

Where is the City of Tampa Heading?

By Robert Pete Edwards,
Community Activist

Hello everyone whom I share my latest thoughts on where the City of Tampa is headed in governmental and citizen relationships in the immediate future. As a former city council candidate (1991) and my lifelong work as a concern community activist I would like to share my thoughts on the above noted subject. Many of you have asked me to do so and let me say right away I'm not interested in running for future office nor do I have a personal axe to grind against any particular person etc. I do say that contrary to what many of uniform people may think the City of Tampa and Hillsborough County has a very long way to go in making the citizens feel all are part of the city growth, well-being and would benefit from fair application of funding and services. Let me now share my thoughts and I say to all of you that I have no problem with the sharing of this email with whomever you desire.

1. Mayor's Race; All of the original (5) candidates were highly qualified to be Mayor and we should be of the energy to see that all of the runner ups should stay active in a very positive way to make this city beyond on paper a great city for all. I will say that the Mayor Elect has his work cut out for him on the following issues. (a) continuing decline in positive

police-community relations particular among the Afro-American and low income Hispanic areas. This city during the last eight years led by Mayor Iorio has continued to ignore a glaring problem of poor race relations. (b) need for equity in funding improvements in special programming, equipment and facilities within the parks and recreation department .A good example is how nice to jog on smooth pavement and trails at Al Lopez but how dangerous it is to jog and walk at Rowlett Park due to broken and uneven pavement sections. (c) need to get away from thinking and in practice that all the ills etc. of low income, poor, black neighborhoods are in east Tampa. This is wrong and it has caused a lot of negative feelings from minorities who live in the West Tampa and N. Tampa area just south of Fowler Ave. (d) a continued open sore with regards to fairness in small business and dumb programs that in the last twenty years we have not come to a win win solution. The school system, aviation authority and though they are regressing somewhat Hillsborough County does a better job etc. It will not take long to see if Mayor Elect Buckhorn is sincere and dedicated with regards to fairness in Public Transportation issues. If he overlooks the need for a truly focus bus system enhancement prior to any funding for light rail then the poor, working poor, blue collar and minority neighborhoods will continue to be left behind and unable to secure jobs beyond the normal 8-5 because of "no consistent bus service". The key will be the type

of persons selected by the city to serve on HART Board and the future merging of HART and TBARTA.

2. City Council; We in the Afro-American community made a "big mistake" by not supporting Curtis Stokes and Chris Hart in two of the three citywide council races. These two gentlemen were not strangers and could find their way around our community without a GPS system. The two people elected we never heard of in anyway prior to this campaign and it is a sure bet that we will not hear or see much of them after they are sworn in to office on April 1, 2011. There is great educational need for members of my community to stop automatically voting for people because of party label and particularly in a non-partisan race. We should embrace Curtis Stokes, Chris Hart, Lynette Judge, Herrold Lloyd, Thomas Scott, Rose Ferlita who although they lost in their prospective races will be key persons to not only help heal this community but lead it in a truly cooperative and diverse future.

3. Areas of Concern: As citizen's I feel that within the next six months between newly elected government officials, shadow city leaders, business interests we will be able to see clearly whether Tampa is moving forward or the final pieces of "scab" come off the sores and everyone will see the Tampa that's been trying to stay on the "down Low" I suggest we monitor the areas of concern listed below.

(a) Police -Community Race relations.

(b) Promotional & Diversity Opportunities without "window dressing or non-qualified placements.

(c) Funding, programing, facility enhancements in undeserved neighborhoods.

(d) Fairness in Purchasing, Special services and other contract opportunities without threat of lawsuits and more waste of funds on disparity studies.

(e) Public Transportation ie what come first a quality dedicated bus system enhancement or magazine cover light rail glorification.

(d) Elected officials who can find their way to poor and minority neighborhoods without being ask, need of GPS and or waiting to run for election in the future.

I thank for your time invested reading my thoughts and certainly I am open to any feedback given. We in Tampa and in Hillsborough County can no longer pretend that we are inclusive when we are not nor understand the need for more bipartisan officials etc.

Sincerely;

Robert Pete Edwards,

Community Activist