

**News from Cam Gordon
Council Member, Second Ward
May 2010**

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

Neighborhood and Community Relations Meetings. Over the next several months, the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (NCEC) and the Department of Neighborhood and Community Relations (NCR) will develop guidelines for the new Community Participation Program in 2011 and beyond. Before they begin drafting these policies, the NCEC and NCR staff are seeking guidance from neighborhood organization leaders and other stakeholders. The discussions we have with neighborhood organizations will be instrumental in developing policy for future funding of neighborhood organizations. For Second Ward neighborhoods, the nearest meetings are **Thursday, May 27th** from 6-8pm at Van Cleve Park, 901 15th Ave SE; and **Wednesday, June 9th**, from 6-8pm at Powderhorn Park, 3400 14th Ave.

Roundtable Discussion on the Future of Neighborhood Organizations. Please join me, Marcea Mariani, (8th District Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commissioner) and other community leaders, for a discussion about the state of neighborhood organizations in Minneapolis today. We will look how changes in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program will impact neighborhood work and explore strategies for influencing the development of new policies and ways to improve and strengthen these critically important organizations through the new Neighborhood Relations Department and Engagement Commission. **Thursday, June 24th** 7 – 9 pm at Matthews Park 2318 29th Ave S.

MERF. The Legislature has granted the City's request to fold the Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund into a larger state pension fund. This means that beneficiaries/pensioners of now have assurance their benefits will continue and the fund will not fail. This is a very big deal for Minneapolis, the result of years of work. Deserving of special credit: our Intergovernmental Relations (or IGR) staff, the chairs of the IGR committee (Betsy Hodges from 2006-2009 and Elizabeth Glidden since), Senator Don Betzold and Rep Mary Murphy, and our Finance Department staff Pat Born and Heather Johnston.

Pensions. In a major victory for Minneapolis taxpayers, Judge Janet Poston has ruled in favor of the City of Minneapolis' position that two closed pension funds, the Minneapolis Police Relief Association (MPRA) and the Minneapolis Firefighters Relief Association (MFRA), must repay over \$52 million in overpayments of benefits that the funds have improperly paid out to members since June of 2000. The total amount that the funds must recoup, however, is higher than \$52 million, since Judge Poston ruled that the funds must calculate the amount they have overcharged the City dating back to June 9, 2000. The City has calculated that the funds' overpayment to members from June 2000 through the end of 2009 totals more than \$75 million. In a previous ruling, Judge Poston had identified three ways that the MFRA and MPRA have violated Minnesota law and their own bylaws in improperly calculating benefits to their members, which she ruled has caused Minneapolis taxpayers "great and irreparable harm." Judge Poston also found that the funds' improper calculation of benefits would have cost Minneapolis taxpayers \$86 million more in the future. The Judge has ordered that by early June, the funds must present to the Court and City their plans to pay the City back, and that they must start recovering the overpayments by July 1. While the decision may still be appealed to a higher court, if it stands it will ease a significant financial pressure on the City's budget, and represents the City's commitment both to pensioners and to taxpayers.

Bike Walk Week. This year's Bike Walk Week is June 5-11. Bike Walk to Work Day is June 10. If you live in Seward or Cooper, please join me for a bike commuting convoy on Thursday, June 10th, at 7:30am at the Birchwood Café (3311 East 25th St). Birchwood will be offering free baked goods and coffee to cyclists and pedestrians. To find a convoy in your neighborhood, go to <http://bikewalkweek.org>. Thanks to other Second Ward businesses who are hosting celebrations, including Bedlam Theater, which is offering free Peace Coffee and hot breakfasts in the morning

and drink specials in the afternoon, and Pizza Luce on Franklin, which is offering discounts on pizza slices and drinks all evening.

Nice Ride Opening. After the downtown celebrations of Bike Walk to Work Day, I will be attending the inaugural ride and ribbon cutting for the *Nice Ride* bike sharing system. The ride begins at the Central Library in downtown Minneapolis at 11:30. The ribbon-cutting will be held next to the bike share station at the Downtown YWCA at noon. I'm excited to get this first-in-the-nation bike sharing system up and running, and hope that it is successful.

Construction Beginning on Central Corridor. Construction is beginning on elements of the Central Corridor LRT line in Minneapolis. In September, the project will begin prep work to retrofit the Washington Avenue bridge to accommodate light-rail trains by reconstructing the bridge piers. They are also beginning work on the "advance traffic improvements" to the area around the campus. These improvements include new traffic signals and turn lanes in and around the University East Bank Campus. In December, they will start work to tie in the Central Corridor line from the Hiawatha LRT line just west of the Cedar-Riverside Station to Pleasant Street on the East Bank. The bulk of the work in Minneapolis will start in spring 2011. If you would like to receive weekly construction updates from the Central Corridor project, go here: <http://tinyurl.com/29kjwm8>.

Emerald Ash Borer. The Park Board's Forestry Division has given a very informative presentation to the Regulatory Energy and Environment committee about Emerald Ash Borer. It included some updated information for residents on what to do about ash on private or public property. If you would like to have your ash removed before it becomes infested, here is the process:

For ash on public property (like the boulevard): Call Park Board Forestry at 612-313-7710. They can remove even non-infested trees, grind the stumps and replant with a different species. This work can only occur between September 1 and May 1 – cutting down trees during the warmer months increases the risk that the beetles will move.

For ash on private property: call Park Board Forestry to get a list of licensed arborists. Residents will have to pay to have trees removed and replaced.

The committee also sent forward a resolution urging Minneapolis residents **not** to treat ash on private property with synthetic insecticides. It is unclear that these chemicals will substantially increase the life of a tree, the risks to the ecosystem and human health are unknown, and treatment requires a long-term financial commitment. Please do not apply insecticides to your ash.

Redistricting. The Charter Commission has put forward a proposed change to the redistricting process as laid out in the Minneapolis Charter. I am generally supportive of their proposals, which include a process for allowing minor parties which have elected a candidate to a local office to have representation in the redistricting process, scrapping an old provision under which a map could be drawn at random (in cases where the Redistricting Commission could not agree) and more. I would also support more comprehensive amendments, including reducing the power of all political parties in the redistricting process and requiring that the Charter Commission approve the final plan. The Charter Commission has scheduled two public meetings on this issue that I encourage you to attend: **Tuesday, May 25th**, at 6:30pm at North Regional Library, 1315 Lowry Ave N; and **Thursday, May 27th** at 6:30pm at Washburn Library, 5244 Lyndale Av S.

Household Hazardous Waste. Hennepin County has organized a household hazardous waste collection opportunity on Saturday, June 5, from 9am-1pm at the University of Minnesota, Lot C66 Como Ave. SE and 29th Ave SE, and July 31 at Anne Sullivan School. For a list of materials accepted and other venues, visit <http://www.hennepin.us/collectonevents>.

Community Energy Services Workshops. The University District Alliance has organized a series of FREE workshops where residents of the Alliance neighborhoods (Cedar Riverside, Marcy

Holmes, Prospect Park and Southeast Como) can sign up for customized home visits. Two energy experts will spend an hour and a half with interested homeowners, installing energy efficient materials (like weatherstripping) and performing an energy audit. This amounts to a \$400 service, for a co-pay of only \$30. I encourage all interested residents to take advantage of this great opportunity. The dates and locations of the workshops are: **Thursday, May 20th**, 6:30-8:30pm in room 113 of the Oren Gateway Center, 610 22nd Ave S; **Saturday, June 5th**, 10am-noon at the First Congregational Church of MN, 500 8th Ave SE; and **Monday, June 14th**, 6:30-8:30pm at Van Cleve Park, 901 15th Ave SE.

Civil Rights Director. The Council has unanimously approved the Mayor's appointment of Velma Korbelt as the City's new Civil Rights Director. I look forward to working with Director Korbelt to increase the effectiveness of the Minneapolis Civil Rights Department, which I think plays a crucial role in making this a fairer and more equitable city for everyone.

Urban Scrubs Camp. The Cedar Riverside Partnership, working with HealthForce MN, Augsburg College, MN Urban AHEC, Fairview Hospitals and the U's Health Careers Center, has put together a great opportunity for Minneapolis youth – especially youth from Cedar Riverside – to put themselves on the path to a good-paying career in the medical field. The registration fee is \$400, but scholarships are available. To download registration materials, visit <http://heathforcemn.org>. Conferences are available by phone at 507-474-3900.

Pedestrian Advisory Committee. The City is looking for more people to serve on our new and improved Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC). The PAC has existed since 2006 and has recently been expanded to include more community members. The committee exists to help make Minneapolis more walkable. Term lengths are two years. Members who reside or own a business in the city and who have an interest in promoting walking and improving the pedestrian environment in Minneapolis are encouraged to apply. For more information about this committee or to apply to serve, visit www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/boards-and-commissions/open/index.asp. For appointments in the summer of 2010, priority will be given to applications received by May 28. Please contact Anna Flintoft at 612-673-3885 or Anna.Flintoft@ci.minneapolis.mn.us if you have questions.

Minnesota Health Plan. The Council has taken a position in favor of the Minnesota Health Plan, a proposed universal single-payer health care for all Minnesotans. I have strongly supported a single payer plan for years, and strongly supported this action.

Permeable Pavement. I have introduced an amendment to the Zoning code that will allow residents to use more types of permeable paving for driveways and parking areas. We are beginning the process of bringing this through the City's approval processes, including meeting with our Environmental Advisory Committee and the Planning Commission. Let me know if you would like to review more details of this proposal and I look forward to communicating more specifics on this environmental initiative in the months ahead.

Transportation Electrification. The City is applying for a grant in partnership with the American Lung Association to install public charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, and to purchase electric vehicles for the City fleet. This is a great opportunity to invest in a cleaner, greener way to power automobiles.

Commercial Recycling. I am working with MPIRG and the Sierra Club on a proposal for a citywide commercial recycling program. My goal is to reduce the amount of waste going to landfills and garbage burners, and increase diversion and recycling. I hope to give a commercial recycling survey and share more formal ideas with local businesses and commercial property owners throughout the summer and fall. My hope is that the Council will adopt a new commercial recycling ordinance by the end of this year.

University Climate Neutrality Resolution. In support of growing efforts to stop the burning of coal at campuses throughout the country including at University of Minnesota, I drafted resolution

that was passed unanimously by the City Council on in May. Since Xcel Energy's Highbridge Plant in St. Paul and Riverside Plant in Minneapolis were both recently converted from coal to natural gas, the Central University Steam Plant on the Mississippi River in Southeast Minneapolis is the only remaining coal burning energy plant in the Twin Cities. The resolution commends the U for working to establish a campus sustainability committee and supports efforts to become climate neutral, transition away from burning coal, and fully implement the University's policy on Sustainability and Energy Efficiency and the U President's Climate Commitment.

Immigration. I applaud Chief Dolan for joining the St. Paul Chief of Police in openly opposing Arizona-style anti-immigrant legislation. I also joined Mayor Rybak in urging all Minneapolis employees not to travel for work purposes to Arizona. I strongly oppose any efforts to force Minneapolis employees – especially police officers – to inquire about residents' immigration status. It is in everyone's best interest for all Minneapolis residents to feel safe when contacting the police to report a crime.

Recreational Fires. My office has noticed an increasing trend in the number of complaints we get about recreational fires. It's fairly clear that most of these complaints are about fires that violate some portion of the City's existing recreational fire ordinance. My office has worked with Communications, the Fire Department and Regulatory Services on a utility bill insert clearly communicating the rules in our ordinances, and offering some advice for reducing conflict between neighbors. You can see the insert in your June utility bill, or find it online here: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2010-meetings/20100514/Docs/RecreationalFires_INSERT.pdf.

Democratic National Convention. I voted against a resolution to apply for the 2012 Democratic National Convention. I have not seen any evidence that the positive impacts of hosting these conventions outweigh the negative impacts and stresses that accompany them. More importantly, I am deeply uncomfortable with the way that security is handled at conventions. During the RNC in 2008, we were forced to give up local control of our police force and subordinate them to a security plan that we could not see or impact in any way. This led to preemptive raids on Second Ward residents, inappropriate and ill-advised crackdowns on peaceful protests, and other suspensions of civil liberties. I cannot in good conscience welcome another of these events to our city until and unless the approach to security – and the balance between security and free speech – changes significantly.

Obesity Prevention Grant. The City has received a more than \$2 million grant from the Minnesota Department of Health to work on obesity prevention, from this year through 2012. My office is working with the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support on various aspects of this project, especially active living (bicycling and walking) and the connections between this grant and Homegrown Minneapolis.

Youth Gang Prevention. The Council is seeking a \$325,000 for an 18-month grant to prevent youth from joining gangs, and to intervene in the lives of youth currently affiliated with gangs. This is yet another example of the opportunities that the City's Youth Violence Prevention initiative makes possible.

Accessible Pedestrian Signals. The City has received federal money through the Met Council to install and evaluate new types of pedestrian signals designed to be accessible to blind and sight impaired people. I look forward to seeing how well these signals work.

2428 Delaware St SE. Curt Gunsbury has requested a conditional use permit for a 75-unit residential development at 2428 Delaware St SE. They are seeking a CUP to increase the height of the building from 4 stories/56 feet to 6 stories/74 feet, along with multiple variances (to reduce the minimum lot area requirement, increase the Floor Area Ratio, reduce the amount of required off-street parking, reduce the front, corner and side yard setbacks). There will be a public hearing at the Planning Commission on **Monday, May 24** at 4:30pm, in Room 317 City Hall. Staff is

currently recommending approval of these applications. Please visit www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/agendas/planning-commission for the agenda with staff reports (web page will be updated by the end of the day Thursday prior to the meeting date).

Prospect Park Resurfacing. The Council has unanimously approved the Prospect Park area street resurfacing project. My office received a small number of requests that the project not move forward, but I have heard more complaints about the quality of the streets in the past few years, and I supported the project. Centerpoint Energy has begun work on the gas mains under some Prospect Park streets in conjunction with this project, and my office has been working to help inform residents about their construction schedule.

East River Parkway. The Park Board has voted to hand control of East River Parkway from Delaware to Fulton Streets to the City. This was necessitated by the closure of Washington Avenue for the Central Corridor transit mall, which will likely increase the amount of traffic being carried by that stretch of the parkway. I am supportive of this transfer, which will allow the City to maintain the roadway and install the sort of traffic signals that will keep it functioning. I also supported the Park Board's decision to make this handover contingent on an agreement that the City will not make any changes to the bike and pedestrian paths without Park Board approval.

Great Streets grants to help Ward 2 businesses. The City has approved \$578,175 in grants to strengthen neighborhood businesses throughout the city through our Great Streets program. The Program supports a range of activities that help provide important goods and services for residents, and retain significant number of jobs located in neighborhood business districts. The most recent data, from December 2008, shows 133,802 jobs were located along commercial corridors. Second ward area recipients include the African Development Center (\$50,000 for technical assistance, business planning, workshops on bookkeeping and accounting); the Latino Economic Development Center(\$50,000 for technical assistance in Midtown and East Lake Street); Native American Community Development Institute: (\$40,000 for corridor branding and analysis and design, marketing materials, and business directory near Franklin Ave. LRT); and Seward Redesign (\$22,000 to develop a tenant recruitment packet, recruit businesses, direct work with property owners along Franklin Ave. (LRT to river).

Seward Resident honored. At its last meeting April the Council passed a resolution I authored honoring Seward resident Mike Trdan for his long and successful career in recycling. I was delighted to follow up on a constituent's idea to honor Mike. Mike worked for the City in the seventies, when he pioneered our first curbside recycling program. He recently retired from Dakota County, where he has been working on recycling for years. He's still on the cutting edge, recently leading the effort (working with the Seward Neighborhood Group as well as County and City staff) to apply for funds for a pilot project in Seward to test out a new dual-stream recycling program and curbside organics collection. I'm excited about partnering with him on this and on other environmental initiatives in the future.

True Thai's Big Win. The Met Council has decided to rescind the \$6,000 Sewer Access Charge they had been demanding from True Thai restaurant in Seward, for 20 outdoor seats that were in use for three months. This is a very big deal for this small business, and is the result of the diligent work of City staff, Seward Redesign, and my office.

Move In / Move Out. The Southeast Como Improvement Association has implemented an impressive project to divert the furniture and other items that are commonly thrown away during the "Move In / Move Out" period around campus back to reuse. They received a grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to pilot a reduce, reuse, recycle project here in Como, to address the massive amounts of curbside waste left after the Move-In/Move-Out cycles here in Como. Items can be dropped or claimed at the temporary "neighborhood free store" at 883 29th Ave SE, the U's ReUse Center, on the following dates: Thursday-Saturday, May 27th-29th, 10am-4:30pm and Thursday-Saturday, June 3rd-5th, 10am-4:30pm.

25th Ave SE Extension. The Council has approved a project layout for building the extension of 25th Ave SE, from 4th St SE to the proposed Granary Road. I'm excited to see this part of the SEMI plan move forward.

Hub of Heaven Garden. Community Planning and Economic Development staff's proposal to sell the Hub of Heaven garden to Seward Neighborhood Group has run into opposition from Council Members. I am working with staff and SNG to find an alternate solution that will preserve this great community garden for the long term.

Openings on Boards and Commissions. There are openings on the Minneapolis Ethical Practices Board and the Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

In peace and cooperation,

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