

June 2007 Eastside News

Dear Neighbors,

It's been an interesting few months on the Council. We passed a local purchasing policy, which will help the City support local business by purchasing from them. We moved forward with a project I've been working on for some time now, a program to make Metro unlimited ride passes available to small employers, just like they are to the UW, MATC and other large employers. We also passed the Neighborhood Conservation District Ordinance, which will allow us to preserve certain distinctive physical features of our neighborhoods. And, of course, we've also considered various development projects, alcohol licenses, and public works projects – all part of the daily business of running the City.

I've been working on traffic calming in several neighborhoods and on trying to address a few "problem houses" that some of you have alerted me to. I'm also continuing to work with the Water Utility on a replacement for Well #3 and on overall communication and water quality issues. Watch for announcements of the upcoming meeting (rescheduled due to the threat of bad weather) on water conservation. I hope you'll join your neighbors to talk about what the City can do to help protect our aquifer. I'm also focusing on transportation issues, both on strengthening our bus system and on making it easier to access our neighborhood by bike. The City recently broke ground on the Sherman Flyer and opened underpasses along the Yahara River at Johnson Street and E. Washington Avenue; more work lies ahead to improve biking on the east and north sides of Madison.

There are two things that will be before the Council in the next several months that I'd like your input on. The first is the Nuisance Abatement Ordinance, which is proposed to serve as a mechanism for the Police and Housing Inspection to address a small number of properties in the City in which there are a high number of police calls and/or building code violations. It would allow the Police and/or the Building Inspector to classify a property as a "nuisance" if there are a certain number of incidents in a certain period of time at that address. Once identified, if the property owner doesn't address the problem, he or she would be subject to fines. The ordinance would require property owners to come up with an "abatement plan" to deal with the nuisance activity or building code violations. Many people have told me they support this concept and want a way to address properties that are chronic problems but are concerned that this could lead to retaliation against tenants, increased eviction rates, denial of housing and that it could complicate domestic violence situations. The latest draft of this proposal should be available soon. Please contact me if you'd like to get a copy or if you have thoughts on this issue.

The second thing I'd like your opinion on is a proposal to limit who can serve as poll workers and others who assist the City Clerk in running our elections. The proposal can be found at <http://legistar.cityofmadison.com/DetailReport/?key=7518>. Click on the "legislative text" link. There are also several memos attached. I'm concerned that the proposal regulates a list of people instead of actions they – or others not covered by the proposal – might take. It makes me uncomfortable to focus on limiting who can work on elections based on their political affiliation rather than focusing on the process that keeps our elections safe and fair. I'd like to hear from you if you have any concerns about the elections process or if this proposal would impact you. We need to do all we can to protect the integrity – actual and perceived – of our elections, but we also need to do it right, and your input would be very useful on this otherwise-insider-baseball legislation.

Speaking of baseball, I hope you'll make it to a Mallards game this summer and otherwise enjoy Warner Park and all of our green spaces in Madison.

Thank you to all of you who have contacted me with questions or issues in the past few months. I hope you'll all be in touch when something City-related is on your mind. And I hope you're all enjoying summer!

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