



The Thomas Connection

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Building Bridges, Finding Solutions

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

THOMAS INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO TIGHTEN PROCESS USED TO SELL DISTRICT-OWNED PROPERTY

Ward 5 Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr. co-introduced with Ward 8 Councilmember Marion Barry on December 11, 2007 two bills designed to tighten the process by which the government disposes of District-owned property.

Bill 17-0527, the "Public Land Surplus Standards Amendment Act of 2007," amends existing city regulations to create standards that must be met prior to classifying public property as surplus. The bill also establishes and empowers an Advisory Committee to create criteria for surplus public property, including the disposition of school properties.

Specifically, Bill 17-0527 calls for the Mayor and all relevant District agencies to furnish the following to the Council before proceeding with any attempts to sell, convey, long-term lease, or exchange property owned by the District:

- A report containing a complete inventory of the real property currently owned by the District;
- An inventory and audit of the real property currently leased by the District;
- A Master Facilities Plan; and
- A Community Development Plan.

Before any District-owned property may be sold, Bill 17-0527 also requires that the Mayor submit a resolution to the Council indicating why the real property is no longer needed for public purposes and the method by which the property will be disposed. The bill also requires the Mayor to hold two public hearings in the vicinity of the property during weekends or evenings, provide 30 days notice of the hearings to ANCs, publicize the hearings by placing a notice in the D.C. Register at least 15 days prior to the hearings, place ads in local free newspapers and submit Public Services Announcements to local radio stations, and send notification by postcard to all households in the zip code of the property in question.

Bill 17-0536, the "School Closing Fairness and Accountability Act of 2007," establishes procedures for closing DC public schools, requires an annual survey of the use and projected use of school buildings, creates a formal process for public engagement in school closings, and mandates co-location of appropriate local entities—such as charter schools or day care programs—to sustain school buildings that may otherwise close due to low enrollment.

"The proposed closure of 23 schools brings to the forefront the importance of establishing a rigorous process for determining whether District-owned properties are no longer needed for public purposes," stated Councilmember Thomas. "District-owned property is like an endangered species—once it is gone, it's gone. For that reason, the sale of District-owned property must be measured, meticulous, and methodical" said Councilmember Thomas.

SANTA COMES TO WARD 5

On Saturday, December 22, 2007, Councilmember Thomas hosted "Breakfast with Santa" at the Turkey Thicket Recreation Center for the children of Ward 5. Everyone had fun and enjoyed visiting with Santa.



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THOMAS SECURES FUNDING FOR DEVELOPING FAMILIES CENTER'S MALPRACTICE INSURANCE

Councilmember Thomas secured \$300,000 in the FY2008 supplemental budget to fund the Developing Families Center, Inc.'s malpractice insurance. The Center, which is located in Ward 5 and provides maternity and pediatric care to low-income families, was expected to close its doors if funding did not become available.

Councilmember Thomas and Councilmember Mary Cheh held a press conference on December 10, 2007 to highlight the Center's dire need for funds to pay its malpractice insurance. At the urging of Councilmembers Thomas and Cheh, the Council allocated the necessary funds at its December 18, 2007 legislative session.

Developing Families Center, Inc. serves low-income families, providing maternity care and delivery of babies, as well as pediatric care for children. More than one-third of the Center's clients reside in Ward 5, and nearly one-quarter live in Ward 8. The Center has an outstanding record of providing quality services, and its rates of low birth weight and preterm babies are below those of the city as a whole, saving Medicaid more than \$1 million a year.

Due to the city's delay in establishing its Medical Liability Captive Insurance Company, the Developing Families Center, Inc. must fund its medical malpractice insurance at least through June 2008. The Center did not have the funds to do this, and turned to Councilmember Thomas for assistance.

"Developing Families Center, Inc. is an integral part of our city's health care network," stated Thomas. "The Center provides a tremendous service to low-income families in Wards 5, 6, 7, and 8. I am pleased that my colleagues also value the Center and voted with me to provide funding for its malpractice insurance," said Thomas.



On December 10, 2007 Councilmembers Thomas and Cheh held a press conference to highlight the Developing Families Center, Inc.'s need for funds to pay its malpractice insurance.

THOMAS CELEBRATES BIRTHDAY OF OLDEST WASHINGTONIAN, WARD 5 RESIDENT EDDYE WILLIAMS

Councilmember Thomas joined the family and friends of Eddy L. Williams to celebrate her 108th birthday on January 4, 2008. Ms. Williams, a resident of Ward 5 for more than 40 years, is the oldest living person in Washington, DC.

Originally from Florida, Ms. Williams moved to the District during Harry S. Truman's presidency. She worked as a government clerk while attending nursing school in the evenings. After completing her nursing degree, Ms. Williams was employed in her chosen profession for more than 30 years.

Although she is unable to attend church now, Ms. Williams remains an active member of the Metropolitan AME Zion Church. Church members visit her regularly. In addition to her devotion to her church, Ms. Williams was also a renowned seamstress. "If you showed me a dress in a store window, I could make it," stated Ms. Williams. Her other hobbies included writing poetry and short stories.

"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 provided Ward 5 resident Eddy Williams, the oldest living Washingtonian, with a Council resolution acknowledging January 4, 2008 as her 108th birthday.

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