

Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Southeast Como, 8-8-12

Cam's next Southeast Como Office Hours:
Tuesday, August 14th, 9:30-11:00am
Muddsuckers Coffee, 1500 Como Avenue SE



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City of Lakes

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Attention: If you want help translating this information in language other than Hmong, Spanish or Somali, call 311

Hmong - Ceeb toom. Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no rau koj dawb, hu 612-673-2800;

Spanish - Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para traducir esta información, llame 612-673-2700;

Somali - Ogow. Haddii aad dooneyso in lagaa kaalmeeyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo lacag la' aan wac 612-673-3500.

Items:

- 1) Voter ID: It's Worse Than You Think
- 2) Changes to Rental Housing Regulations
- 3) City Opposes Xcel's Plan to Scrap Solar Rewards
- 4) Recycling at Major Events
- 5) Major Change Proposed for CRA
- 6) Solicitors Ordinance
- 7) Fire Department Agency Evaluation
- 8) Coal-Tar Sealant Ban
- 9) Healthy Housing Indicators and the U District
- 10) Openings on City Boards and Commissions

- 1) The Council has received an informative and disturbing report from our City Clerk and Elections Department on the potential impacts of the proposed "Voter ID" Constitutional Amendment. You can read the report here: www.minneapolismn.gov/meetings/elections/WCMS1P-094785. I have also written some analysis of this topic on the Second Ward blog. The bottom line is that this amendment will make it much harder for many Minnesotans to vote, and create significant difficulty and cost for the Minneapolis Elections Department. It is possible that the court will keep this question off the ballot this fall. If not, I urge you to **vote no**.
- 2) I supported, with some hesitation, moving ahead with a set of amendments to the City's rental licensing rules proposed by Council Member Glidden at the last Regulatory Energy and Environment Committee. The change that concerned me most was the removal of the mandated "2 strikes and you're out" provision that dictates that anyone who loses 2 rental licenses in Minneapolis (regardless of how long ago) will automatically have all their other rental licenses revoked. Under the new proposal some offenses, including those related to unpaid financial obligations owed to the City or County, could result in a license revocation action for that property but would not necessarily result in the owner losing all their licenses, even two licenses were revoked on this basis. Failure to address violations related to the health and safety of the property would most likely result in an owner losing his or her licenses. Other provisions in the proposal, gave me no pause. In several ways I think the amendments make our ordinance stronger. For example, once an owner has one revocation, they cannot add to their rental portfolio or get any additional rental licenses, for three years. One aspect of the proposal that I believe offers great potential authorizes the City Council to put conditions on rental licenses if there are concerns about that license or license holder. That means in some cases, the City could pursue signed agreements with license holders that address the specific conditions at, or concerns about, their properties much as we have been doing for years with other types of business licenses. If the terms of the agreement are violated, the City then would have the flexibility to impose even more significant, penalties including license revocations. Additionally, the proposed changes provide protection for tenants who are required to move out if their landlord loses the rental license for their property. Under the proposal the City will increase from 30 to 60 the minimum number of days people would be allowed before being required to move out, unless there are immediate health and safety concerns, but landlords would be prohibited from collecting rent once the license has been revoked. In addition to fines and license revocation, if an inspector deems a property to be substandard, the property owner may be required to take a healthy housing training course and any owner who has more than two properties and has a rental license revoked will be required to attend a training on the fundamentals of property management. In the months ahead I will be watching the impacts of these changes carefully. I believe that we should be proud of the track record we have had since I took office in holding unsafe and negligent landlords accountable and I am hopeful that these changes will allow us to continue those efforts while maintaining and improving safe, healthy housing options for people throughout Minneapolis.

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- 3) The Council has gone on record opposing Xcel Energy's proposal to scrap the popular and effective Solar Rewards program. I am disappointed at Xcel's lack of commitment to renewable energy, and to solar in particular, and this strengthens my interest in establishing a municipal power utility to keep our energy options open.
- 4) The City Council voted to require all large block events and all parades and races on Minneapolis streets to recycle. The changes are designed to reduce the amount of trash being generated at these events. Beginning Jan. 1, 2013, organizers of any block event with more than 2,500 people in attendance and any parade or race that uses City streets will need to provide recycling of all paper, cardboard, plastic, glass and metal containers.
- 5) The Civil Rights Department, in conjunction with the Police and City Attorney's Office, has proposed a major change to the Civilian Police Review Authority (CRA). If passed, the CRA would essentially cease to exist, and be replaced by an advisory board to the Police Department. Internal Affairs and the Civilian Review investigatory functions would basically be merged. The current CRA board is not supportive of this proposal, and has recommended its own improvements to the civilian review process. I have serious concerns about merging the police department's internal affairs with the civilian review authority and making the citizen/civilian component advisory only. It also removes the residency requirement and focuses more power with the chief. Public meetings will be held **August 16, 7-8:30pm** at **Shiloh Temple International Ministries**, 1201 West Broadway Avenue, and in **City Hall room 319** on **Tuesday August 21 7-8:30pm**. The proposal is set to return to the committee on **September 12** for a public hearing. You can find more information here (under item 9) www.minneapolismn.gov/meetings/psch/WCMS1P-094889. I will be following this very closely, and strongly encourage anyone who cares about police accountability to do the same.
- 6) The City Council approved new rules for door-to-door salespeople intended to protect consumers, better comply with First Amendment requirements consistent with recent court rulings, and make it more difficult for out-of-state companies to exploit youth workers. Under the new rules, salespeople and transient merchants will be required to wear a City-issued photo identification card. To make things easier for schools and youth groups doing fundraising, the City will approve group identification cards at no cost. The photo identification rule does not apply to canvassers, including people who advocate for religious, social, or political causes.
- 7) Emergency Services Consulting International, a firm hired by the City to evaluate the Minneapolis Fire Department, has presented its final report to the Council. This independent, comprehensive evaluation of the Fire Department will help us see how the department compares to similar departments and consider recommendations to improve effectiveness, increase efficiency and potentially raise additional revenue through cost recovery strategies. The report includes recommendations about facilities, equipment and staffing. It does not recommend adding any new stations but identifies 13 stations in need of renovation or replacement. It also cautions about aging trucks and engines and recommends that the City allocate \$1,046,667 annually to fund vehicle replacement. Related to staffing the report indicates that our levels are slightly lower than regional and national averages, but that many of the other departments also provide ambulance service and Minneapolis does not. It also notes some concern with overtime costs and sick leave and recommends a minimum staffing of 94 firefighters per shift on duty to respond to emergencies and fight fires. Staffing is currently based on having 92 fire fighters on duty per shift. You can find all 3 sections of the report and the presentation slides here <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/meetings/psch/WCMS1P-096367>.
- 8) The Council has passed an ordinance, supported by the Citizens Environmental Advisory Committee, which bans coal tar-based sealants from being sold or used on any driveway or parking lot in Minneapolis. The purpose of this ban is to keep Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons – toxic chemicals present in coal tar sealants but not alternative sealant products – out of our lakes, streams and river. I enthusiastically supported this ordinance, and commend Council Member Colvin Roy for taking the lead on it.
- 9) On **Thursday, August 30**, 4:30 to 6:00 p.m., in the Multi-Purpose Room, at Van Cleve Park there will be a discussion hosted by the Alliance's Livability Committee, with Tom Streitz, Director of Housing Policy and Development, Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development. The discussion will focus on a recent city report that showed that the University area communities have very strong indicators in housing value and a low rate of foreclosures and vacant properties, but, in Southeast Como in particular, had some of the higher rates of conversion of single family homes to rentals during the period 2000 to 2010.
- 10) There are openings on the Arts Commission, Capital Long Range Improvement Committee, Citizens Environmental Advisory Committee, Civil Rights Commission, Civilian Police Review Authority, Disabilities Advisory Committee, Heritage Preservation Commission, Housing Board of Appeals, Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, Planning Commission, Public Health Advisory Committee, Senior Advisory Committee, Mpls Telecommunications Network, ThincGreen Advisory Committee and Youth Violence Prevention Committee. To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@minneapolismn.gov.