

**News from Cam Gordon
Council Member, Second Ward
July 2007**

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

I-35W Bridge Collapse. The media and City staff, particularly our Communications Department, have been working hard to provide information and access to information about the tragic I-35W bridge collapse over the Mississippi. I would like to offer some of my own comments and observations.

First and foremost, my thoughts go out to all who have lost loved ones, who are missing family and friends and who are suffering because of the collapse. I hope that you and your family, friends and loved ones are safe and unharmed after this catastrophic event. For all of us, as individuals and as a community, this has been a shocking experience and a devastating loss in many ways.

While things may seem stable now and in many ways our community is coming to terms with this shock, let's not forget that some are still caught in the moment, grieving the loss of family members, co-workers and friends, in anguish for loved ones who are still missing, or struggling to recover and survive from injuries resulting from the fall.

Please keep these people, as well as our recovery workers still on the scene, in your thoughts and prayers and wishes.

Second, I want to share a little of how proud I am of City, our community and all the city staff, outside agencies, volunteers and others who were able to respond quickly and competently to this disaster. Minneapolis City staff and elected officials are, and have been, fully engaged in doing everything we can to respond to this terrible disaster. From courage and competence on the street in the actions of the scores of first responders to the highly skilled and focused leadership at the Emergency Operations Command Center, we have a lot to be proud of.

Also, we have a so much to be grateful for. The outpouring of support from the emergency response teams from all over the county and state, the chaplains, red cross personnel, those who have donated food and supplies, all must be acknowledged.

As we enter the recovery phase we are just beginning to get a sense of the difficult work ahead. Divers, structural engineers, and other recovery experts are checking vehicles that are still submerged in the Mississippi River following the accident. Currently the site is under the command of the Minneapolis Police Department and will likely remain so until all vehicles have been checked and all bodies recovered.

We are in discussions with other agencies, including the County, the National Transportation Safety Board, Army Corps of Engineers, Coast Guard and others to develop a plan and unified command and control structure for after the recovery phase is complete. A clean-up plan is also being developed to address the styrene monomer spill from the train car that was crushed under the bridge.

I would like to offer a few updates:

- This morning, the City Council passed a resolution approving the state of emergency called by the Mayor.
- For the most updated City information on this disaster, please go here: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/35wbridge/>

- The City of Minneapolis is convening a special meeting next week for members of the business community citywide to discuss transportation and transit issues arising from the collapse of the bridge: Tuesday, August 7, 8:30AM, Augsburg College, 2211 Riverside Avenue South, Marshall Room (located in the Christensen Center).
- We are developing ongoing plans to deal with traffic and congestion. A map of affected roads is here: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/news/master.pdf>, and a detail map around the bridge itself is here: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/news/inset.pdf>.
- I do encourage all of you who will be coming to or traveling to downtown to consider taking a bicycle or public transit, both to speed up your own commute and to reduce congestion. Go here for mass transit information: <http://metrotransit.org/> and here for a map of bike routes: <http://www.co.hennepin.mn.us/portal/site/HCInternet/menuitem.3f94db53874f9b6f68ce1e10b1466498/?vgnnextoid=6e0907df789fc010VgnVCM1000000f094689RCRD&vgnnextfmt=default>.
- I also urge that everyone remain patient and calm as we try to address the inevitable traffic problems that this disaster will create in the upcoming weeks and months.
- Concerned family members who want to check on the welfare of relatives should go to the Twin Cities Red Cross Web site at www.redcross.org.
- 311 will be open this weekend, 8am-6pm on Saturday and 10am- 4pm on Sunday.

From the reports I have seen, I believe we should be grateful that this collapse did not result in more loss of life. We should take this opportunity to remind ourselves to cherish those around us.

Lastly, I am hopeful that in the months and years ahead, this catastrophe will help refocus our attention on maintaining our infrastructure, so that nothing like this happens in our city, our state or our country again.

National Night Out is next Tuesday, August 7th. For a list of registered events, please go here: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/nno/docs/EventsbyNH.pdf>. If you would like any last-minute help organizing your block party, please contact the Second Ward Interns: for Seward and Cooper, Annie Welch, welc0194@umn.edu; for Southeast Como, Adam Engleman, enge0413@umn.edu; for Cedar Riverside, Mustafa Adam, mustafaadam1@yahoo.com; and for Prospect Park and the University Area, Paul Kristapovich, krist049@umn.edu.

Climate Change Innovation Fund. Congratulations to Seward Neighborhood Group and Longfellow Community Council staff and volunteers for their successful application for one of 5 "Climate Change Innovation Funds" \$10,000 grants. I look forward to working with these groups to implement the aggressive goals they have laid out. To learn more about the grants and see other grantees ideas for fighting global warming, please visit the City's sustainability Web site at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/.

"Bait Bicycle" program. Last month, the PS&RS Committee passed a motion I wrote, directing the Police Department to explore creating a "Bait Bicycle" program, similar to the "Bait Vehicle" programs we currently have in place. It also directs them to pursue Non-Motorized Transportation grants to fund a pilot project. Bike theft is a serious concern in the Second Ward, and few bike thieves are caught. This program could potentially help increase bike mode share by deterring thieves and making potential riders feel comfortable riding and parking bikes in our city.

Farm Stand Policy. My office is continuing to work to make it easier and cheaper for small farm stands selling local produce to navigate the City's bureaucratic processes, to increase access to healthy foods in communities with little access at this time.

Contract Compliance. The Civil Rights Department has reported that there is a major discrepancy between the goals for our Contract Compliance Unit and the implementation of these goals. The report states that Governmental and non-governmental entities governed by the Civil Rights Ordinance are **not** in full compliance with the hiring, contracting, reporting, monitoring, and enforcement mandates described in the contract compliance provisions of the Ordinance. It goes on to state that the City is not holding firms that are not in compliance accountable. I take this report very seriously, and initiated a motion directing the Civil Rights Director to report back to the HE&E Committee in October with further analysis as to the scope of non-compliance, and with recommendations to improve the contract compliance in small and underutilized business program processes and for other potential Council actions.

Unpaid Judgments Ordinance. The ordinance I introduced giving the City the authority to revoke or not renew rental licenses to landlords who have unpaid legal judgments against them has been referred to the City's Rental Property Advisory Committee for review next week. I believe we may need strong support from the community to offset the power of the landlord lobby to get this proposal passed.

Public Safety for Public Housing. The Council has voted to put \$350,000 in additional funding into the Public Housing Authority and Police Department partnership for keeping public housing residents and the surrounding communities safe. I strongly supported this measure.

New CPED Director. Mike Christenson has been unanimously approved as the new Director of the Community Planning and Economic Development Department.

Compensation Philosophy. The Council rescinded the 2% wage increase cap for City employees last week, and replaced it with a more comprehensive employee compensation philosophy.

Free Speech Work Group. The Free Speech Work Group that I helped form has drafted our guiding principles for protecting free speech during the RNC Convention next year. The Council has unanimously approved these principles.

IAU Audit. The Police Department has released a Request For Proposals to find a contractor to conduct an audit of the Internal Affairs department, as a step towards the greater goal of increasing police officer accountability. I am hopeful that the Council will approve and fund this tomorrow.

Air Quality Study. The Environmental Management Department has released an Air Quality Study, designed to look at air quality across the entire city in areas where citizens live, work and play. Samples were collected in each season and analyzed for volatile organic compounds. Fifty monitors were deployed four times throughout the year to collect information on 31 different chemicals. To see the report, please go here: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/airquality/docs/AirQualityReport_July2007.pdf.

Sale of City-Owned Parking Ramps. The Council has decided to sell eight City-owned parking ramps, including the Seven Corners ramp in the Second Ward. For more information, please go here: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2007-meetings/20070629/Docs/08_Parking_Ramp_Set_PH.pdf

Animal Protection Ordinance. The ordinance that my colleague Ralph Remington has sponsored and that I support, banning wild animals in circuses in Minneapolis, will come before the Public Safety and Regulatory Services committee next Wednesday, August 8th.

Green Party Convention 2008. I have been deeply involved in the effort to bring the Green Party 2008 Convention to Minneapolis, to further increase the visibility of our wonderful City and help offset the Republican Convention later that year.

Employee Free Choice Act. The Council has passed a resolution calling on Congress to pass the Employee Free Choice Act, to make it easier for working people to join labor unions.

Bedlam Theater. The Zoning Board of Adjustment approved Bedlam Theater's application for a variance of the "enclosed building requirement," in order to have an outdoor theater as an accessory use. There was substantial opposition to this application by residents nearest to the Bedlam, and I will be actively engaged in bringing the theater and its neighbors together to try to find a consensus that will work for everyone.

Morningstar Coffee. Morningstar has not lived up to its commitment to install an afterburner by July 16th. My office, along with City Environmental Management staff, are pursuing punitive measures to compel this company to honor its commitments to the City and finally stop polluting the Seward neighborhood.

Riverside Market Grants. The Seward Coop has received \$102,600 in Metropolitan Tax Base Revitalization Account funding, and Seward Redesign has received \$169,338 in Hennepin County Environmental Response funds, both for the redevelopment of the Riverside Market Site into the Seward Coop expansion.

Openings on City Boards and Commissions. There are openings on the Minneapolis Ethical Practices Board (closes 8/10/2007). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

Yours, in peace and cooperation,

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