

Second Ward July 2013 E-newsletter

News from Cam Gordon
Council Member, Second Ward
July 2013

<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/council/ward2>

Public Hearing on Our Energy Future. The City of Minneapolis has adopted aggressive goals for dealing with the most pressing environmental problem of our time, global climate change. But our current electricity provider is not doing enough to help Minneapolis residents and businesses to reduce our energy use and increase the percentage of our energy we get from clean, renewable energy sources. They are continuing to raise rates even as consumption falls, and those rates are going in part into questionable investments like outdated nuclear plants and corporate profit. Reliability is not improving, and the electrical grid is more sensitive to external shocks than it needs to be. This Thursday, **August 1**, the Council will hold a public hearing to discuss placing a question on this fall's general election ballot to improve the City's energy future. If passed by the voters of Minneapolis, this question will authorize the City to form a municipal power utility. I view this as a necessary step to meeting the City's aggressive climate change mitigation goals. Approximately two-thirds of the greenhouse gas emissions in Minneapolis come through our existing electricity and natural gas utilities. A vote to authorize the creation of a municipal utility will not *require* the City to form one, but will give us that option – which I think will help in the ongoing electrical and natural gas franchise negotiations with Xcel. I believe that Minneapolis should only form a municipal utility after we make certain that we can provide energy services as or more affordably and reliably as the incumbent utilities, and with a greater focus on renewable energy, energy efficiency and local generation. We owe it to ourselves and the generations to come to use this unique moment in our history to change the trajectory of our energy future. Having the option on the table to own our own utility will open the doors to more positive partnerships with our existing energy producers and more possibilities for a new, innovative, vibrant energy economy for the future. For more information you may also wish to visit my blog, the city website at <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/energyfranchise/index.htm> and the Minneapolis Energy Options website at: <http://www.minneapolisenergyoptions.org>.

Ranked Choice Voting How-To Video. The City has produced a new video demonstrating how Ranked-Choice Voting works. You can find it here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ct70K5la5gk> as well as on the new Elections/RCV website, at: vote.minneapolismn.gov. This website is where the most current, accurate information will be posted throughout the election period. I expect it to be available in other languages soon. Our Voter Ambassadors will be using this and other resources in the months ahead to educate voters about how Ranked-Choice Voting works.

Youth Cabinet. In August I will be introducing a resolution that would formally create a Minneapolis Youth Cabinet. The cabinet would primarily be an internal workgroup charged with coordinating the City's role in implementing the Youth Coordinating Board Call to Action and Youth Compact, developing a framework for incorporating the needs of youth and families into more of the work of the City, supporting department efforts to incorporate youth and children in their goals, business planning and work, and fostering more opportunities for engaging neighborhood and community partners in supporting youth and families.

Feral Cat Management and Reduction. The final language for the Trap Neuter Release ordinance I have been working on has been completed and I will be requesting a hearing date September 11. The ordinance is intended to allow volunteers who are working with nonprofits to implement Trap Neuter Release programs, like those allowed in St. Paul and many other cities, to help us humanely and effectively manage the problem of feral cats and help reduce the numbers of cats living in feral cat colonies.

Dinkytown Greenway Opens. After years of planning, the Dinkytown Greenway is now open to bicyclists. The bike trail runs through the University of Minnesota's East Bank campus and, by connecting to the U of M Transitway, carries bike traffic from the northeast metro (Saint Paul, Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Roseville) across the Mississippi River. Next year's Bluff Street Trail project will

extend the Dinkytown Greenway under Interstate 35W and into downtown Minneapolis. Please join me this **Sunday, August 4**, for an opening celebration and ride. At noon riders will meet near the corner of Carter Avenue and Eckles Avenue in Saint Paul, on the campus lawn. We will ride the U of M Transitway west towards the Dinkytown Greenway. At **12:20** at Malcolm Ave SE, we will meet up with Mayor Rybak and hear a brief presentation from Omar Ansari, the founder of Surly Brewing Company, about development plans along this route. At **12:45** pm, there will be a grand opening celebration at the corner of Oak Street SE and 5th Street SE to formally open the Dinkytown Greenway. After the celebration, the bike ride will continue along the new greenway, through campus and across the Mississippi River to the site of next year's Bluff Street Trail project, which will complete the trail connection to downtown Minneapolis.

“No More Names” Rally. I attended a rally sponsored by Mayors Against Illegal Guns on July 31st in downtown, where people called for gun law changes at the state and national level to require universal background checks. At the rally, Sami Rahamim, whose father owned Accent and was slain in that shooting; and Carlee Soto, whose sister Victoria was killed in the Newtown massacre. Sami reported that “Since Newtown 7,551 people have been killed in the United States by gun violence.” That helped me remember that this is not just an issue because of mass shootings. North Minneapolis recently celebrated the life of slain toddler Terrell Mayes Junior, who was killed by a stray bullet (and whose killer has still not been caught): <http://kstp.com/article/stories/S3109896.shtml>.

Two MPD Officers Suspended. As you have likely heard, two Minneapolis Police officers, Shawn Powell and Brian Thole, have been suspended for recent behavior in Green Bay, Wisconsin. They are alleged to have used racist language after an incident involving two black men in a bar, and to have made “sexually offensive” comments about Police Chief Janee Harteau. It is worth noting that these particular officers are named in multiple lawsuits against the City of Minneapolis. These include the suit brought by Derryl Jenkins after he was beaten by MPD officers, which the City settled for \$235,000. I support the Chief’s decision to suspend these officers. Racism and sexism have no place in the MPD or any other City department.

Conservation District Ordinance. The Conservation District Ordinance amendment I have been working on for several months is nearly complete. The proposal would allow property owners and neighborhood advocates to identify historic resources to conserve and to define historic values and characteristics that the community is looking to preserve. If one third of the property owners within a proposed conservation district consent, they can apply to become a Conservation District and an Establishment Study can be completed. Design guidelines would be drafted as part of the study and at least two thirds of the property owners of tax parcels would need to give their consent before the matter would be taken up by the Heritage Preservation Commission and then referred to the City Council for approval. If approved, property owners in districts might need to apply for conservation certificates to make changes to their properties if that is stipulated in the guidelines. This is a very brief summary, so please let me know if you would like a copy of the proposed ordinance or more information and I would be happy to share it with you. Also, next month we will hold a larger community meeting to gather more input before the formal public hearing.

CenterPoint Agreement on Energy Goals. As a result of the work of the Minneapolis Energy Options campaign, the Council’s decision to hold a public hearing on creating municipal energy utilities, and CenterPoint Energy’s willingness to come to the table, CenterPoint and the campaign have revealed a list of commitments from the utility that could help Minneapolis meet our energy goals. These include:

- CenterPoint Energy has committed to pursue the City’s goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2025 and to assist all of its customers in reducing their energy consumption and the associated greenhouse gas emissions,
- On-bill financing for residential energy efficiency investments,
- A pilot comprehensive residential retrofit program featuring “hand holding” to identify potential energy-saving measures, assist customers with decision-making regarding implementation and contractor selection, and quality assurance inspections, possibly including a bulk contracting component,
- A comprehensive multifamily retrofit program,

- A study of energy savings potential and energy program participation specifically within the City of Minneapolis,
- CenterPoint Energy's support for state data privacy and disclosure policies that facilitate the use of customer energy usage data for purposes of tracking consumption against goals and encouraging greater conservation,
- Combined Heat and Power, which offers significant energy savings at a system level where there are both electric and thermal requirements but which is not currently well-incorporated into state policy,
- Renewable energy technologies such as solar thermal and biogas,
- Reporting to the City about the amount of natural gas leakage in the CenterPoint distribution system and the steps taken to address methane leakage on an annual basis, and information from CenterPoint's natural gas suppliers. (This is important because methane is more than 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas.)
- CenterPoint will work to meet the City's goals for hiring a more diverse workforce that better reflects the communities in Minneapolis.

Opus Development. I voted against the Opus Development application to rezone a large piece of land in Dinkytown from C1 to C3, to build a 6-story mixed-use building. In general, I support increasing residential density in Minneapolis, especially close to major job centers like downtown and the U of M. In this case, however, I had two major concerns. The first is that the Dinkytown Small Area Plan, which began in March and will be completed sometime this fall or winter, is not yet finished. This planning process is a good opportunity for Dinkytown stakeholders and the City to come to consensus about the level of density that is appropriate for Dinkytown, which parts of the area are worth preserving and which parts would be good to redevelop, and what the zoning should be to facilitate those goals. My second, related concern is that a decision by the Council to rezone this piece of land, before the Small Area Plan is complete, would give a "green light" to other developers to buy up and redevelop the rest of the four block "core" of Dinkytown. I do not think it would be wise to send that signal, especially before we've had the opportunity to finish our proactive land use plan. For more of my take on this project, please see my blog.

Franklin Avenue Bridge. Hennepin County is planning to substantially renovate the Franklin Avenue Bridge. The design process has begun, and designs have been presented to the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committees. There are currently two layouts, one with buffered bike lanes and one with a physically-protected bikeway, which is favored by the Bicycle Advisory Committee. The protected bikeway option will include a new way for westbound bicyclists to turn south onto Seabury and West River Pkwy, something that has been needed for a long time. In both designs, the bridge will have one auto lane in each direction except at the east end, where it will widen to two lanes in each direction for the intersection with East River Pkwy and 27th Ave SE as it does today. The bridge is on the National Historic Register, and this project will have to protect and even enhance the historic character of the bridge (for instance, by putting in railings more similar to the originals than the ones installed in the 1970s). The County will be reaching out to the Prospect Park and Seward neighborhoods for an introductory community meeting in the next few months, and I encourage you to stay informed.

Ryan Development Project Downtown. The City Council has approved a framework and directed staff to negotiate terms based on it (here: www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@clerk/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-110756.pdf) for participation in a large 5 block, development project near the Stadium in Downtown East. The blocks, now owned by the Star Tribune, currently consist of surface parking lots and three buildings. Ryan Companies is proposing to buy the land and construct one million square feet of office space in two 20-story office towers, a parking ramp of approximately 1,300 stalls approximately 320 housing units, approximately 40,000 square feet of retail space and a one –two block public park. City participation would include assuming a \$65 million dollar debt to help Ryan pay for the parking ramp and to purchase the park land from them. The debt would be paid back from parking fees. I did not support the framework in committee but after my amendment to force the developer to pay fair market value for the third of the land that they wanted to lock in at current prices passed I voted to support moving forward at the Council. I will still be watching this project very carefully and pushing hard to make sure that the investment results in a full

service park that meets the needs of area residents first and foremost, including those who live in the densest areas of nearby Cedar Riverside and could benefit greatly from more park amenities.

Community Oven. I have met with staff and community members to better understand and support efforts to get a community oven built in the Prospect Park East River Road area. So far several possible locations have been looked at, including one at Luxton Park and one on City-owned land at the green “oval” space near East Franklin and Bedford. It appears this use is currently not allowed on the “oval” but I planning to propose ordinance changes to make this a possibility.

Parking in Motley Area. Motley residents and City staff have agreed to try expand the parking restrictions to parking in Motley from 8am-midnight, seven days per week. These parking restrictions are necessary to prevent negative spillover effects from the U of M stadium, especially during the period in which the Vikings will play there.

Rezoning of Bruce Printing Building. The Council, with my support, has approved rezoning the former Bruce Printing property at 315 27th Ave SE to C3 (Community Activity Center) to allow for a K-12 school, restaurant and office.

10th Avenue Bridge. The Council has approved hiring SRF Consulting Group, Inc. to start work to rehab the deteriorated 10th Avenue SE River Bridge over the Mississippi River. Design work is scheduled to be completed early in 2014. Construction will begin in the summer of 2014 and is projected to be completed in the summer of 2015.

Five15 Project may be delayed. The City has received a letter from Dr. Bianca Fine asking that we postpone the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) process. Apparently she is considering reducing the number of affordable units. Therefore, the public hearing on this TIF request will move from August 6th to sometime in October. The notice on the City’s webpage (<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/public/>) will also be updated shortly.

Cedar Avenue Sidewalk Meeting. City and County staff are working to schedule a public meeting on August 29th, from 4-6pm, at the Brian Coyle Center to discuss the conversion of Cedar Avenue from a four-lane road to a three-lane road and the full reconstruction of the Cedar Avenue sidewalks in 2014. I will share the location once the meeting is set.

Apply to Serve on a Boards or Commission. There are openings on the Arts Commission, Police Conduct Oversight Commission, Police Conduct Review Panel, and the Minneapolis Telecommunications Network. To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@minneapolismn.gov.

Ward Office Hours. Every Tuesday morning I hold “Office Hours” in the Ward from 9:30-11:00am.

Please feel free to call for an appointment or just stop by.

1st Tuesdays, Hard Times Café (West Bank/University);

2nd Tuesdays, Muddsuckers Coffee, 1500 Como (SE Como);

3rd Tuesdays, Pratt School (Prospect Park);

4th Tuesdays, the Birchwood Cafe (Seward/Longfellow).

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