

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

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

February Roundtable Discussion Reminder. Please join me to discuss priorities and challenges for 2009 on **February 11, 6-8pm** at Matthews Recreation Center. In this time of economic uncertainty, how can we work better together to keep making progress towards our shared goals? Come discuss your hopes and concerns for our city.

Candidates Forum. Candidates for City Council in Wards 2, 9 and 12 will detail their platforms and answer questions at a Nonpartisan Political Forum sponsored by Longfellow Community Council on **Saturday, February 21**, from 10-noon at Matthews Park, 2318 29th Ave.

More Bad News on Budget. Under the Governor's budget proposal, Minneapolis would be cut by \$17 million in 2009 and an additional \$18 million in 2010. This represents a nearly 40% permanent cut to Minneapolis. To put that cut in context, \$35 million is equal to Minneapolis' entire budget for all street and bridge maintenance and repairs, traffic operations, street lighting and maintenance of our malls and plazas. The Governor is also recommending reducing the renters' credit appropriation by \$50 million in the second year of the biennium. This would heap financial pain on the most vulnerable in our society, including a large number of Second Ward residents. Lastly, the budget proposes a \$650,000 reduction in the summer youth employment programs, which funds City and Park Board work. In a worsening jobs climate with dramatic increases in unemployment, this is exactly the wrong direction to go. These proposals reinforce the need to make significant changes to our budget in 2009.

Mayor's Budget Meetings. To gather public input about these budget challenges, the Mayor has scheduled two community meetings. **Monday, Feb. 9, 7-8:30pm** at the Martin Luther King Park Recreation Center, 4055 Nicollet Ave S; and **Tuesday, Feb. 10, 7-8:30pm** at Eastside Neighborhood Services, 1700 Second St NE. He will be presenting his new 2009 budget to the City Council on February 18.

Alternative Revenue. The Council has directed our staff to study the fiscal relationship between the City and the State, including: 1) our current Local Government Aid (LGA) appropriation as compared to the LGA appropriation from 1998–2009 and 2) Data regarding sales tax, income tax and property tax generated within the City of Minneapolis from 1998–2009. Based on this information, staff is to come up with recommended alternatives to our current dependency on LGA from the state. These could include scrapping the current LGA system and retaining more of the sales or income tax revenues generated within the City. I strongly support studying these options, given the damage done to Minneapolis by the State budget processes over the past decade.

Pension Reform. The Council has voted to put reform of the closed Minneapolis pensions on our Legislative Agenda. As I reported last month, the investment decisions of some closed pension funds have created a situation in which the City is expected to pay out up to \$38 million over the next five years to meet our pension obligations. The City will be asking the Legislature to merge these closed pensions into other statewide pension funds, creating better oversight and reducing costs to the City.

City Wins IRV Lawsuit! The City, supported by FairVote Minnesota, has won the lawsuit regarding Ranked Choice Voting. Hennepin County Judge McGunnigle clearly and forcefully rejected all of the plaintiff's claims, including that Ranked Choice Voting is unconstitutional and that the City is preempted by State law. This is a great vindication for those of us who strongly support ranked choice elections. However, the Voters Alliance has appealed this decision. They have agreed to an expedited review directly to the Supreme Court (bypassing the Court of Appeals). The Council's Elections Committee met yesterday and voted to move ahead on a "dual

track" process, preparing for both our first ranked choice election this fall and, if necessary, a standard primary and general election.

Charter Amendment Proposals. I oppose the proposal by Council Members Ostrow, Remington and Samuels to scrap the independent Park Board, and plan to vote against putting it on the ballot this fall. I am also concerned about putting the proposal to eliminate the Board of Estimate and Taxation and the proposal to create a City Administrator, on the ballot. All three proposals would benefit from a larger community discussion. The current timeline is that CM Ostrow will bring the amendments before the Charter Commission in early March, before they formally come before the Council.

Redistricting Process. I am working with Council Member Benson on amending the charter to change the process by which we determine our ward boundaries, something we are required to do every ten years. We are looking at what other cities do and working to identify a simpler, fairer and more transparent process than what currently is called for in the charter.

City Signs onto Marriage and Family Protection Act. I helped push the City to formally support this incredibly important bill to change the Minnesota marriage laws. If enacted, Minnesota will no longer discriminate against GLBT members of our community by preventing them from marrying their partners of choice. I'm proud that the City is out front on this. To see the bill, go here: <https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/bin/bldbill.php?bill=S0120.0.html&session=ls86>.

Joint Ward Meeting. Please join me, along with Council Member Hofstede, Second Precinct Inspector Robert Skomra, and representatives of the University for a meeting on **February 18th**, 7-8:30pm, at Van Cleve Park, which will discuss traffic, parking, tailgating and clean-up for game days at the new U Stadium.

State of the Second Precinct. Please consider attending this gathering on Saturday, February 21, 10am-noon at University Lutheran Church of Hope, 601 13th Ave SE, for a presentation by Inspector Skomra and members of the 2nd Precinct, which will include a summary of activity for 2008 and police initiatives for 2009. If you have any questions, please call Nick Juarez at 673-2797.

University Master Plan. The University's Draft Campus Master Plan will be published and available website at http://www.cppm.umn.edu/master_planning.html. They have held public meetings, and will also take electronic comments on the plan until **February 20**. I encourage you to look it over and communicate with both the University and me about your ideas and concerns.

Park Board Planning. The Park Board is embarking on a planning process for two of their most important services. If you're interested in Field Sports (soccer, baseball, etc), please share your thoughts at one of the following community meetings, all of which start at 6:30pm; February 10 at Pearl Park, 414 E Diamond Lake Rd; February 11 at Northeast Park, 1615 Pierce St NE; or February 24 at MPRB Headquarters, 2117 W River Rd. If you're interested in Biking, Walking or Rolling, please attend one of the following meetings, also starting at 6:30pm: February 9 at Lake Hiawatha Park, 2701 E 44th St; February 12 at Windom NE Park, 2251 Hayes St NE; February 17 at Loring Park, 1382 Willow St; February 19 at Brackett Park, 2728 39th Ave S; February 23 at Lynnhurst Park, 1345 W Minnehaha Pkwy; or February 26 at Wirth Chalet Fireplace Room, 1339 Theodore Wirth Pkwy. For more information contact Jennifer Ringold at 230-6464 or visit www.minneapolisparcs.org.

Internal Affairs Audit. I was able to convince my colleagues on the Public Safety and Regulatory Services committee to direct Police staff to update us on their progress towards implementing the recommendations from the external audit, on a quarterly basis.

Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission. The Council has appointed seven people to the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission. As outstanding as the

recommended applicants are, I did not vote for the final list of appointees due to the lack of ethnic, geographic, gender and age diversity among the applicants brought forward. An amendment I supported to increase the geographic, gender and age diversity failed and those selected were predominately male(5), European Americans (6).No one was selected from the southeast quadrant of the City (wards 2, 9 or 12) despite the fact that many highly qualified people applied from those areas. I supported a staff direction to develop recruitment strategies for board members that will promote more diversity on this essential board, and I hope that the Park Board and neighborhood process will help fill the gaps left by the Council's appointments.

Homegrown Minneapolis. The initiative to increase the amount of locally produced food being consumed and grown in Minneapolis is under way. For updates, please see the health department's website here: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/homegrown-home.asp>.

Unpaved Alley Report. Public works staff has prepared a report on how the City might address paving of remaining unpaved residential alleys, including a number of alleys in Ward Two. If the Council adopts the report and recommendations, a program will be introduced into the 5-year Capital Improvement Program, for construction starting in 2014. This would be the first year of a 10 year program under which the City would pave about eight alleys per year. Staff is also recommending that the City explore vacating some alleys, which will require shared use agreements between users to ensure continued access. For more information see the report to Council here: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2009-meetings/20090206/docs/Unpaved_Residential_Alleys_REPORT.pdf

Parking Meter Pilot Project. In December, the City started a six-month-long test of several new types of parking meters. Our current parking meters will need to be replaced in the next few years, and this will help us determine what kinds of meters we want. I am very interested making sure new meters accept credit cards. Six different types of meters are being tested on six separate blocks around the city. There are test areas in Stadium Village, Dinkytown, Old St. Anthony, Elliot Park and downtown. Staff will evaluate the performance of the meters and you can help by sharing your feedback with tim.drew@ci.minneapolis.mn.us and filling out a short survey at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/parking.

Alliance Update. The University District Partnership Alliance is working on our report back to the Legislature in February. This report will go before the Council's Intergovernmental Relations committee on February 17. Also, throughout February neighbors in the University District area will be reviewing a draft report of the Alliance's Zoning Planning and Regulatory Review Committee. This will form the basis for any changes we make in conjunction with the demolition and development moratorium put in place last August. All comments are welcome. For more see http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/University_District_ZPRR_public.asp

Homebuyer Incentive. We've launched the University District – Home Buyer Incentive Program, which provides down payment or closing cost assistance through \$10,000 two-percent interest loans that requires no monthly payment and are forgivable over five years. For more information contact the Greater Metropolitan Housing Corporation Housing Resource Center, at 378-7985.

Bike Sharing Open Houses. I'm excited about a new bike sharing system that I hope will be installed over the next year or so, using Non-motorized Transportation Project funding. You can learn more at one of two remaining public meetings cosponsored by the City and the Nordic Ski Foundation (our consultants on the system): **Tuesday February 10**, 7pm Coffman Memorial Union, The Whole Music Club (basement level); **Thursday February 12**, 5:30pm Central Library, Pohlada Hall, 300 Nicollet Mall.

The **2009 Great Streets Business District Support Grant** Request for Proposals (RFP) has been issued. There is \$500,000 available to fund activities that revitalize and strengthen business districts. Eligible activities may include technical assistance for businesses, marketing, planning, market studies, promotional events, and more. The target grant amount is \$5,000 - \$50,000. The

Request for Proposals and more information are available at <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/rfp.asp>. **Proposals are due February 27, 2009 by 4:00 p.m.** Questions can be directed to Kelly Hoffman at kelly.hoffman@ci.minneapolis.mn.us or 612-673-5079.

Xcel Energy's Midtown High Voltage Power Line Proposal. The Council has passed a resolution I coauthored, calling on Xcel Energy to do more study about the need for new substations and, if still needed, bury the proposed high-voltage power line under 28th Street East from Hiawatha to I-35W, rather than implementing any overhead option or putting the line down the Greenway. Unfortunately, the City does not have any formal control over this project – all decisions will be made by the Public Utilities Commission.

Indoor Space Temperature Policy. The Council has passed the City's first-ever indoor space temperature policy. I enthusiastically supported this policy, which will help us provide comfortable, functional work spaces while cutting down costs and reducing the City's carbon footprint.

Paint-a-Thon. The Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches is again presenting the Twin Cities Paint-a-Thon. Volunteer teams will paint homes for low-income senior or disabled homeowners, starting the first week of August. If you are a homeowner, over the age of 60 or permanently physically disabled, and your monthly income does not exceed \$1,735 for one person or \$2,335 for two people, you should be eligible. To apply, call 612-721-8687, extension 321, or apply online at www.gmcc.org/paint-a-thon. All applications must be received by **May 8**.

EPA Rules against Big Stone II. The Environmental Protection Agency has objected to the air permit issued by South Dakota for the proposed Big Stone II coal-fired power plant expansion, because Otter Tail Power wasn't properly following the rules to control smog and acid rain pollution that would blow eastward and affect Minnesotans' health. I'm proud to have convinced the Council to take a strong position against this project, and will continue to advocate against dirty coal power, and for clean renewables.

University Ordinance Power. The University of Minnesota has introduced a potential legislative initiative to expand ordinance making authority of the Regents of the University of Minnesota. The Regents currently have authority to make ordinances related to parking on the campuses of the University of Minnesota. Other Big 10 Universities have a full set of ordinances provided them by their Regents, as authorized by their state legislatures. Some of the concerns the U is looking to address with this ordinance-making capacity might include alcohol possession or consumption, building hours regulation, disorderly assemblies or conduct, soliciting without a permit, and unauthorized camping or fires.

Success on Hennepin and First. I'm thrilled to announce that thanks to the good work of my office, along with Council Members Lilligren and Goodman, the plans for Hennepin and First Avenue have become much, much better for bicyclists. Responding to a staff direction I helped sponsor, Public Works staff has proposed a good connection for less-experienced riders from Hennepin to First and vice versa, ensuring that every rider can use the two roads as one corridor. I believe that this will help us reach our goal of steadily increasing bike mode share in our city.

Lead Grants. The Minnesota Department of Health has given the City a \$10,000 grant for lead abatement in older homes.

Bands for Band! Please join me at the 2009 Bands for Band! benefit for Anne Sullivan, Sanford and Seward School bands, on **Saturday, Feb. 21, 3-9pm**, at the Eagles Club (2507 25th Street East, Mpls). Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 6yrs and older, and \$25 for families.

Façade Improvement Grants. The African Development Center has been awarded a Façade Improvement Matching Grant Administration Contract for \$50,000 that will include façade

improvements in the area of the Franklin and Cedar Riverside LRT Stations and five commercial corridors in the area. .

Organics Collection in Seward. Public Works has expressed some interest in starting a curbside organics collection and composting pilot project in Seward. Seward Neighborhood Group has formally requested to participate before I give staff the green light.

Bystrom Brothers Site. The City has accepted a grant of \$550,000 from the Met Council for the Bystrom Brothers site redevelopment near the Franklin Ave LRT station.

SEMI Development. The Council has authorized City staff to pursue acquisition through negotiation with property owners or through condemnation, portions of the following properties to be used for the 25th Avenue portion of SEMI/University Research Park infrastructure: The property in question is owned by Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Railroad Companies. I am supportive of this effort because it will allow us to move forward with plans to extend Malcolm Avenue SE and 25th Avenue SE and build Granary Road in the Southeast Minneapolis Industrial (SEMI) redevelopment project area. Granary Road has also been identified in a memorandum of understanding between the City, County, University of Minnesota and Metropolitan Council, as a betterment related to the Central Corridor LRT project. The planned road network will open up the 400-acre former rail yard site for redevelopment as a light industrial bioscience area. The area is a state-designated bioscience zone. Funding for the acquisition will come from tax increment revenue (\$320,000) and a State Grant (\$320,000). The tax increment is the 50% local match necessary for the Grant.

Openings on City Boards and Commissions. There are openings on the Civil Rights Commission (closes 2/27), Latino Advisory Committee (closes 2/27) and Public Housing Authority Board of Commissioners (closes 2/13). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

Yours, in peace and cooperation,

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