



The Thomas Connection

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Building Bridges, Finding Solutions

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The Newsletter of Ward 5 Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr.

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THOMAS PROVIDES REMARKS AT WDCEP LECTURE

On March 25, 2011, Councilmember Thomas provided remarks as part of the Washington, DC Economic Partnership's Studio Speaker Lecture Series. The discussion series, which is geared toward the business community, features candid and thought-provoking conversations with the District's most compelling leaders, thinkers, newsmakers, and authors. Joining the councilmember on March 25 were Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development nominee Victor Hoskins and Office of Planning Director Harriet Tregoning.

Past events have included conversations with DC government officials and business leaders covering topics such as economic development, the DC Revenue Bond Program, sustainability, walkable urbanity, the state of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), the creative economy, the state of retail in the District, and the nonprofit community.

At the March 25th event, Councilmember Thomas discussed his new role as chair of the Council's Committee on Economic Development and his vision to shape economic development into community development. "In tight fiscal times like this, we need to prioritize which economic development projects

will receive District funding. For me, the litmus test is how many jobs a project will create and the level of commitment to hiring District residents.

THOMAS BILL WOULD CREATE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FUND

At the Council's March 1, 2011 legislative session, Councilmember Thomas introduced a bill to enhance, expand, and assist local business development. Councilmembers Michael Brown and Marion Barry co-introduced the legislation.

The Business Development Enterprise Fund Establishment Act of 2011 calls for the creation of a fund within the DC Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD) to pay for programs such as retail strategy assistance, career development, and Certified Business Enterprise assistance. All programs paid for through the fund would supplement, not replace, existing DSLBD offerings and services. Individuals, associations, corporations, partnerships, neighborhood and civic groups, and other government entities would be able to contribute to the fund.

A number of states have established business enterprise funds, including Texas, Nebraska, Colorado, and Maryland. Texas, for example, has used its enterprise fund to finance community development projects, job training programs, and business incentives. The District, however, would be at the vanguard of creating an enterprise fund that focuses on small, local business development.

"It is vital that we promote our small, local business community and establish new, cost-effective programs to assist them in being competitive," stated Thomas. "This bill creates an opportunity to enhance our current government-sponsored small business offerings without incurring a budgetary impact."



Thomas provided remarks at a March 25, 2011 WDCEP lecture attended by more than 150 people.

COUNCILMEMBER'S APRIL-AUGUST 2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday, April 25	Easter Egg Hunt
Monday, August 22	Back-to-School Day
Saturday, August 27	Harry Thomas, Sr. Day

WARD 5 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EXPO DRAWS HUNDREDS

Councilmember Thomas sponsored his 5th annual Ward 5 Community Development Expo on March 12, 2011. The event was held at Gallaudet University's Kellogg Conference Center, and more than 250 residents and small business owners attended.

The morning session of the Expo featured remarks from Victor Hoskins, nominee for the position of Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development. It also included panel discussions on the significant retail development projects planned for Ward 5 and how to balance economic development with the goal of keeping Ward 5's neighborhoods walkable and pedestrian friendly. Steve Moore, President of the Washington, DC Economic Partnership moderated the panel on retail projects, which included updates on Rhode Island Station, South Campus, and the Shops at Dakota Crossing. Harriet Tregoning, Director of the DC Office of Planning, moderated the discussion on transportation, which included transportation experts RJ Eldridge of Toole Design Group, Scott Kubly, Associate Director with the District's Department of Transportation, and Cheryl Cort, Policy Director with the Coalition for Smarter Group

For the past two years, the Ward 5 Expo has featured a small business showcase to highlight the range of unique, small businesses that are located within the ward. More than 40 small businesses exhibited their goods and services.

Councilmember Thomas also released the Ward 5 Business Directory at the Expo. The directory is a joint project between the Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Office of Councilmember Thomas.



The March 12, 2011 Ward 5 Expo included a panel discussion on transportation and economic development.

TROUT REPORT ON PARKS CONTRACTS RELEASED

In his role as Chairman of the Council's Special Committee on the Investigation of Capital Projects of the Department of Parks and Recreation, Councilmember Thomas publicly released Special Counsel Robert Trout's investigative report on March 14, 2011.

The investigation found no wrongdoing on the part of the Mayor and determined that the selection of Banneker Ventures was reasonable. However, the investigation concluded that the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) operated "under the assumption that Banneker would end up with the project contract." The investigation also determined that the rationale for transferring the capital project funds from DPR through DMPED to the D.C. Housing Authority (DCHE), or the selection of Banneker, "did not hold up under close scrutiny."

"On behalf of the Special Committee, I thank Mr. Trout and his law firm, Trout Cacheris PLLC, for the many hours of pro bono work dedicated to this matter," said Councilmember Thomas.

DC WATER RATE INCREASE DISCUSSED AT WARD 5 TOWN HALL MEETING

Councilmember Thomas joined with DC Water General Manager George Hawkins on March 22, 2011 to host a Ward 5 town hall meeting at Luke C. Moore High School to discuss the authority's water quality, construction projects, customer service, and proposed 2012 rate increase, which will add about \$6 per month to the average residential customer's bill. DC Water will hold a public hearing for its 2012 proposed rates on Wednesday, May 11, 2011, 6:30 pm at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, 777 N. Capitol Street, NE.



Councilmember Thomas and DC Water General Manager George Hawkins held a joint Ward 5 town hall meeting on March 22, 2011.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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