



NAACP CHIEF SETS AMBITIOUS GOALS

INSIDE:

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From the League Vault



Alfoster Garrett, Jr. is the new president of the Seattle chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The 34-year-old defense attorney took over the reins of the 91-year-old chapter in January. Steve Clark caught up with Garrett at his office in Pioneer Square to ask about the challenges the organization and its new leader face.

You've come to Seattle after growing up in Los Angeles, California and Akron, Ohio. What makes this area different racially than Akron and L.A.?

In Seattle you learn the difference between polite and nice. In L.A. or Ohio, if someone doesn't like you, especially for racial reasons, it's pretty apparent. It's a little more covert here.

You're taking over from Carl Mack, a charismatic leader who graced magazine covers and got the Seattle Police Chief to join him sampling taser charges. What challenges do you face filling that void?

Maintaining the confidence of the members that I can carry the mantle. And letting them know I'm a different person than Carl.

What does carrying the mantle mean for you?

There's this misperception that all we deal with are African American issues. Our mission is to protect the civil rights of all individuals—whether you're African American, Chinese American, Hispanic or Caucasian. Another goal is to increase membership up to 5000.

Conventional wisdom says recruiting for civic organizations is getting harder. Yet you've more than doubled your membership in the last two years. A lot of those new members are the coveted younger demographic. How did you do it?

The reality is that by the time people start saying 'oh, we have a civic duty, we have to be more socially aware' they're already middle-aged. Most younger people are thinking about marriage, children, jobs and other distractions.

So, first get younger board members. If you get younger adults on the board, they're going to pull their friends in. That's just a natural process. And we have to go to where younger people frequent. We're working with a culturally aware cinema, in the Central District, which features films with cultural themes. Before the film starts, we invite speakers to raise awareness.

The comedy film Blazing Saddles recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. Cleavon Little plays a black sheriff riding in to save the racist old west town. Did you see that movie? Could its blunt racial themes get into a movie today, or has race become the kind of unpleasant topic not for polite conversation?

I saw it—a long time ago [laughs]. There was a poll of college students recently. African American and other students were asked whether discrimination and affirmative action were issues anymore. Most of them didn't think they were, effectively saying that [the years Affirmative Action was in effect] have somehow done away with all of the racial issues in this country. I think that is a ridiculous notion. Access to economic viability hasn't increased, it's gone down. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



**FROM THE
MUNINEWS VAULTS:
SEPTEMBER 16, 1916**

The Municipal League endorsed a City Ordinance providing for a City Forester, noting that to most this position may seem “novel and unnecessary,” but careful research into New York state parks made it clear that the position was worth it. The League counsel decided that Seattle’s street trees and parks deserved careful planning, and “the need for concerted local action is apparent to anyone who passes along our streets with his eyes open.”

Visit the League website for in-depth information about current issues facing King County.
www.munileague.org

THE VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members:

The Municipal League of King County began its work nearly 100 years ago because it was clear that without an active and engaged electorate, the public interest would not be served.

Back in 1910, the people of our region could have thrown up their hands and said, “They’re all crooks anyway!” It’s a good thing they didn’t, because without their leadership and foresight, the waterfront would have continued to drain our public inheritance without the oversight of the Port of Seattle, and Seattle city government would have continued to operate corruptly, at least for a few more years! And think of all the other ways in which our region would be different without the Municipal League.

In May we honored those who have made outstanding contributions to the civic life of our region. It is safe to say that each of our Civic Award winners never imagined that they would be honored by the Municipal League’s Civic Award. They were too busy being dedicated to improving our civic life, each in their own way. And so each one of our awardees represents what we aspire to in our own way. I happen to believe that the Municipal League of King County is the best local option for channeling your civic energies to address the emerging issues in our region. Join the Municipal League, and consider making a tax deductible donation to our Foundation. If you have time, join the Candidate Evaluation Committee, Ballot Issues Committee, or one of several issues study groups that are busy with a common goal—to empower citizens with informed choices.

Our government is only as good as the people expect it to be. What are your expectations? What will you do about it?

Rita Brogan

Chair, Board of Trustees



Alfoster Garrett Jr. [continued from page 1]

A lot of people would say, ‘well, that’s not because of race.’ Then why is it?

You were quoted as saying “Too many times, people mistake diplomacy for complacency.” Where does an organization draw that line? Can a desire for tact make an organization timid?

There was a [local newspaper] that ran an editorial cartoon recently. It showed an overweight African American woman with big lips and curlers in her hair, cussing out a police officer. I called the editor and said ‘Why the caricature? It’s stereotypical and inflammatory.’ The editor issued an apology on the front page. That’s a perfect resolution to the issue. There was no need to call a press conference and embarrass this guy. But if someone takes an ignorant stance, if they’re telling you ‘I don’t care what your position is,’ then your judgment’s got to

say, okay, now I’m going to have to call attention to this issue. I’ve got to take the next step.

Does the Seattle NAACP evaluate candidates for office?

We keep a report card. We can’t favor or endorse any candidates. I’ll always remember what [National NAACP Board Chairman] Julian Bond said during his keynote at our 91st anniversary—‘Just because you’re non-partisan doesn’t mean you have to be non-critical.’

And your chapter’s 92nd anniversary is coming in October.

Does that history help you carry the mantle at the NAACP?

There must be a need for it if an organization has been here for 92 years.

LEAGUE CALLS FOR TRANSPARENCY IN MONORAIL PROCEEDINGS

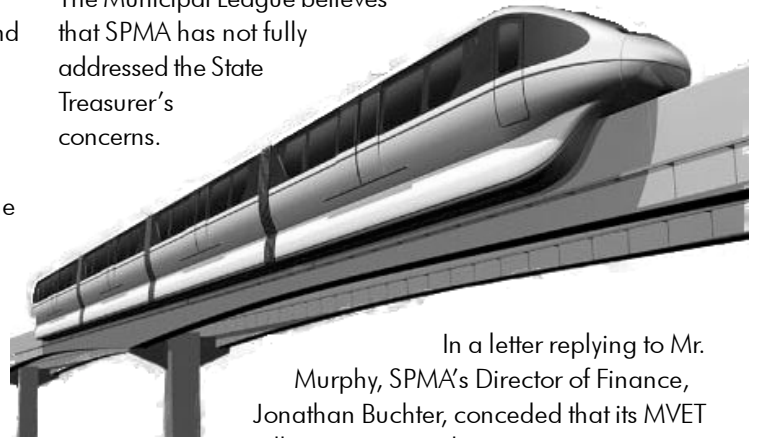
Bob Klein explains that when it comes to projected revenues for the Seattle Popular Monorail Authority, "something doesn't add up."

After more than two years of planning, public meetings and negotiations, the Seattle Monorail Project is approaching the end of its planning process, a point when Seattle citizens and the Seattle City Council will have a final opportunity to examine the Project before the construction phase begins. Two important hearings will be convened in the coming months: a Seattle Popular Monorail Authority (SPMA) public hearing to present the proposed DBOM (design, build, operate and maintain) contract to the public; and a separate City Council hearing to consider the Project's financial viability.

A careful public review of the project is essential in the coming months, especially because the project's final scope, design, cost and financial plan will become clear only shortly before the public hearings begin. The SPMA and the City Council must assure that the decision-making process is judicious and transparent to the public. By coordinating their information disclosure and hearing schedules, the SPMA and the City Council will assure that the SPMA complies with legal requirements, that there is meaningful public access to final Project information and that an open public discussion of the issues will occur.

The SPMA's financial plan has been called into question by the State Treasurer, Michael Murphy. The SPMA is completely dependent on collection of the Seattle motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) to retire the bonds it will issue to pay for Monorail construction. In a recent letter to State Senator Ken Jacobsen, Mr. Murphy observed that the SPMA's projected first year collections from the MVET tax is just \$47 million. He is concerned that these projected tax revenues are inadequate to cover the anticipated interest charges accruing on the \$1.5 billion bond debt that SPMA will incur to build the Monorail. At a 6% interest rate, first year interest charges on the bonds will be \$90 million. As Mr. Murphy observed in his letter, "something doesn't add up."

The Municipal League believes that SPMA has not fully addressed the State Treasurer's concerns.



In a letter replying to Mr. Murphy, SPMA's Director of Finance, Jonathan Buchter, conceded that its MVET collections are inadequate to pay interest charges using standard payment terms. Instead, SPMA proposes that it would structure the bond repayment schedule to back-load interest charges, to take advantage of projected growth in MVET tax collections. SPMA is betting that the value of all Seattle automobiles will grow fast enough to repay the bonds, a questionable assumption when one considers that – if the Monorail succeeds in its mission – Seattle car ownership should decline, not increase.

The SPMA financial plan leaves many unanswered questions. What interest rates would be charged for the bonds? What sort of bond rating would the bonds have? What would the SPMA do if the MVET tax revenues were inadequate? Would the SPMA turn to Seattle voters for real property taxes? SPMA could, but has not, obtained a bond rating for its proposed offering.

The Muni League will continue to monitor the SPMA's financial plan. We are in the early planning stages of a public forum that will address the state of Monorail finances. Stay tuned to www.munileague.org for more information.

CIVIC AWARDS HONOR KING COUNTY'S CIVIC CHAMPIONS



League Chair Rita Brogan and Trustee Kevin Carter present a \$1,000 scholarship to Civic Scholar Vijou Bryant (center).

- SAFECO Civic Scholar: VIJOU BRYANT, *Garfield High School*
- Citizen of the Year: DAVID BREWSTER, *Town Hall*
- Public Official of the Year: JAY COVINGTON, *City of Renton*
- Public Employee of the Year: DON W. DING, *King County Dept. of Transportation*
- Business of the Year: DICK'S DRIVE-IN RESTAURANTS
- Organization of the Year: JOHN STANFORD PUBLIC SERVICE ACADEMY and REAL CHANGE

James R. Ellis Regional Leadership Award: GERRY JOHNSON, *Preston Gates Ellis LLP*

Doug Mason Memorial Award: GABRIEL GALANDA, *Williams Kastner & Gibbs PLLC*

MUNICIPAL LEAGUE OF KING COUNTY

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS...

Interview Public Office Hopefuls This Summer

The Candidate Evaluation Committee is currently accepting applications for volunteers to interview and rate candidates running for office. The Municipal League Candidate Ratings are published by the Muni League each September, and they are an integral part of our local election process. To get an application, visit our website at www.munileague.org or contact the League office at 206-622-8333.

Get Connected

The Muni League is working to update our membership files with current email addresses. Please send yours into our office today by emailing admin@munileague.org with your name and current email. Also, to receive notices on our latest candidate and issues reviews, upcoming events and news, consider joining one of our Email Listservs. Find out more and join today at www.munileague.org.

League Wish List

The Muni League office is in need of a digital camera; a fax machine; a telephone; a small microwave; and volunteer office work. If you can donate any of these items, please contact Jen Watkins at 206-622-8333. THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION...

MUNINEWS and the **votersguide** are produced by the Municipal League's Communications Committee and published by the Municipal League of King County. The Municipal League is nonpartisan and welcomes all points of view. If you have any question or would like information on joining the Municipal League, call 206-622-8333 or send an e-mail to muni@munileague.org.