

= Gary Schiff =

Gary Schiff ( born February 3 , 1972 , as Gary J. Schiffhauer ) is an American politician and activist who represented Ward 9 on the Minneapolis City Council . A member of the Minnesota Democratic @-@ Farmer @-@ Labor Party ( DFL ) , he was first elected in 2001 and re @-@ elected in 2005 and 2009 . Prior to his political career , Schiff was involved with a variety of activist groups and causes ranging from human rights with the Human Rights Campaign , to historic preservation with Save Our Shubert .

During his city council tenure , Schiff worked to ease ordinances prohibitive to small businesses , especially microbreweries , and strongly advocated against a publicly funded stadium for the Minnesota Vikings . In January 2013 , Schiff began a campaign for Mayor of Minneapolis in the 2013 election but after an unsuccessful DFL endorsement convention , dropped out of the race and backed an opponent ( the eventual winner ) in mid @-@ June . His third and final term on the City Council ended in January 2014 .

= = Early life = =

Schiff was born Gary J. Schiffhauer on February 3 , 1972 , and grew up the youngest of six children in Western New York State . In 1990 , the American Civil Liberties Union represented Schiff after he graduated from Lewiston @-@ Porter High School in his hometown of Youngstown , New York . According to The Buffalo News , Schiff had painted a mural along the school 's stairwell that referenced " drugs , safe sex , AIDS and racism " in the style of artist Keith Haring . In September of that year , the school 's superintendent , Walter S. Polka , decided that parts of the mural 's text were objectionable . The American Civil Liberties Union became involved in an extended legal fight over the constitutionality of Polka 's censorship , and a New York Supreme Court Justice sided with the Lewiston @-@ Porter School Board . In 1991 , the school board voted 5 @-@ 1 to paint over the mural . The board cited Schiff 's involvement in a recent ACT @-@ UP demonstration at the school ? where demonstrators gave condoms and safe sex literature to students ? as a major influence on their decision .

As part of a transition that included moving from Youngstown to Minneapolis to attend college at the University of Minnesota , Schiff shortened his name from the original Schiffhauer as a result of his parents ' shame and refusal to acknowledge his sexuality in the small conservative town of Youngstown NY where the family attended church in a conservative Roman Catholic Parish ( St. Bernard 's , Youngstown , NY ) . However , Robert and Rita Schiffhauer , Gary 's parents , soon joined the PFLAG Chapter in nearby Buffalo , NY in order to understand and support their son which they continued to do throughout their lives . Schiff 's official public statement is that he shortened his name in an effort to move at the memories of bullying that he said made his youth " an act of survival " . In October 1992 , he and six other students protested against the Reserve Officers ' Training Corps ( ROTC ) and its compliance with a longstanding ban on homosexuals in the military . The seven protesters interrupted a meeting of the University Board of Regents , demanded the expulsion of the ROTC from campus , and handcuffed themselves to the Regents ' chairs . Wearing signs that read " \$ old , " suggesting that their human rights had been traded for Federal grant money , Schiff and the six other students were arrested by University Police and each charged with misdemeanors .

From 1993 to 1995 , Schiff directed the Progressive Student Leadership Exchange ( PLSE ) , a program modeled on the Civil Rights Movement 's Freedom Summer . The Human Rights Campaign ( HRC ) took interest in the program , and invited Schiff to direct it as the newly named " Youth College for Campaign Training " in Washington , D.C. The HRC @-@ funded program invited people aged 18 ? 24 to participate in workshops , and sent the participants to " target states " where they worked in groups as campaign staff members . The program was still in operation as late as 2006 .

After graduating in 1994 with a B.A. in women 's studies , Schiff moved to Washington , D.C. to work with the Human Rights Campaign . He returned to Minneapolis to work with Progressive

Minnesota , " a grassroots group focused on community organizing and electoral politics . " In December 1997 , he became involved in a fight to save the Shubert Theater , a former vaudeville house on " Block E " in downtown Minneapolis , after the Minneapolis City Council approved a redevelopment plan that called for the theater 's demolition . Within days , Schiff organized " Save Our Shubert , " a grassroots effort to preserve the theater . After eight months , during which time Save our Shubert acted as a media contact , lobbied the city council , and " kept the Shubert in the public eye " , the Minneapolis City Council voted 9 @-@ 3 to move the theater to a space adjacent to the Hennepin Center for the Arts at a cost of \$ 3 @.@ 9 million .

= = Minneapolis City Council = =

Schiff , at the time working as a teaching assistant in the University of Minnesota 's Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs on his way to earning a master 's degree in urban planning , took a leave of absence to run for a seat on the Minneapolis City Council against Michael Guest and Kathy Thurber in 2001 . He won unanimous DFL endorsement on September 11 , 2001 and , in a race that was overshadowed by the 2001 terrorist attacks , he ran against Lucky Rosenbloom , an African @-@ American Republican . Schiff received the endorsement of the Star Tribune , which noted his " first @-@ hand knowledge " of light rail systems in other U.S. cities . Elected by a large majority in November 2001 , Schiff became one of seven newly elected members on the 13 @-@ member city council , joining two Green Party members , two other openly gay council members , one African @-@ American council member , and four women . He was sworn into office on December 17 , 2001 , earlier than his fellow councilmembers , when Thurber resigned from her seat to assume the position of deputy director of Perpich Center for Arts Education .

= = First term ( 2001 ? 05 ) = = =

In his first term , Schiff sponsored and cosponsored numerous legal reforms to the Minneapolis Zoning Code that reduced bureaucratic obstacles for small businesses and housing developers , including a measure that permitted sidewalk cafes to use permanent outdoor furniture and a change in city zoning code that facilitated the construction of denser and more affordable housing . He also sponsored an ordinance to add domestic partnerships to the Zoning Code 's definition of " family " in terms of housing .

In 2003 , with colleagues Barbara Johnson and Sandy Colvin Roy , Schiff developed a last @-@ minute plan to restore \$ 2 million in proposed cuts to the Minneapolis Fire and Police Departments , following a \$ 26 million cut from Local Government Aid by former Governor Tim Pawlenty . That same year , he sponsored an ordinance that effectively blocked police officers , city inspectors , and other city employees from inquiring about a resident 's immigration status . The ordinance forbids police officers from arresting a suspect solely on the grounds of a suspected immigration status violation .

= = Second term ( 2005 ? 09 ) = = =

In July 2004 , the Minneapolis City Council passed a ban on indoor smoking in bars , restaurants , pool halls , and bowling alleys by a 12 @-@ 1 margin . In March 2005 , the ban took effect alongside other indoor smoking bans passed by other cities in the Minneapolis @-@ St. Paul metropolitan area . Subsequently , during the 2005 Minneapolis City Council elections , a write @-@ in candidate named Dave Shegstad received 10 percent of the ninth ward vote under a " Smoke Out Gary " campaign slogan ? a reference to Schiff 's role as a co @-@ author of the smoking ban . 59 percent of voters re @-@ elected Schiff to a second term ; his main opponent , Green Party candidate David Bicking , won 30 percent of the vote .

In 2006 , Schiff sponsored eliminating a cap on taxi licenses in Minneapolis . The move angered some local taxi drivers , who noted that an attending increase in licenses would lead to greater competition in the local taxicab business . The City Council passed the cap lift , and the number of

Minneapolis taxis doubled between 2010 and 2012 .

Beginning in 2008 , Schiff and other city leaders contended with local ramifications of the 2008 @-@ 2012 global recession , which included spate of foreclosures in economically distressed neighborhoods . In April 2008 , the city council approved a pilot mortgage assistance program called Minneapolis Advantage . The program , which passed the council 10 @-@ 2 , offered forgivable loans to homebuyers who were interested in properties on the same block as foreclosed or city @-@ owned properties within targeted neighborhoods . Schiff argued that the initiative was not targeted enough to have the designed effect and voted against it , along with fellow councilmember Paul Ostrow .

The city also strictly regulated non @-@ motorized pedicabs ; it first permitted the bicycle @-@ powered taxis in 1984 , but there were no active pedicab licenses in the city by 2008 . Schiff proposed eliminating some restrictions , and the city council passed ordinances allowing pedicabs to operate on downtown streets , downtown bridges , and on the Nicollet Mall , at any time except the morning and evening rush hours . In October 2011 , when the city permitted pedicabs to operate during rush hours ( with new safety regulations ) , eight licensed pedicab companies operated forty cabs in the downtown area .

= = = Third term ( 2009 ? 13 ) = = =

In February 2012 , a reporter for the Minnesota Daily wrote that Schiff is " possibly the most active and popular City Council member " and noted that 60 percent of Ward 9 voters reelected him to a third term in 2009 .

An avid supporter of microbrewing in Minneapolis , Schiff sponsored the " Brew Beer Here " ordinance that allowed the sale of 64 @-@ ounce " growlers " of beer on Minneapolis brewery premises . Passed in August 2010 , the ordinance facilitated brewery operation within Minneapolis city limits and led to the opening of Harriet Brewing Company , the first Minneapolis brewery to open in decades . With colleague Elizabeth Gidden , Schiff co @-@ sponsored the " Surly Bill , " an ordinance that permits breweries to sell pints of their products on @-@ site . Schiff also proposed eliminating zoning constraints against establishments serving alcohol within 300 feet of a house of worship outside of the downtown area . The ordinance change was inspired by a struggle between Rob Miller , a brewer interested in opening a " pico brewery " called Dangerous Man Brewing in Northeast Minneapolis , and the church of Saints Cyril and Methodius Church , located across the street from the brewery 's proposed location . Citing his work to ease ordinances prohibitive to the microbrewing industry , Twin Cities Business named Schiff the most business @-@ friendly city councilor in Minneapolis in 2012 .

In 1997 , before he became a member of the city council , Schiff co @-@ authored an amendment to the City of Minneapolis Charter that mandated a voter referendum on city stadium subsidies that cost taxpayers over \$ 10 million . As of 2009 , the Minnesota Vikings were moving forward on a \$ 870 million plan to rebuild a downtown stadium on the site of the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome . The team also considered building a new stadium in other cities , including Anoka , Minnesota and Los Angeles , California . Though supportive of the Vikings remaining in Minneapolis in 2012 , Schiff became an outspoken critic of the financing plan for the stadium when it came to a vote before the Minneapolis City Council , in part because it bypassed the charter amendment . Schiff also argued that the plan 's estimated cost to Minneapolis taxpayers , cited at \$ 150 million in construction costs , failed to account for interest , maintenance costs , and upgrades over the course of the stadium 's expected 30 @-@ year lifespan . In a Star Tribune editorial , Schiff quoted figures presented by the city 's chief financial officer , Kevin Carpenter , which estimated a cumulative , 30 @-@ year cost that could range from \$ 675 million to \$ 890 million . Despite Schiff 's objections , the Minneapolis City Council approved the stadium financing 7 @-@ 6 . Subsequently , the football team moved forward with plans to demolish the Metrodome and rebuild a new stadium on the site , and Governor Mark Dayton signed a financing plan approved by the legislature .

= = Mayoral bid ( 2013 ) = =

Schiff had been considering running for mayor of Minneapolis in the 2013 Minneapolis mayoral election as early as June 2012 , and stated that his ultimate decision would not be contingent upon whether Mayor R.T. Rybak opted to run for another term . Speaking from the Harriet Brewing tap room on January 29 , 2013 , Schiff announced his official candidacy for the position . On the same day , he also held an event in the Dinkytown area near the University of Minnesota with rapper Brother Ali to kick off his campaign . Schiff was the second City Councilmember to announce his candidacy after Betsy Hodges of Ward 13 , and Don Samuels of Ward 5 announced his candidacy later .

The University of Minnesota 's Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs hosted the first mayoral debate on March 27 , with Schiff among the five declared candidates who were seeking the DFL nomination . A week later , on April 4 , Schiff took part in the city 's second mayoral debate , this time located at a Kingfield @-@ neighborhood church . During the proceedings , he pledged that he would abide by the DFL 's endorsement , making him the sole candidate to vow so among the five candidates seeking the endorsement at the time . Schiff also participated in the city 's first mayoral debate dealing specifically with issues concerning Minneapolis 's Somali population , an event that took place on May 31 and was hosted at a Somali restaurant on Lake Street . Schiff received endorsements from the Minneapolis Firefighters Union , state representative Karen Clark , and former Vikings punter Chris Kluwe , among others .

At the DFL endorsement convention , Schiff came in third place behind Mark Andrew and Hodges during the first two rounds of voting but was denied a place on the third round ballot after failing to meet a minimum vote threshold during round two . When Schiff backed Hodges with the intention , according to the Star Tribune , of preventing Andrew from receiving the 60 % of votes needed to win the endorsement , he lost the support of the Minneapolis Firefighters Union . The convention concluded with no winner and , because no one was endorsed , Schiff stated that he would remain in the race . His campaign manager , Mark Warren , left Schiff 's campaign shortly after the convention and a few days later , he declared an end to his bid for mayor and announced that he would campaign actively for Hodges .

= = = Post @-@ mayoral bid = = =

Schiff did not run for reelection in the City Council elections in 2013 . Activist and communications specialist Alondra Cano won his seat with over 47 percent of the vote and was sworn into office on January 6 , 2014 . On July 1 , 2014 , Schiff took over as president of the Council on Crime and Justice , an organization with the goal of guaranteeing " equal justice and improved public safety at the same time " .

= = Personal life = =

An avid cyclist , Schiff lives in the Corcoran neighborhood of South Minneapolis . He sits on the board of In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre and has served as co @-@ chair of the capital campaign of the Little Earth for United Tribes . Schiff is gay and does not eat gluten .

= = Electoral history = =