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Volume 8

Wednesday, November 29, 2006

Issue 48

Outlook exclusive:

Study blasts Tillman's use of taxpayer money



Mell Monroe takes a swing at Tillman

Challenger stages
conference in front
of alderman's office
about last week's
Outlook story

by Kathy Chaney

In the battle to oust incumbent Ald. Dorothy Tillman (3rd) in the February 2007 election, challenger Mell Monroe threw the first punch at a Nov. 27 press conference in front of Tillman's office about the delegation of her \$1.2 million Aldermanic Menu money in 2004.

Monroe, a Bronzeville businessman, cited the Nov. 22 issue of the Lakefront Outlook, which reported that while Tillman used slightly more than \$300,000 of the fund for infrastructure projects in the ward, she did not spend the remainder, an excess of \$800,000. The unused amount was sent back to the city's general fund.

"I'm outraged that Ald. Tillman would be so selfish as to use taxpayers' money to improve her fami-

Running
for 3rd Ward:



Ald. Dorothy Tillman, office holder since 1983

Challengers:



Pat Dowell, opposed Tillman in 2003



Mell Monroe, first run for office



The majority of 3rd Ward Ald. Dorothy Tillman's discretionary spending for infrastructure improvements have been concentrated around the intersection of 47th Street and King Drive. Marc Monaghan

"If you don't give them a piece of it, it doesn't happen," study says

by Daniel J. Yovich

A new study by the University of Chicago's Cultural Policy Center on the economic impact of publicly-funded art questions the benefits of millions of dollars of taxpayer money spent by 3rd Ward Ald. Dorothy Tillman on Bronzeville's public art and the Harold Washington Cultural Center (HWCC).

Published Nov. 27 by the Journal of Law, Management, Law and Society, the study — authored by professor Jane Grams of the university's Harris School of Public Policy — noted that while Bronzeville's property values skyrocketed, the construction of the cultural center has not brought significant numbers of tourists into the neighborhood and that the neighborhood's limited infrastructure impedes access to public art and culture.

The study said Tillman ignored policy recommendations made in 1993 by the Chicago Department of Planning and

Development that identified 43rd Street as the area's best site for a blues district because it was the location of Muddy Waters' house and the original location of the Checkerboard Lounge. Instead, the study said Tillman spearheaded efforts to construct a blues district along 47th Street near the 3rd Ward office headquarters located in a building Tillman owns at 4645 S. King Dr.

Tillman's office is less than one block from the HWCC, the 40,000-square-foot building located at 4701 S. King Dr., built with more than \$10 million in taxpayers' money and run by Jimalita Tillman, the alderman's daughter.

Grams' study noted that almost all of the public money for art and cultural projects in the area had been spent at or near the cultural center — a phenomenon the study characterized as the "kiss the ring tactics" of the ward's powerbrokers.

The study noted that while the area immediately surrounding 47th Street

and King Drive is now thriving, other areas of Bronzeville remain stagnant. It noted the importance of small businesses and art venues in other areas of the community for the long-term financial viability of the cultural center.

"What do they think is going to happen? That people are just going to show up?" the study asked. "The alderman wants to control things. If they (the ward's political powers) would have allowed the people to use their entrepreneurial skills, Bronzeville would have been done by now. All those empty spaces, all those buildings, that district on 43rd Street would have been done by now. They are blocked by the 'kiss the ring' concept. That is, if you don't get the alderman involved, get her sponsorship, if you don't give them a piece of it, it doesn't happen."

Tillman did not return telephone calls seeking comment.

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about last week's Outlook story

by Kathy Chaney

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Monroe, a Bronzeville businessman, cited the Nov. 22 issue of the Lakefront Outlook, which reported that while Tillman used slightly more than \$300,000 of the fund for infrastructure projects in the ward, she did not spend the remainder, an excess of \$800,000. The unused amount was sent back to the city's general fund.

"I'm outraged that Ald. Tillman would be so selfish as to use taxpayers' money to improve her family's real estate holdings, businesses and enterprises," Monroe said.

He referred to street lighting and four bronze statues that stand on the corners of 47th Street and King Drive and said that those improvements were done to increase the property values surrounding her ward office, 4645 S. King Dr., the Harold Washington Cultural Center (HWCC), 4701 S. King Dr. and the Spoken Word Café, 4655 S. King Dr.

Jimalita Tillman, the alderman's daughter, is the owner of Spoken Word and is the HWCC's executive director.

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Ald. Dorothy Tillman, office holder since 1983

Challengers:



Pat Dowell, opposed Tillman in 2003



Mell Monroe, first run for office



Ald. Toni Preckwinkle is running unopposed in the 4th Ward.

Pat Dowell attacks Tillman's Aldermanic Menu, see Letter to the Editor on Page 4

Provident Hospital and Liberty Baptist Church host events to celebrate World AIDS Day on Dec. 1.
See Page 2

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What Barack did on Thanksgiving



Whaddya expect? U.S. Sen. Barack Obama helps Irene Moore with her packages after distributing Thanksgiving food bags last week at the St. James Food Pantry, 2907 S. Wabash Ave.

Owen M. Lawson III

Tillman

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The politics of Bronzeville's infrastructure improvements

Financial documents obtained by the Lakefront Outlook under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act may support the study's assertions.

An examination by the newspaper of Tillman's management of her Aldermanic Menu program spending — a \$1.2 million fund for ward infrastructure improvements given to each of the city's 50 aldermen — showed that the majority of the money spent in 2004 and 2005 paid for projects at or near the cultural center.

In 2005, Tillman used \$570,000 of her infrastructure funds to supplement construction costs of what she has long promised will be a small park adjacent to the cultural center, which Tillman has said will honor either music educator Walter Dyett or music composer Quincy Jones. More than \$12,000 of the \$62,759 spent from the fund for light pole painting was used for work near the cultural center, and \$190,000 of the \$547,500 spent on improved street lighting in the 3rd Ward was for improvements on streets near the cultural center.

John Paul Jones, the director of community outreach for the non-partisan Neighborhood Capital Budget Group (NCBG), said Tillman had failed to meet the needs of her constituents by consistently focusing infrastructure improvements in her ward on developments near 47th Street and King Drive.

"This is a critical time for the Third Ward, and residents need to inform and direct the alderman as to where this spending should be targeted," Jones said. "Property values continue to grow in that district and homeowners continue to pay high property taxes but are not getting the basic improvements from the alderman to which they are entitled. There are many more needs in the community than just those at 47th and King Drive."

BGA: much of the ward 'neglected'

The Outlook previously reported that in 2004 Tillman failed to use much of her \$1.2 million fund for infrastructure improvements, which was returned to the city's general fund. In fact, Tillman was criticized by the NCBG for failing to work with residents to identify and fund infrastructure improvements in her ward after she returned \$883,877 to the city from her menu fund after paying for more than \$300,000 for improvements at 47th Street and King Drive.

Jay Stewart, the executive director of the non-partisan Better Government Association, noted that property owners near the intersection — including Tillman — were disproportionately benefiting from improvements made at the intersection. Other areas of her ward want for infrastructure improvements.

"Certainly those property owners are going to see their investments increase because of these improvements," Stewart said. "But what really is the bigger issue here is so much of the money she is spending is targeted for this very narrow area while the rest of the ward's needs go unaddressed. I can't imagine you can find anyone in Bronzeville who will say the only area that needs improvement is at 47th Street and King Drive."

d.yovich@hpherald.com

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Josephine Lee, Artistic Director

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Harris Theater, 205 E. Randolph

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Monroe

continued from page 1

Ald. Tillman could not be reached for comment.

Former city planner and Bronzeville resident Pat Dowell, who unsuccessfully ran against Tillman for the 3rd Ward in 2003 with 35 percent of the vote, said she voiced the same concerns about Tillman not using or mismanaging the menu money during her campaign four years ago. "I'm glad to see Mell Monroe finally join me on this issue, an issue I've been raising since 2002 when the alderman wasn't spending aldermanic menu money at all," Dowell told the Outlook.

Tillman has held the seat since 1983 at the appointment of the late Mayor Harold Washington.

In related news, Ald. Toni Preckwinkle (4th) is running unopposed as of Outlook presstime. Preckwinkle has held the seat since 1991.

Candidates seeking nomination to run for alderman must file their papers between Dec. 11 and Dec. 18.

Provident, Liberty Baptist host AIDS awareness

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Provident, Liberty Baptist host AIDS events

To commemorate those who have died from complications of the HIV virus, Provident Hospital, 500 E. 51st St., is holding its 12th annual World AIDS Day Memorial Service on Dec. 1.

The memorial service will begin at noon in the Carl T. Harris Conference Room. The hospital offers free confidential HIV testing. Call 312-572-1106.

Library Baptist Church of Chicago, 4849 S. King Dr., is also its 3rd annual Relationship Summit, "Taking It To The Streets," on Dec. 1 about HIV/AIDS awareness. Admission is free and HIV screening will be available. Call 773-895-3474.

—Nykeya Woods

LAKEFRONT OUTLOOK

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The Lakefront Outlook
is published weekly by
Herald Newspapers, Inc.,

1435 E. Hyde Park Blvd., Chicago, IL 60615

Deadline for editorial and display advertising copy is noon Thursday before Wednesday's publication. Deadline for classified advertising is 3 p.m. Friday before Wednesday's publication.

Volume 8 Issue 48 Wednesday, November 29, 2006

Publisher
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