



Minneapolis
City of Lakes

Cam Gordon
City Council Member
Second Ward

350 South 5th Street - Room 301M
Minneapolis MN 55415

Office 612-673-2202
Fax 612-673-3250
Cell 612-296-0579

Email: cam.gordon@ci.minneapolis.mn.us

www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/ward2/

Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to the West Bank, 8-18-11

**Cam's next West Bank Office Hours:
Tuesday, September 6th, 9:30-11:00am
Hard Times Café, 1821 Riverside Ave**

Items:

- 1) Road Construction
- 2) West Bank Music Festival
- 3) Svea Triangle
- 4) State Budget Deal
- 5) Bicycle Master Plan
- 6) 2011 Budget Cuts
- 7) Managed Natural Landscape ordinance
- 8) Farmers Market ordinance
- 9) First City Electric Vehicle
- 10) Police and Fire Pensions
- 11) Openings on Boards and Commissions

- 1) Riverside Avenue construction continues, and a mill and overlay project is scheduled for August 18th and 19th on 19th Avenue S. If you would like to sign up for a regular email update on City construction activities in the neighborhood, please email Chris.Engelmann@minneapolismn.gov with Riverside Email Update in the subject line.
- 2) The West Bank Music Festival is Saturday, August 20th. My office worked with City staff to approve the closure of Cedar and coordinate emergency vehicle access with Fairview. I hope that the event will be very successful.
- 3) As part of the Riverside Avenue reconstruction project, the Svea Triangle green space at the intersection of Riverside and 8th St S has been transferred from the Park and Recreation Board to the City of Minneapolis, in trade for an easement near Ryan Lake on the Northside. From the discussions I have had with Public Works staff, I am confident that the Svea Triangle green space will be substantially improved by this change in management responsibility.
- 4) The budget deal between Governor Dayton and Republicans in control of the legislature is not as bad as it could have been for the people of Minneapolis, but it wasn't very good, either. The City was hit hard with a decrease in Local Government Aid and will be getting \$64 million instead of the \$87.5 million we are due under the state's own LGA formula. More importantly, due to the Republicans' unwillingness to raise taxes on the wealthiest Minnesotans, the budget that will be adopted essentially borrows the whole difference between the two sides' positions, approximately \$1.4 billion. This structurally unbalanced approach virtually assures that the state will continue to face major deficits in future years, with significant consequences for state services and for municipalities across the state.
- 5) The Council has passed the City's first ever Bicycle Master Plan. It was considerably improved by input from the new Bicycle Advisory Committee (or BAC), with four bike facility corridors throughout the city being added as a result of their advocacy. This outcome has also significantly strengthened the BAC itself. As we passed the plan, the Council also directed staff to work with the BAC on finalizing the recommendations they've made for an implementation plan, and return to the Council in November. For more information, please see my blog.

If you need this material in an alternative format please call Ahmed Muhumud at 612-673-2162 or email Ahmed.Muhumud@ci.minneapolis.mn.us

Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons may call 311 or 612-673-3000. TTY users may call 612-673-2157 or 612-673-2626.

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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, llama 612-673-2700;

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

- 6) Earlier this year, the Council passed a “plan B” budget for 2011, to prepare for the possibility that the State legislature would not follow its own Local Government Aid formula. We identified a “waterfall” of cuts that would be triggered if the State returned to us the same \$64 million in LGA that we received in 2010. Sadly, this preparation was prescient: the budget passed by the Governor and state legislature cuts Minneapolis by \$23.5 million. Among other things, this requires cuts to the Police and Fire departments, which together account for 46% of the discretionary General Fund, the part of the City budget supported by LGA. The total cut to the Fire Department in the waterfall is \$1.45 million. Had we been forced to make that cut in the beginning of this year, it would have equaled 17 firefighter positions; however, in order to achieve this level of savings when implemented today, it equals 44 firefighter positions. I believe that a cut of this magnitude is too deep and am supportive of the proposal that passed the Ways and Means Committee to transfer \$1.1 million from our Contingency fund to the Fire Department. I am concerned, however, because this transfer would eliminate 13 firefighter positions, including 10 layoffs, and bring our number of firefighter first responders to roughly 372, or 93 per shift. This is below the City Council approved number of 96 per shift. I am also concerned because our contingency, or emergency, fund is already lower than it should be with the need to also pay for unanticipated tornado-related costs, special elections and possible snow emergency plowing. I am working with my colleagues to find alternative ways to preserve firefighter positions. The needed cuts also include eliminating 9 police positions, (though due to attrition this will not result in any layoffs), and smaller reductions across all departments.
- 7) The Managed Natural Landscape ordinance I am authoring will be coming before the Regulatory Energy and Environment committee next Monday, **August 22nd**. If passed, it will allow our ordinances to catch up with the environmentally friendly practices being used by residents, including native prairie plantings and other purposeful, well-maintained yards that use something other than turf grass. For the first time, there will be the legal authority for inspections staff to allow grasses in yards over 8 inches in height. The ordinance will also help clarify the difference between turf grass lawns that are not being maintained and purposeful plantings. Staff will also be bringing forward some related process improvements, including allowing 14 days, rather than the usual 7, for property owners of ambiguous yards – those that might be either a managed natural landscape or a yard that is inadequately maintained – to communicate with the City about what the intent is for the yard in question. I see this as a major step forward in allowing and encouraging residents to use more ecologically sustainable plantings in their yards, with all the attendant improvements to storm water management, biodiversity, air quality and more.
- 8) Since fall of last year, my staff has been working with farmers market managers and City staff on a comprehensive revision of the City’s farmers market ordinances. I have introduced this ordinance change, and expect it to come forward for a public hearing in September. This ordinance would make many overdue changes to the farmers market regulatory system, including:
- Creating our first-ever “Farmers Market” license type, which would require that at least 60% of market vendors would be selling food they had grown themselves.
 - Codifying the existing “Mini Markets” in ordinance.
 - Creating a new “Art and Produce” market type, which would include both self-made arts and crafts and fresh food.
- I’m excited to be bringing these changes forward, and I’m optimistic that, given the support of both City staff and the community, my colleagues will support them as well.
- 9) The City will unveil our first next-generation all-electric vehicle on September 22nd. In partnership with the Drive Electric Minnesota Coalition and with financial support from Xcel Energy, the Public Works Fleet Services Division has purchased one of the nation’s first all-electric Ford Transit Connect vans. This van will replace a Ford F250 as the parts runner truck for Fleet Services. At 20,000 miles a year, this is one of the City’s most heavily used light duty vehicles. Anticipated fuel savings for this zero emissions vehicle over the F250 is in excess of \$40,000 over the next 8 years. I’m excited to see the City taking the first step towards the electrification of our road transportation system.
- 10) During the special session, legislation passed that would consolidate our old city Police and Fire pension programs. The agreement, outlined in the legislation, would not be effective until January 21 and still needs to be approved by the members of the programs and the City Council. It appears that this bill is generous to the pension recipients and offers slightly better terms Minneapolis tax payers than the previously passed legislation that was not signed by the Governor. This has the potential to save Minneapolis taxpayers \$21 million next year, millions more over the long term, end a long drawn out litigation process and stabilize payments in the next several years until, eventually, the programs will be completely managed by the state’s Public Employee Retiree Association. In the months ahead I will be carefully reviewing the specifics of the legislation and watching what the pension program members do to prepare for making my final decision on this when it will be voted on by the Council sometime in the fall.
- 11) There are openings on the Latino Advisory Committee and Planning Commission. To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.