

## **District 13 November 2007 Update**

Dear Neighbors:

I wanted to give district residents an update on the City Council's three-day budget marathon and let people know how I voted on few key issues. There were over 70 budget amendments, and I am happy to talk anyone who is interested in any of them but here are a few highlights:

**South Madison Library Branch:** I sponsored a successful amendment to increase the library hours from 45.5 hours (tied for last) to 58 hours per week. I am really proud to have participated in this effort that was jump-started by a petition drive by South Madison residents, many of whom waited patiently for hours to testify in favor of the library. THANK YOU!!

**Safe School Crossings:** My amendment to improve crosswalk markings in school zones passed. I proposed \$25,000 to begin marking crosswalks with 'continental striping' (think the "Abbey Road" album cover) with isometric paint. In working on this amendment, I learned that this type of striping is the most visible and that isometric paint is more durable than regular paint. It will take three years to complete the striping citywide, but I hope it will make drivers more aware of the need to stop for pedestrians especially in school zones.

**Sister Cities:** I heard from many constituents about how important this money is to the program is and voted to continue the city's \$10,000 funding.

**Planning Councils:** I heard from a number of South Madison residents and voted in favor of continuing funding for the South Madison Planning Council, which principally serves the Bram's Addition, Capitol View Heights, and Bay Creek neighborhoods.

**Police:** The council voted to add 30 new police officers. I co-sponsored an alternative amendment that was covered extensively in the press and I want to let neighbors about some of the thought that went into it. The alternative amendment would have had us hire 18 police officers immediately. The other 12 officers in the Mayor's budget could have then been hired after we received the police staffing study that is currently underway and a financial analysis of how the additional police costs will funded after 2010.

I started out absolutely in favor of adding all 30 officers, but grew more concerned about the fact that the officers are being paid for by a one-time windfall as the result of closing two very profitable Tax Increment Financing districts (TIF). That money will be spent in 2008 and 2009, but we don't know how we will pay for the new police and existing city services without significant property tax increases after the TIF money is gone. I then spoke with

constituents who made some good points and asked some tough questions (paraphrased here):

“If we add the 30 new officers, does that definitely mean the police will come and break-up loud house parties when I call at 2:00 am?”

“Someone stole a bike from our garage and we used the Police Department’s on-line form to make a report. It didn’t work. If we add more police, does that mean an officer will come and take a report if something like that happens again?”

“I have lived on the South Side for decades, I raised my kids here, I pay taxes and contribute to my community. We have had a serious crime issue for decades. Why did it take huge public meetings in other parts of the city for our leaders to take this issue seriously?”

The amendment failed and I still don’t know all the answers, but I am glad to represent a district with so many thoughtful residents.

I am also thankful to my family for putting up with me after two very late nights and the one all-nighter that it took to get the budget done. Also, many thanks to our babysitter Zoe who spent two nights on our couch since Ron was in Houston on a business trip for two of the three “budget nights.”

### **Harriet: My Hero**

Three long nights discussing the budget, aldermanic puffery (myself included), and gamesmanship definitely took a toll on me...(let’s just say I am not particularly pleasant at 4 am after a few nights of sleep deprivation) and likely undermined some people’s confidence in city government.

But Harriet changed all that.

I was a little down after all the budget stuff and went to the library to request some books...a quick two days later, Harriet “the automated library voice” called to let me know the books were ready to be picked up. AWESOME!!

So I read “Kitchen Confidential: Adventures in the Culinary Underbelly” by Anthony Bourdain. It’s a good read chronicling the life of a chef in New York with some Hunter S. Thompson-like riffs. I am just finishing “Flower Confidential: The Good, the Bad, and Beautiful in the Business of Flowers” by Amy Stewart. It is a bit plodding at times but definitely provides some interesting insights into the worldwide flower production and distribution business.

Thank you Harriet.

## **Announcements**

Now that the budget is behind us, the City of Madison is about to start a very important effort to update our economic development plan. Here is the schedule of the upcoming public listening sessions and I hope to see neighbors at one or more of them:

### Listening Session 1:

Targeted toward any business, non-profit and the general public  
Wednesday, November 28th, 2007, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
Alliant Energy Center - Exhibition Hall, Monona Room  
1919 Alliant Energy Center Way

### Listening Session 2:

Targeted toward small businesses  
Thursday, November 29th, 2007, 8 a.m. – 10 a.m.  
Overture Center, 201 State Street

### Listening Session 3:

Targeted toward medium and large businesses  
Thursday, November 29th, 2007, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.  
Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Drive

### Listening Session 4:

Targeted toward "high tech" businesses of all sizes  
Thursday, December 6th, 2007, 1:30 p.m. - 3:30pm  
MG&E Innovation Center, Conference Room 50, 510 Charmany Dr.

I was fortunate to enjoy Thanksgiving with family and friends. I have a lot to be grateful for this holiday season and I hope you do too!!

Julia Kerr, Alder  
Madison Common Council  
District 13  
Phone: 260-2661  
Email: [district13@cityofmadison.com](mailto:district13@cityofmadison.com)