



The Thomas Connection

February 2010

Building Bridges, Finding Solutions

Volume 4, Issue 2

In this Issue....

Council Questions Xmas Eve Payment to Banneker Ventures

Work on Arboretum Playground Underway

Thomas Calls for Investigation of Chancellor's Inflammatory Statements

Thomas Celebrates Birthday of Oldest Washingtonian

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

COUNCIL QUESTIONS XMAS EVE PAYMENT TO BANNEKER VENTURES

Ward 5 Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr. expressed shock and disappointment at a January 8, 2010 oversight hearing when discussing the DC Housing Authority's \$2.5 million disbursement to Banneker Ventures on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2009.

"This payment is troublesome for a number of reasons," stated Councilmember Thomas. The Banneker contract was never approved by the Council, and on December 15, 2009, the Council voted unanimously to shift management responsibility of Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) projects from Banneker Ventures to the District's Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization (OPEFM). The Housing Authority did not notify the Council of the disbursement, which occurred during the Council's holiday recess.

Through their questioning at the January 8 hearing, Councilmember Thomas and his colleagues determined that the check to Banneker Ventures was issued outside the Housing Authority's regular disbursement cycle, which requires checks to be cut on the first and 15th days of the month. Testimony at the January 8th roundtable also revealed that the check to Banneker Ventures was issued while the Housing Authority's chief financial officer was on vacation, and that an emergency Board meeting by a Housing Authority subsidiary was held via conference call on Christmas Eve to authorize the check.

"I am disappointed in the leadership of the DC Housing Authority and its decision to make this payment to Banneker Ventures, given the toxicity surrounding the issuance of the contract. "This is poor stewardship of public dollars. We deserve better from our public servants, and I will continue to use my oversight capabilities to ensure that happens " stated Councilmember Thomas.

WORK ON ARBORETUM PLAYGROUND UNDERWAY

On January 23, 2010, Councilmember Thomas participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the installation of new playground equipment at the Arboretum Recreation Center, located at 2412 Rand Place, NE. Councilmember Thomas was joined by Mayor Adrian M. Fenty, DC Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) Interim Director Jesus Aguirre, and Ward 5 community leaders and residents.

In his remarks at the groundbreaking, Councilmember Thomas pointed to the active involvement of Arboretum neighborhood civic leaders and residents in realizing the much-needed improvements to the recreation center. "The Arboretum community played a pivotal role in communicating the critical need for these upgrades, and I thank them for their active involvement," said Councilmember Thomas.

"It is essential that we, as a City, provide our residents with the quality facilities they need to engage in activities that promote a healthy lifestyle. With the work underway at the Arboretum Recreation Center, we are one step further along that path," said Thomas.



Councilmember Thomas participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the installation of new playground equipment at the Arboretum Recreation Center on January 23, 2010.

COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS' 2010 WARD 5 EVENTS*

January 30	Ward 5 Leadership Meeting
March 6	Ward 5 Expo
April 5	Ward 5 Easter Event
September 3	Harry Thomas, Sr. Day
September 25	Ward 5 Leadership Meeting
October 29	Halloween – Recreation Centers
November 22	Thanksgiving Turkey Give-Away
December 16	Ward 5 Holiday Open House
December 18	Breakfast With Santa

**Dates subject to change.*

THOMAS CALLS FOR INVESTIGATION OF CHANCELLOR'S INFLAMMATORY STATEMENTS

On January 27, 2010, Ward 5 Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr. held a joint press conference with his colleagues Ward 8 Councilmember Marion Barry and At-Large Councilmember Michael Brown regarding the inflammatory statements Chancellor Rhee made during a recent interview regarding the 266 DC teachers who were dismissed as part of a Reduction in Force in October 2009. In the February issue of *Fast Company* magazine, the Chancellor is quoted as saying "I got rid of teachers who had hit children, who had had sex with children, who had missed 78 days of school. Why wouldn't we take those things into consideration?"

Prior to the publication of Chancellor Rhee's statements in *Fast Company*, Councilmember Thomas met with more than a dozen of the dismissed teachers to talk about their circumstances and options. He expects to continue these meetings, which will now likely include a discussion about how to ensure that the hard-working, law-abiding teachers who have been RIFed are not wrongly tarnished by Chancellor Rhee's statements.

"I'm disappointed by the Chancellor's lack of judgment in making these comments," stated Thomas. "The Council will use all tools at its disposal to investigate these allegations, and I will be asking the US Attorney to substantiate the claims of abuse."



Councilmember Thomas held a press conference with Councilmembers Marion Barry and Michael Brown on January 27, 2010.

THOMAS CELEBRATES BIRTHDAY OF OLDEST WASHINGTONIAN

Councilmember Thomas joined with the family and friends of Eddy L. Williams to celebrate her 110th birthday on January 4, 2010. Ms. Williams, a resident of Ward 5 for more than 40 years, is the oldest living person in Washington, DC.

In his remarks to Ms. Williams and others attending the event, Councilmember Thomas noted his commitment to the senior residents of Ward 5 and across the city. As part of that commitment, Thomas introduced a bill to increase the amount of pension or annuity income excluded from the computation of income subject to taxation by the District of Columbia. A hearing on the bill is expected soon.

Specifically, the bill: 1) raises from \$3,000 to \$10,000 the maximum annual exclusion for military retired pay, pension income or annuity income from the DC or federal government for persons who are 62 to 64 years of age by the end of the taxable year; and 2) creates a maximum annual exclusion of \$20,000 for military retired pay, pension income or annuity income from the DC or federal government for persons who are 65 years of age or older by the end of the taxable year. These changes would bring the District's taxation of pension and annuity income more into line with those of other local jurisdictions.

Councilmember Thomas also remarked on Ms. Williams' lengthy tenure as a DC resident. Originally from Florida, Ms. Williams moved to the District during Harry S. Truman's presidency. "I am honored to celebrate Ms. Williams' birthday with her," stated Councilmember Thomas. "Ms. Williams has given much to Ward 5 during her many years as a resident. She is a role model to us all."



Councilmember Thomas celebrated the 110th birthday of Eddy L. Williams on January 4, 2010.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

OFFICE OF WARD 5 COUNCILMEMBER
HARRY "TOMMY" THOMAS, JR.
1350 PENN. AVE., NW SUITE 107
TEL. NO. 202.724.8028
WEBSITE: WWW.HARRYTHOMAS5.COM