



Rice Will Stay Involved After He Leaves Office

The forceful, outspoken voice of Willie Lee (Jimmy) Rice won't be heard in an official capacity anymore after the next meeting of the Model City Commission.

With the swearing in of new Commissioners January 4, Jimmy will no longer hold his place on the Commission and its executive committee as a representative of the Harrison neighborhood.

But although he chose not to run in this fall's neighborhood election, Jimmy Rice still plans to stay involved with the Model Cities process he believes in so strongly.

"In spite of criticism I've had in the past," Rice says, "I'll take a role in Model Cities as long as there is a Model Cities in High Point."

For the past two years, Rice has served as an executive committeeman, elected by the Commission itself. A vocal advocate of citizens' rights, he has some definite opinions on the successes and failures of Model Cities since its inception here in 1968.

With his retirement from office close at hand, he shared some of his thoughts with What's Happening.

PUT INTO WORDS

"First of all, Model Cities has done more for the city and for the city's poor and minority people than the city itself has done since its incorporation," he said.

"My contribution to Model Cities has been to put the average citizen's input into words, especially in the area of housing."

As a member of the Housing Task Force in addition to his other duties, Rice has seen the development of the Turnkey III and London Woods projects as a result of Model Cities efforts. He is proud to have been a part of the work which brought these improvements about.

His decision not to seek reelection came not because of any ill feelings,

but a desire to give some other Model Neighborhood resident the chance to learn what he has learned about the city and its politics.

"I've learned more about city government than I'd ever known in my life," he says of his two years in office. "And it's frightening! I want others to get involved on this level, too."

Many times during this period he has felt frustration, he says, at not being able to do more. "My only regret is, that the people who have received our projects' services have failed to thank Model Cities by participating in town meetings, task forces, and so forth."

LACK OF SUPPORT

"I feel disappointed that the citizens have not supported Model Cities for all Model Cities has done for them," he went on.

"I don't want to infer that our CP (Citizen Participation) project has failed. The citizens themselves have failed. They have failed the city. . . ."

Rice, a resident of 811 Meredith Street, is a native of High Point. He and his wife have two children. A graduate of William Penn High School, Rice is a Navy veteran with four years' service and is now a



WILLIE LEE (JIMMY) RICE

customer engineer for the IBM Corporation.

Over the past several years he himself has experienced what he calls "intimidation" because of his own publicly outspoken views on various subjects.

"At times I've been criticised for monopolizing discussions at meetings," he recalls, "but I've only tried to get others present to speak out as I do. I feel I've been a voice for those who couldn't, or wouldn't, or didn't speak out their inner feelings," he says.

Rice regrets that Model Cities "has not been accepted by city management, some City Councilmen, and the

business and financial leaders of the community. If they had accepted us, then Model Cities could have been more effective. As it is, we've been stymied. . . ."

Looking to the future, Jimmy Rice hopes that every project will be carried on as long as it is needed. But more important, he feels, is that the decision-making process itself must be preserved.

"The most disappointing aspect of my term in office," he concluded, "is that citizens themselves have not gotten out and supported Model Cities. These people, too, share the blame for Model Cities' ineffectiveness. . . ."

Revenue Sharing Grant

City Council Can Spend As Wishes

With the arrival December 11 of a check for \$608,300, federal revenue sharing is now a reality for High Point.

The decision on how this money will be spent, however, has not been made.

In all, High Point is expected to receive about \$1,287,000 this year by this new federal funding technique. The remaining amount will arrive in

the spring.

While the decisions are being made to determine how this new windfall money will be spent, the money is in a City bank account drawing interest.

Many groups around High Point have ideas on how this lump sum of money — granted by Congress this fall — will be spent. City Council has

the final word on its use.

What does revenue sharing mean to people in the Model Neighborhood, for example?

Well, it means that their voice is more important than ever in the decision on how their federal tax dollars are spent.

INFLUENCE SPENDING

Explaining it in another way, citizens can now have more influence over the way their federal taxes are spent on a local level, because it is their City Council — rather than the government in Washington — who identifies the problems that need to be solved, and plans for their solutions.

Revenue sharing was set up, after all, because Congress felt that the federal government was getting too complex and bulky to watch how every one of its dollars was spent on a local level. Therefore, it entrusted local leaders to spend this money wisely in the form of block grants.

As this lump sum reaches a locality such as High Point, it comes from Washington with no strings attached. With only two exceptions, this money can be spent on any project City Council sees fit.

Now, more than ever, City Councilmen will need the help and advice of people from all over the community to help make these crucial decisions

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'Look, We've Got A Problem . . .'

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Ask 99 people what citizen participation is, and you'll get 99 different answers.

It's easier to say what citizen participation is not.

Citizen participation is not sitting at home griping about how bad things are in High Point, or in your neighborhood. (It's coming to Model Cities meetings and griping about those same things.)

It's not letting your neighbor say what's on your mind. (It's speaking out yourself.)

It's not being afraid to say what you think because someone might think you're a little foolish. (It's giving your opinion no matter what, because you know best what things affect you and your family.)

Citizen participation is a state of mind on the part of a community.

It's knowing that by attending meetings, working together, speaking out, making an issue of the things that affect your daily lives, changes will take place.

Maybe it sounds like a nice ideal that doesn't quite work in practice.

Well, take a look around at some of High Point

Model Cities' projects: day care, Family Planning, the Demonstration Health Center on Elizabeth Street, Consumer Credit Counseling, A&T and UNC-G Special Services scholarship programs, rodent control — these projects didn't come about overnight.

They also didn't come about by neighborhood residents sitting at home, not caring.

These and all other Model Cities projects are the product of interested people like you and your next-door neighbor saying, "Look, we've got a problem. What can be done about it?"

The result of their concern was action, and projects that are helping improve High Point.

There's a long way to go. No one person or agency has the solution.

What people from all over High Point must realize is that they too — as individuals — can make an impact on the way decisions are made, and on the way their tax dollars are spent.

Model Cities is here to help them be heard.

The next time you're asked to come to a task force meeting, think about it.

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