

Call The Roll

An E-Publication of Columbus City Council

August 2007

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the August 2007 edition of **Call the Roll**—Columbus City Council's monthly e-magazine. In this issue, you will learn more about the numerous initiatives and programs that Council and Mayor Michael B. Coleman have worked on recently to help improve the safety and quality of life for Columbus residents.

Examples of some of these measures include: passage of an ordinance that is being used as a model for other cities in Ohio to deter scrap metal theft; funding for the Division of Fire's distance learning system to provide critical new training for our Fire Fighters; and a regional agreement for a new Metro Park on the northeast side of town. Also, in our continuing efforts to attract new jobs to Columbus, Council provided funding for a traffic study to help CSX bring a potential intermodal transportation hub to the South Side and for the initial plans to build two downtown parking garages.



Council President Mentel joined Mayor Coleman during the recent Fire Graduation Ceremony.

Council also provided additional funding to help Community Crime Patrol (CCP) expand operations in several areas throughout the city. CCP members patrol neighborhoods and assist the Division of Police in identifying trends and behaviors that may be indicative of criminal activity.

Until next month, I hope you and your family will enjoy everything summer has to offer in Columbus.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael C. Mentel".

Michael C. Mentel
President of Columbus City Council

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Visit City Council's [Website](#) to learn more about Council's [Initiatives](#) and to access links to City departments and information.

CRAIG HELPS CITY LAND NEW SITE FOR POLICE HELIPORT



Councilmember Craig sponsored legislation to purchase property from the State of Ohio for the new Police heliport.

The Columbus Division of Police is preparing to build a new facility for the unit known as their “eye in the sky.” In an innovative partnership, the City of Columbus is purchasing unused property from the State of Ohio to develop into a new Police heliport on the West Side.

“The legislation to authorize this purchase and allocate the funding signals a continuation of City Council’s support for the men and women in our Division of Police,” said Judiciary and Court Administration Committee Chair [Hearcel F. Craig](#).

Councilmember Craig’s legislation appropriated \$194,955 to allow the City to purchase the land. The property, which is located near I-70 off of West Broad Street, was identified in an inventory of underused state-owned properties. Ohio Treasurer Richard Cordray began compiling and analyzing the inventory earlier in the year.

“This property has been owned by the State of Ohio since 1845 when they bought it from Lucas Sullivant,” said Cordray. “It was used for years to quarry out limestone to build the Statehouse and the Ohio Penitentiary.”

The City owns and operates six helicopters, which is the third most of any police force in the United States. Helicopters patrol Columbus skies from noon to 4:00 AM every day of the year, including holidays.

“One helicopter in the air is like having dozens of police officers on the ground,” said Mayor Michael B. Coleman. “Our six helicopters are force multipliers; they can see criminals wherever they are. These helicopters can protector our officers and our citizens.”

The Helicopter Unit of the Columbus Division of Police provides tactical air support for the officers on the ground. They have the ability to conduct surveillance day or night, with a 90-second average response time to a scene.

“This is another positive step for the Hilltop,” said Safety Committee Chair [Andrew J. Ginther](#). “City Council has recently voted to support a new neighborhood health center along West Broad Street and we have increased safety in the area by expanding Community Crime Patrol.”

Groundbreaking for the \$8-million heliport will take place in early 2008.



Aerial view of the new police heliport site.

TYSON'S "WALK & TALKS" PROMOTE ACTIVISM AND HEALTH

In her continuing effort to meet with Columbus residents and receive feedback on City programs, Recreation and Parks Committee Chair [Priscilla R. Tyson](#) has hosted a series of "Walk & Talk" events. The programs are designed to provide an opportunity for "one-on-one" time with Councilmember Tyson—while also promoting a healthy lifestyle for all involved.

"It is important to stay active and healthy, and these *Walk & Talks* also are a great way to gather citizen input," said Tyson. "As a member of Columbus City Council, this helps me understand how City funding can best be used to benefit seniors and all park users."



During her "Walk & Talk" session, Councilmember Priscilla R. Tyson (left) discussed programs for seniors held at Columbus recreation centers.

The most recent walk was held at the Franklin Park Conservatory, where approximately 25 residents joined Councilmember Tyson. During the four "Walk & Talk" events that Councilmember Tyson has held so far, dozens have taken advantage of the program to walk with one of their City representatives and enjoy the Recreation and Parks system.



Councilmember Tyson's contemporary approach to engaging the residents of Columbus has afforded her invaluable insight as chair of the Recreation and Parks Committee.



FIGHTING SCRAP METAL THIEVES

This summer has been a costly one for Reeb-Hosack Community Baptist Church. The South Side congregation has been hit four times by scrap metal thieves, who have stolen everything from down-spouts to air conditioning units.

“Instead of spending money on community outreach programs to benefit kids and our neighborhood, we are pouring thousands of dollars into our church,” said Pastor John Little.

Reeb-Hosack served as the backdrop for a news conference with Columbus City Councilmember [Andrew J. Ginther](#). Ginther serves as chair of City Council’s Safety Committee and announced details of legislation to regulate the scrap metal industry in Columbus.

“These are the materials that were returned to the church from a scrap metal yard,” said Councilmember Ginther as he held up a mangled piece of copper that once was attached to the church’s air conditioning unit. “These materials were worth \$14 at a scrap metal yard, but it cost the church \$14,000 to repair and put in a new air conditioner.”

Ginther stated that City Council will be helping to reign in an “unregulated industry, one that has been unable to regulate itself.” The regulations include requiring scrap metal dealers to obtain a license and pay a yearly fee to operate. Other requirements of the new law include:



Safety Committee Chair Andrew J. Ginther, with recovered scrap metal in hand, details the City’s new regulations.

- Sellers of scrap metal must provide identification including their name, address, license-plate number, and thumb print.
- Scrap metal dealers must generate a daily report on the items they receive. Those reports will then be forwarded to the Columbus Division of Police. There will be an electronic reporting option available for the dealers.
- A limitation on the number and type of items that people can sell without reasonable proof of ownership.

The new ordinance has already received state and national attention. Ginther held a series of public meetings to engage Columbus Police and members of the recycling industry to draft a law that gives law enforcement the information they need to apprehend scrap metal thieves while also treating scrap metal dealers fairly. A working group was also formed to incorporate citizen input. Residents attending the news conference at the church applauded City Council’s action.

“If the thieves know they’re going to have to give a fingerprint and picture identification when they go to the scrap yard, it’s going to make them think twice,” said Robert Patterson, president of the Marion Franklin Civic Association. “It also makes the metal dealer think a little bit, too, before he accepts the scrap.”

“It has been my pleasure and honor to serve as a member of the scrap metal work group,” said Gary L. Baker II, chair of the Greater Hilltop Area Commission. “This legislation is critically important to reduce the mounting losses we are experiencing across the city. I want to thank Mr. Ginther and his City Council colleagues for taking this very important measure.”



(top) Gary L. Baker II and Pastor John Little (right) conveyed to the audience how metal theft affects the entire community.



ADDRESSING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Council President Michael C. Mentel told the Chamber of Commerce audience how he and his colleagues support economic renewal with a variety of tools including TIFs and tax incentives.

City Council President [Michael C. Mentel](#) recently outlined his plans to support economic growth and development during a major policy speech before members of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce. President Mentel spoke at the Chamber's *Capital Connections* forum held at the Bar of Modern Art (BoMA). The setting helped frame a major theme of his speech: *reinvention*.

"BoMA is a great example of what I mean by reinvention," said Mentel. "In the span of just over a year, this 19th century church—abandoned and likely scheduled for demolition—has been converted into an extraordinary space for the exhibition of fine arts and cultural entertainment."

President Mentel explained how Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts divert property taxes and associated revenue to help build the necessary infrastructure in areas under development. He specifically highlighted 13 out of

the 47 TIFs around Columbus, which have led to more than \$61 million in improvements.

A second economic tool used by the City of Columbus to support area businesses is the utilization of various tax incentive programs. For instance, Enterprise Zones and Community Reinvestment Area districts have led to the creation of more than 5,400 new jobs and \$173 million in new payroll.

"Skybus is another good example of how the City partners with private investment. The airline has created excitement and national interest, and the City is proud to have supported the \$14 million tax incentive package that helped Skybus lift off the ground. Those benefits only accrue to the company if it meets certain employment and payroll goals."

President Mentel indicated that one of the most important measures that helps the City partner with business is Columbus' prudent fiscal and management policies. Columbus is the largest city in the nation with a "Triple-A" bond rating—the highest rating from each of the national rating agencies.

"The Triple-A Bond Rating is the *blue ribbon* in endorsements for municipalities," Mentel said. "It is independent verification that Columbus manages public funds the way citizens expect, the way they hope to manage their own finances."



The crowd at BoMA listened closely as President Mentel explained how the City of Columbus maintains its Triple-A bond rating.

CUTTING-EDGE COURTHOUSE



Councilmember Craig helps with the courthouse groundbreaking.

A surface parking lot on the southern end of downtown will soon be home to the new Franklin County Courthouse. This is another example of City, County and State projects that will literally change the landscape of the near south side of Columbus.

“I’m excited about this new project by the County, and I can assure you that City Council also will continue to invest in developments that move Columbus forward and help define our city for decades to come,” said Councilmember [Hearcel F. Craig](#), chair of the Judiciary and Court Administration Committee.

Craig was one of the honored guests invited to participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new courthouse. The new building will be located along Mound Street, across from the existing courthouse. Craig noted that the proposed building will have the latest in “green” technology—similar to the nearby Lazarus building, which was renovated with the assistance of City funding.

In addition to investing in the Lazarus project, City Council also approved funding for the new Main Street bridge to connect downtown to Franklinton. Council also has invested in the Whittier Peninsula project, which will provide much-needed green space to the south of I-70.

The City has committed more than \$40 million for freeway caps and infrastructure improvements to supplement the State’s reconstruction efforts on the I-70/71 interchange near the courthouse.

CITY COUNCIL HELPS MAYOR LAUNCH BICENTENNIAL PLAN

As Columbus moves closer to its 200th birthday in 2012, the members of Columbus City Council have been asked to help plan a community-wide effort to honor our past and map our future.

Mayor Michael B. Coleman has created the Bicentennial Commission and Council President [Michael C. Mentel](#) and President Pro Tem [Kevin L. Boyce](#) are both serving as co-chairs of different focus groups.

“As a lifelong Columbus resident, I am honored to serve as one of the commissioners for this historic event,” said Council President Mentel. “We have the auspicious task of organizing a celebration worthy of this great city, paying tribute to our past while embracing the shared vision for our future.”

A 31-member steering committee is charged with implementing a community engagement process and putting together residents’ ideas in a ***Blueprint for the Bicentennial***, which will be released in May of 2008.



(L-R) Councilmember Priscilla Tyson, President Michael Mentel, Councilmember Charleta Tavares, and Councilmember Hearcel Craig look on as President Pro Tem Kevin Boyce addresses the audience.

BICENTENNIAL BIKEWAY PLAN ANNOUNCED



Councilmember Maryellen O'Shaughnessy (podium) and Mayor Coleman (right) recently unveiled the strategy for the Bicentennial Bikeway Plan.

Columbus presently offers eighty-seven miles of bike trails, bike lanes and posted bike routes throughout the city. Over the next four years, [Columbus City Council](#) and Mayor Michael B. Coleman will extend this coverage by 60 miles with the implementation of their comprehensive Bicentennial Bikeway Plan.

The plan will include expanding the number of transportation conduits that bike users have at their disposal, and calls for a study of approaches that the City can take to increase bicyclist safety. The plan also will address methods the City can use to optimize its infrastructure to enhance bicycle travel.

“We must embrace a comprehensive transportation philosophy,” said Public Service and Transportation Committee Chair [Maryellen O'Shaughnessy](#). “It is essential for us to stand behind a plan that ensures all of Columbus’ streets are designed with bicyclists and pedestrians in mind.”

“Our street systems must accommodate bicyclists,” said Mayor Coleman. “Biking has contributed greatly to the viability of the downtown community. In addition to creating more accessible bike routes, this plan will provide a holistic approach to bicyclist safety.”

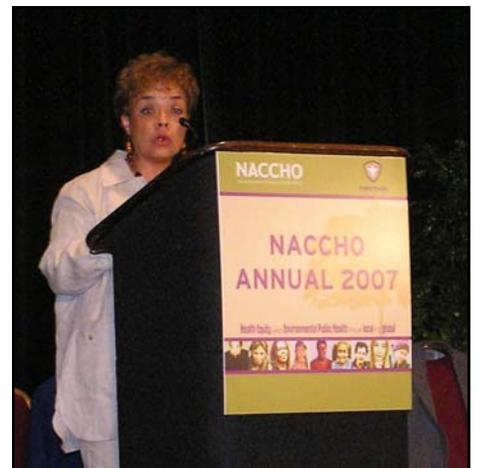
Prior the press conference, members of a stakeholder group designed to assist City officials with crafting the initiative met to discuss the next phase of the plan’s development.

“A RIGHT TO CARE”

The struggle to access quality health care affects millions of Americans across the nation. To show her support for the efforts being taken to end disparities in our health care system, Health, Housing & Human Services Committee Chair [Charleta B. Tavares](#) attended the performance of *A Right to Care* held at the Hyatt Regency Columbus Ballroom.

“This performance highlights an issue that many people in our community are passionate about,” said Councilmember Tavares. “Like cities all across the nation, Columbus is becoming more diverse. However, not everyone shares equally in health care options.”

A Right to Care, performed by award-winning playwright Sarah Jones, was presented during this year’s National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO) annual conference.



Councilmember Charleta B. Tavares

During her act, Jones single-handedly played an entire cast of characters—each one portraying an example of how ethnic, racial and economic disparities impact people’s lives. Prior to the performance, Councilmember Tavares addressed the audience.

“We must eliminate the disparity among our community’s African American, Latino, Asian, and Native American residents,” said Tavares. “It is vital to understand that health disparities do not have one cause, but many. Solving this problem will involve going beyond the health care system and examining issues such as education, housing, transportation, and land use.”

NEW STATE-OF-THE-ART FIRE TRAINING FACILITY

The nation's best Division of Fire will soon have a new place to train recruits and veterans alike. Columbus City Council President [Michael C. Mentel](#), Safety Committee Chair [Andrew J. Ginther](#), Councilmember [Priscilla R. Tyson](#) and Councilmember [Hearcel F. Craig](#) joined Mayor Michael B. Coleman and other city leaders for the ground breaking of a new Fire Training Center. The academy will be built on the grounds of the current center along Parsons Avenue. In June, City Council appropriated \$8,572,180 to build the new facility.

"The building of the new Fire Training Center is the result of teamwork between Columbus City Council, the Mayor's office, and the Division of Fire," said Council President Mentel. "We want to provide the best training possible to the men and women who protect us everyday of the year."

The new center will have four individual training structures that will allow fire fighters to hone their skills and prepare for different real-life scenarios. It will include a practical skills building, a burn building, a training tower, a roof stimulator, a retention pond, a storage building, a shelter house, a half-mile running track and a paved hydrant area.

"The tragic incident in Charleston, South Carolina underscores how critically important a state-of-the-art training facility is to the City of Columbus, to our fire fighters, and the families they serve and protect everyday," said Councilmember Ginther.



Council President Michael C. Mentel (top) and Safety Committee Chair Andrew J. Ginther (left) discussed the importance of providing fire fighters with training facilities that offer realistic simulations of fire fighting scenarios.



Additional space is being set aside at the site to accommodate future outdoor training methods such as confined space, tank cars, collapse and extrication drills.



(L-R) Assistant Chief Warren Cox, Mayor Michael B. Coleman, Council President Michael C. Mentel, Councilmember Priscilla R. Tyson, Councilmember Hearcel F. Craig, and Councilmember Andrew J. Ginther participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new fire training center.

"Training is the cornerstone of safety, and this new training academy will give our fire fighters the best possible foundation to save lives and protect themselves while doing their daily duties," said Mayor Coleman. "We're investing bond funds that are voter approved in an educational facility that will be among the nation's best. I'm proud that we continue to integrate green design and construction elements into City buildings, reducing our environmental impact and showing the private sector how new concepts can improve major construction projects."

The new Fire Training Center is expected to open in January, 2009.

SNOW PLOWS IN SUMMER

With summer in full swing, snow is the last thing on one's mind. But when it comes to winter weather, Councilmembers [Andrew J. Ginther](#) and [Maryellen O'Shaughnessy](#) believe it is never too early for Columbus to start preparing for the City's response to ice and snow storms.

Recently, Public Service and Transportation Committee Chair Maryellen O'Shaughnessy sponsored legislation to purchase eight new single-axle dump trucks and four new snow plows.

"When it comes to snow season preparation, it is vital to be proactive rather than reactive," said Councilmember O'Shaughnessy. "This investment will provide our snow warriors the equipment they need to remove snow and ice safely and effectively from the streets and roadways of Columbus."

Utilities Committee Chair Andrew Ginther had the opportunity to inspect two of the trucks currently being used in the fleet. The new vehicles will be equipped with Global Positioning System (GPS) devices. The GPS technology will ensure that drivers are on the right path and also provide the Public Service Department with an up-to-date status on the location of dispatched units.

"These new additions to the fleet will allow us to respond more quickly to snow emergency situations," said Councilmember Ginther. "The GPS technology will enhance operational efficiency by assisting the Public Service Department with route planning."

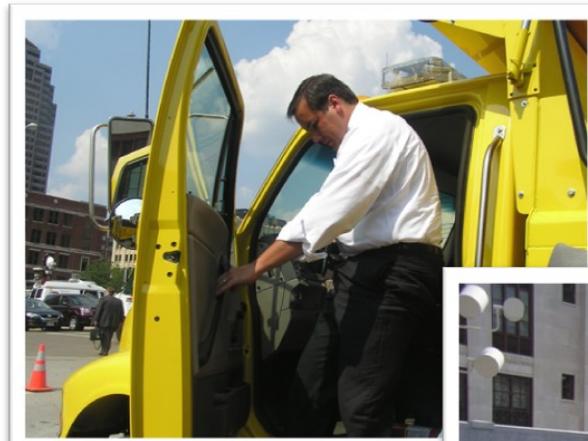
In conjunction with Councilmember O'Shaughnessy's legislation, Councilmember Ginther sponsored an ordinance that will enable the Department of Utilities to retrofit its utility trucks with blades and spreaders.

Once outfitted with the proper equipment, these trucks will assist with snow removal.

"This is a new tactic for the City," said Ginther. "This innovative and cost-saving approach will allow us to leverage the tax payer's dollars and maximize the City's resources."



Councilmember O'Shaughnessy sponsored legislation to purchase new trucks and plows for the City's fleet of "Snow Warriors."



(top) Councilmember Andrew Ginther rolled up his sleeves for an up-close inspection.

(right) In collaboration with Mayor Coleman, Council has increased the snow fleet's size to 125 vehicles, the largest in Columbus' history.



“DOG DIALOGUES” RETURN



President Pro Tem Kevin L. Boyce

The “Dog Dialogues” are back. Council President Pro Tem [Kevin L. Boyce](#) is continuing to provide a public forum for all citizens to debate dog parks and the prospect of a more stringent leash law.

“The public has been a critical part of the discussion,” said Councilmember Boyce.

City Council recently held a public hearing to explore various types of proposals for animal-related laws and off-leash alternatives.

“We started this discussion about keeping dogs on leashes while they are in public,” said Boyce. “However, citizen input has really helped transform this dialogue into a comprehensive discussion about public safety and public health.”

Councilmember Boyce says that the feedback his office has received indicates that the City’s first dog park is a huge success. Each week, hundreds of dogs and their owners enjoy the space at Big Walnut Park, where dogs can run off-leash and socialize. City Council hopes to add more dog parks around the city in the coming months. As successful as the program has been, the City still faces challenges when it comes to irresponsible dog owners.

“We have to take this issue very seriously and look at the whole picture,” said [Priscilla Tyson](#), chair of the Recreation and Parks Committee. “I respect the rights of dog owners, while at the same time I’m concerned about children who are afraid to ride their bicycles because dogs are running loose in their neighborhood. This is a public issue that can affect all citizens, whether they own an animal or not.”

Many in the audience agreed with the members of Council regarding the need for laws that encourage responsible pet ownership.

“Outside of the parks, I don’t think there should be much debate,” said Assistant City Prosecutor Bill Hedrick. “Speaking hypothetically, I don’t think I should be able to go down High Street with my three dogs unleashed. First of all, I think it’s dangerous for the dogs—they could run out onto the street. Secondly, even if I have verbal command of those dogs, the citizens who are coming up the street don’t necessarily know that I have verbal command.”

Councilmember [Charleta B. Tavares](#), chair of the Health, Housing & Human Services Committee, pointed out the public health problems caused by careless dog owners.

“Certainly we want people to have pets and take care of their pets,” said Councilmember Tavares. “The more dogs or animals a person has on their property, the more waste and bacteria will be around that house and neighborhood.”

Pro Tem Boyce has indicated that there will be opportunity in the future for the public to engage in the ongoing “Dog Dialogues.”



HOME AGAIN PROGRAM IN ACTION

The rebirth of Franklinton continues as Health, Housing & Human Services Committee Chair [Charleta B. Tavares](#) joined Mayor Coleman for the demolition of a pair of troubled homes on the West Side through the City's *Home Again* program.

"The *Home Again* program rebuilds neighborhoods and, just as importantly, rebuilds lives," said Councilmember Tavares. "Removing a problem home from a neighborhood not only makes the area safer, it also restores the esteem of the residents who live near the cleaned-up property."

Carol Stewart, chair of the Franklinton Area Commission, has lived for more than 40 years next to the two homes being torn down on South Princeton Avenue.

"This is a major, wonderful thing that is happening," said Stewart. "All of the houses being built are really high quality, and we're looking forward to the new houses that will be here."

Last June, Mayor Coleman kicked off the \$25 million *Home Again* program, which is a five-part strategy intended to either repair or replace one thousand of the estimated 4,400 vacant properties citywide.

"I believe in a targeted approach that will result in the transformation of a neighborhood faster than if we just did it as a scattered site basis," said Mayor Coleman.



Councilmember Charleta Tavares (center) was joined by Mayor Coleman (left) and Carol Stewart (right) to celebrate the success of the Home Again Initiative.



Mayor Coleman (left) and Councilmember Tavares (right) watch as demolition of the blighted houses begins.

To prove his point, Mayor Coleman invited the crowd to head east to Martin Avenue to tour some of the rehabbed *Home Again* properties. People were able to see the quality that Stewart talked about earlier in the day.

"These are some of the most outstanding houses in the neighborhood, and they are selling quickly in an area where there were no new houses being built before," said Coleman.



EAST SIDE COMMUNITY FORUM

In its prime, the King-Lincoln District on the near East Side was an epicenter for African American culture in Columbus. The homes, businesses and venerable Lincoln Theater were all sources of pride for the entire city.

“When I grew up in this neighborhood, it was a thriving economic community,” said Toni Smith, one of the dozens of King-Lincoln residents who attended the community forum hosted by Columbus City Council. “I remember driving with my dad down Long Street and Mount Vernon Avenue, there were so many businesses, we didn’t have to go any place else to shop.”

Now City Council hopes to work with the community to help restore the neighborhood’s luster. Citizens talked about their ideas to fight crime and clean up vacant houses. As noted at the meeting, many members of Council have family and friends who live in the near East Side neighborhood, giving them a greater appreciation for the history of the area.

“For all Columbus residents there are some central, underlying themes. All residents want to have a safe community, and they want to make sure their young people have an opportunity for growth and development,” said Councilmember [Hearcel F. Craig](#). “They also want to make sure that they have vibrant and important businesses to help spur the local economy. And this neighborhood is no different.”

[City Council](#) has worked closely with Mayor Michael B. Coleman to invest in redevelopment projects in the King-Lincoln District. Members of Council find the “one-on-one” time with area residents during these forums to be invaluable in doing their jobs and helping Columbus thrive as a community of distinct yet inter-connected neighborhoods.

“When we have a city as diverse as Columbus—with many different neighborhoods and areas and priorities—Council needs to get out and listen and talk directly to folks who are the real leaders and catalysts in their neighborhoods,” said Councilmember [Andrew J. Ginther](#), who helped organize the meeting with King-Lincoln residents. “One size does not fit all, and this is the best way to understand a neighborhood’s priorities.”

“When we make the King-Lincoln District vibrant again, we strengthen all of Columbus,” said Councilmember [Charleta B. Tavares](#).



Members of Columbus City Council took part in a community Q & A forum at the King Arts Complex on Mount Vernon Ave.



(above) As chair of the Health, Housing & Human Services Committee, Charleta Tavares addressed many of the questions and concerns community members raised about vacated houses.



Council President Pro Tem Kevin L. Boyce (right) discussed his experiences growing up in the King Lincoln community.

EAST SIDE COMMUNITY FORUM (CONT.)

After the public comment portion of the meeting, Councilmembers met one-on-one with local residents.



**Workforce Development Committee
Chair Charleta B. Tavares**



Judiciary & Court Administration Committee Chair Hearcel F. Craig



President Pro-Tem Kevin L. Boyce



Recreation & Parks Committee Chair Priscilla R. Tyson



Safety Committee Chair Andrew J. Ginther



Council President Michael C. Mentel