member Auto Allowance which allows us to receive up to \$400 a month from our ward office budgets to cover transportation expenses. It was approved 7 to 6. With my support, the Council also approved a formula for setting Council Member salaries for the next four years. Increases, if any, will be based on the average of what we negotiate with our largest collective bargaining units. Next year I expect this to amount to a 2.5% increase.

Neighborhood Revitalization Program. The Council has approved the NRP administrative budget for next year, and directed the NRP Director and the new Neighborhood and Community Relations Director to work together on a plan to transfer administrative services from NRP to NCR. This plan will be submitted to the Council at the end of 2010.

Downtown Garbage Burner. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has required that the Covanta/Hennepin County proposal to burn more garbage in the county's garbage burner go through a major permit amendment process. This process is likely to take several months. It will also then activate the citizen's petition that the project go through the Environmental Assessment Worksheet process. Given these facts, the County has again postponed their

application for an amendment to their City Conditional Use Permit until April of next year. At that time it could also be postponed further.

Recycling in Apartment and Commercial Buildings. I am convinced that we can recycle much more in the city and have identified two potential law changes that could help. The first is an improvement to our multi-family/apartment building recycling ordinance. Currently we have a law mandating that recycling service as least as good as provided by the City be offered to all residents. However, compliance has been poor and enforcement has been ineffective. In the first quarter of the year I hope to draft amendments that will help. Additionally, working with community advocates, business groups and the City's Solid Waste and Recycling department, I plan to create a new commercial recycling program later in 2010. Currently, commercial establishments are not required to recycle. As we are discussing ways to reduce the overall waste stream that is being incinerated or going into landfills, I believe that we need to do a much better job recycling in businesses as well as residences throughout the City.

Social Hosting. I have proposed a new Social Hosting ordinance which would make it a crime to knowingly host a party where underage drinking is taking place. It is based on the recently-passed St. Paul ordinance and the public hearing has been set for January 6 at or after 1:30. Let me know if you would like to review and comment on the draft so far.

Pet Licensing Online. At the end of this month, pet owners will be able to apply for pet licenses online at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/animal-control/. Licensed pets are three times more likely to be returned home if they are lost. Off leash dog park permits are not available through online pet licensing but can be obtained through the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board www.minneapolisparcs.com/default.asp?PageID=623.

Chicken Permits. After hearing from a large number of urban chicken keepers that the fee increase proposed by staff was unduly large, I was able to convince my colleagues to support a smaller increase, and creating a new five-year permit (similar to the existing "lifetime" permit available to dog and cat owners). I hope that we balanced the City's need to protect the health and safety of urban chickens, and the desire among chicken keepers not to pay an exorbitant fee.

Changes to Redistricting Process. Every ten years, following the census, the City draws new ward boundaries. In light of concerns from last time I am currently researching possible options for a new redistricting process. Working with Council Member Glidden, in January I will be formally asking the Charter Commission to lead a process of research and community engagement to help develop a fairer, more transparent and improved process to be part of a charter amendment that would be put on the ballot next November.

Dolan Renominated. Mayor Rybak has indicated he plans to nominate Police Chief Tim Dolan. While I realize the chief has had success in some area, I have concerns about this nomination. I am currently reviewing the Safe City Resolution that I authored, and that passed the Council unanimously when the Chief was first appointed in 2006, to hold Dolan accountable for the goals the Council outlined. On some of them, such as achieving a 100% discipline rate for sustained CRA complaints, it is clear that Dolan has fallen short.

Uganda Resolution. Along with outgoing Council Member Scott Benson, I have cosponsored a resolution condemning the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda, which would, among other things, make homosexuality punishable by death. The resolution places language in the City's Federal Legislative Agenda calling on the federal government to actively oppose this bill through our diplomatic relationship with Uganda.

Indoor Farmers Markets. City staff are responding to several different proposals to offer farmers markets indoors during winter months. For farmers markets held in grocery, a new policy is being written that makes clear that the City does not need to regulate them as "farmers

markets," but treat them as a grocery store operating normally. For other indoor spaces, the farmers market ordinance is being amended to allow licensed farmers markets indoors. I'm supportive these moves, which are in keeping with the goals of Homegrown Minneapolis and have involved the participation of the Homegrown Minneapolis Implementation Task Force.

Bike Lanes. Public Works staff has striped bike lanes on Riverside Avenue, without a loss of on-street parking, by converting Riverside from a 4-lane to a 3-lane road. This offers us time to evaluate this configuration before the total reconstruction of Riverside in 2011. Public Works staff is also working towards striping the bike lanes on 20th Ave S, from Riverside down to Cedar/Minnehaha. These lanes will be on both sides of the street. The current confusing seasonal parking restrictions will go away, replaced by year-round parking on the west side of the street and no parking on the east side of the street. Lastly, Public Works staff is looking at options for striping bike lanes in Southeast Como, on 15th Ave SE and Como Ave SE. My aide, Robin, joined a recent ride through the neighborhood with staff and some residents, to review the potential changes firsthand.

Summer Jobs for Youth. Applications are available for the summer 2010 STEP-UP program which offers Minneapolis youth, age's 14-21 summer job opportunities and career exploration. Youth, ages 14 and 15 are offered a first job experience and matched with positions at non-profits. Youth, ages 16-21 are matched with jobs in private businesses, government, and education. STEP-UP is currently recruiting non-profits and private employers to provide 1300 internships for the 2010 program. Businesses interested in hiring a 16-21 year-old intern should contact Anne Krocak at 612-455-1562. Hiring a STEP-UP intern can benefit your business and cost as little as \$1,000. Non-profits interested in hiring a 14 or 15 year-old, should contact Tammy Dickinson at 612-673-5041. The wages for the non-profit interns are paid by the STEP-UP Program.

Traffic Signal LED Conversion. The City is working to complete conversion of our traffic signals to Light Emitting Diodes, which use significantly less energy. Xcel Energy has stepped up to partner with us, reimbursing the City for over \$30,000 in conversion costs from their utility rebate funds.

Midtown Greenway Area Rezoning Plan. The Planning Commission has moved this major rezoning effort on to the City Council after making many amendments to the staff recommendations including denying staff recommendation of R4 (medium-high density residential) zoning and approving OR1 (office residential) for those homes at the south end of the 2600 blocks of 29th and 30th Ave S. The plan will next go the Zoning and Planning Committee where additional amendment could be made.

Sporty's Pub. My office has worked with Southeast Como residents and Sporty's Pub's owner to draft a list of consensus conditions for his requested liquor license. I am optimistic that these conditions will allow Sporty's to succeed while preventing negative impacts on nearby neighbors and I supported the application when it passed the full Council.

Street Resurfacing in Prospect Park. Public Works staff are planning to resurface the majority of the residential streets in Prospect Park in 2010. I am working with them to engage the community and have asked them to come before the neighborhood organization (PPERRIA) as soon as possible to give an update on this project. They are also planning to convene a special neighborhood meeting to answer questions about what the project covers, the construction schedule, and the assessments that will be levied to property owners. Having heard from a significant and growing number of Prospect Park residents about the poor and declining quality of the streets, I am supportive of this project moving forward.

Riverside Reconstruction. Riverside Avenue has been slated for complete reconstruction in 2011-2012. I am working with Public Works staff to ensure that they will be conducting a full and

comprehensive community engagement process next year to gather the neighborhood's input on this incredibly important – and much needed – project.

22nd Street Reconstruction. Public Works staff and CPED will be presenting plans to the Seward Neighborhood Group in early January for a new alignment for 22nd Street, which will connect Minnehaha to Cedar. This project is important for two main reasons. First, it facilitates the transit-oriented redevelopment of the Bystrom Brothers site, a longstanding neighborhood priority. Second, it creates the opportunity to address the terrible intersection of Cedar, Franklin, Minnehaha and 20th Avenues that acts as a barrier to Seward residents making full and comfortable use of the Franklin Ave LRT station.

African Development Center. The City has provided \$40,000 to support the ongoing work of the ADC to extend our partnership on small business loans.

Seeking Intern to Focus on East African Constituents. I am seeking a part time intern for next year to focus on helping me better communicate and engage with the growing population of East African immigrants in the ward. Knowledge of the Ward 2 neighborhoods and effective communication skills are necessary. Please encourage interested and qualified people to contact me.

607 Erie. At my request, the owner of 607 Erie St SE is being given one final chance to save his rental license from revocation, in the first week of January. The owner has not attended his two previous opportunities but requested another chance to be heard before a final decision is made.

Metro Blooms. Congratulations to the Second Ward recipients of Metro Blooms 2009 Best Garden Awards, including the Birchwood Café. To see all of the winners, go here: www.metroblooms.org/bloomsday-photos.php.

Yards to Gardens. Working with Gardening Matters and the Minnesota Energy Challenge, the City has helped develop (through the use of our highly successful Climate Change micro grants) a new website called "Yards to Gardens." It helps connect people who have land available for gardening with people who want to garden. Check it out here: www.y2g.org. This project was one of the recommendations from the Homegrown Minneapolis initiative, and I'm thrilled to see it getting off (or should I say into) the ground.

Snow Emergencies on Facebook. If you're a Facebook user, please consider becoming a fan of Minneapolis Snow Emergency. This will help facebook users (including some of our younger neighbors who are difficult to inform through other means) get information about snow emergencies. Go to www.facebook.com/MinneapolisSnowEmergency to become a fan.

Rebates for Energy Efficiency. You may be eligible for energy saver rebates of **35 percent** of a Minnesota Housing Finance Agency's fix-up loan for energy efficiency upgrades, up to a \$10,000 rebate. Qualifying improvements include windows, doors, insulation, water heaters, heating and cooling. However, improvements must meet certain energy efficiency criteria to be eligible for the rebate. The rebates are made possible by an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant from the U.S. Department of Energy and the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Office of Energy Security. Rebates are available on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information on the energy saver rebate, the fix-up fund loan and other home improvement loans, contact the Center for Energy and Environment at www.mncee.org or the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency at <http://www.mnhousing.gov>.

Opt Out of Phone Books. With the increasing availability of information online, many people no longer need or want phone books. This is a good thing, from an environmental perspective – not using phone books saves paper and energy, and reduces waste. To opt out of phone book

delivery, go to www.yellowpagesoptout.com. Enter your ZIP code to find phone book publishers in your area that are making it possible for you to opt out of receiving phone books, then inform each of the publishers that you'd like delivery stopped.

Openings on City Boards and Commissions. There are openings on the Civilian Police Review Authority (closes 12/31), and Public Health Advisory Committee (open until filled). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us .

Priorities for 2010. Each year I identify key priorities to guide my work. So far, I have already identified 11 areas I plan to focus on and would like your input about what is most (1st choice) and least (last choice) important. If you want to share your thoughts please feel free to cut and paste the list below into an email, rank as many as you like in order of your preference and email it back to me at cam.gordon@ci.minneapolis.mn.us . Also, feel free to add your own ideas.

- Close the racial disparities in poverty and employment
- Increase affordable housing and reduce homelessness
- Fight climate change and work to clean up our soil, water and air
- Improve community policing and police-community relations
- Prevent youth violence and increase youth employment and health
- Enhance civilian oversight of police and end racial profiling
- Manage public dollars wisely and keep taxes and fees down
- Support small businesses
- Create green jobs
- Ensure that there is funding and support for neighborhood based planning and revitalization
- Improve the "City's" relationship with other units of government including the park and school boards.

I am also always anxious to hear what concerns and goals you have for our city and your neighborhood. Please feel free to drop me a note, phone message or email anytime sharing your ideas and letting me know how can I serve you better?

I wish you all a happy and healthy New Year from all of us in the Ward 2 office.

In peace and cooperation,

Cam Gordon
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<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/ward2/>