

February 2011

District 7 Primary and Licensing Board Appointment

Finalists set, issues should be noted - Appointment power is small part of bigger issue

District 7 Primary

The primary election on February 15 to fill the unexpired term of the City Council District 7 seat formerly held by Chuck Turner ended with a decisive win for Tito Jackson who received 67.3% of the votes. Only 7% of registered voters in the District cast their ballots in this primary race. Runner up Cornell Mills, son of the former State Senator Dianne Wilkerson, received 9.4% of the votes, only 13 more than third-place finisher Danielle Renee Williams. Jackson and Mills will face each other in the final election which will be held on Tuesday, March 15. The winner will have to run again in November for a full, two-year term starting on January 2, 2012.

Both candidates have focused on supporting economic growth of small businesses in the District as well as increasing educational opportunities for all BPS students. The future of the appointed School Committee has been discussed at most campaign events. Both finalists favor a change in the current appointed school board structure.

Boston Licensing Board

Governor Patrick's submission of legislation to authorize the Mayor of Boston to appoint the three members of the Boston Licensing Board is long overdue. The Governor's appointment of these three positions is one of the last vestiges of state political oversight of Boston activities. The Governor's bill provides the opportunity to consider the

merger of the Boston Licensing Board and the Boston Office of Consumer Affairs and Licensing which has similar responsibilities related to entertainment licenses. The merger of these two offices has been suggested over the years to create greater efficiencies.

Other examples of state oversight included the Governor's appointment of the Boston Police Commissioner from 1906 to 1962. Edmund McNamara was the first Police Commissioner (1962-1971) to be appointed by the Mayor since 1906.

The Boston Finance Commission, established in 1909, is the other remaining vestige of state oversight. The Governor continues to appoint the five Commissioners. The work of the Commission remains relevant but its independence should be secured by a means other than the Governor's appointment.

This issue brings to mind the 2007 *Boston Bound* report by Harvard Law School professors Gerald Frug and David Barron, with the support of The Boston Foundation, which compared the legal powers of Boston and six other cities. The authors found that the existing Massachusetts home rule legal structure restricts Boston's ability to make changes regarding its economic future, placing the City in a competitive disadvantage. The Governor's actions are welcome, but the issue is bigger than appointments to one board and deserves a more comprehensive response.