

CITY OF HOUSTON

INTER OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

TO: Annise D. Parker
Mayor

FROM: Charles A. McClelland, Jr.
Chief of Police

DATE: June 3, 2015

SUBJECT: **Naming of Police Headquarters
In Honor of Senior Police Officer
Edward A. Thomas**

As you know I wholeheartedly support the naming of Police Headquarters in honor of retired Houston Police Officer Edward A. Thomas, who faithfully served the department and the City of Houston for over 63 years. I want to make you aware that, as evidenced from my receipt of letters from Council Member Bradford, Constable May Walker, NAACP President Dr. James Douglas, and other civic leaders, there is growing sentiment to name Police Headquarters after Dr. Lee Brown. Notwithstanding Dr. Brown's contributions to the department and the City, Officer Thomas' life-time commitment, contributions and legacy to the Houston Police Department (HPD) and City of Houston give Officer Thomas precedence in naming Police Headquarters in his honor.

I want to highlight some of the remarkable facts of Officer Thomas' life story and career with the Houston Police Department. Senior Police Officer Edward A. Thomas joined the Houston Police Department as a member of Cadet Class #1 after honorably serving in the United States Army during World War II. After graduating from his cadet class on April 16, 1948, Patrolman Thomas was assigned to the Uniformed Division where he worked a foot patrol using "call boxes" to communicate information regarding calls for service or other information from dispatch. During the time period of 1957-1967, Officer Thomas was well known for patrolling the Louisiana and Bell Street area, where he received praise for keeping the sidewalks clear and keeping the area safe. On August 1, 1974, Officer Thomas transferred to the Patrol Bureau-Northeast Division and remained there for the majority of his law enforcement career. During these assignments Officer Thomas utilized his policing approach to create and improve relationships between the citizens, juveniles and the community at large.


"Mr. Thomas," as he is more fondly known throughout the department, has been instrumental in providing the ultimate example of perseverance, diligence, duty, service, and pride to all HPD officers and police officers in other jurisdictions. Officer Thomas was one of the first African-American police officers to integrate into HPD. He had already served nearly 20 years with HPD prior to the height of the Civil Rights Movement. Officer Thomas endured challenges and difficulties that most cannot fathom. He was not allowed to drive a police car because of his race and had to walk a foot beat. In the early days of his career, Officer Thomas was not allowed to arrest non-minority violators; he could not attend roll call with his fellow officers, and was not permitted inside the cafeteria with fellow employees because these areas were reserved for white officers only. Quite frankly, during the first several decades of his career, he endured harsh and systemic racism. The most amazing part of Officer Thomas' journey is that through professionalism, tenacity, bravery, perseverance, and courage beyond comparison, he paved the way for other African American and minority officers to follow. Moreover, through more than six decades of dedication, hard work, and exemplary character, he became and will always remain the most revered and respected police officer

in the City of Houston. Officer Thomas is also the longest serving police officer in the history of HPD to date.

Officer Thomas devoted his police career to serving the public. Many of the aspects with which he approached his profession in policing, his adaptability of working with the community, juveniles, and schools, have evolved into the advancements now utilized by police agencies such as neighborhood-oriented policing and community outreach initiatives. During his tenure with the department, Officer Thomas was recognized with numerous letters of appreciation from citizens and supervisors. Among his accolades, on January 28, 1976, he was named The 100 Club's "Officer of the Year" after 28 years of outstanding work while assigned to Northeast in the Radio Patrol Bureau for his service in the 5th Ward and Denver Harbor areas of Houston. Most known for his loyalty, honest integrity, punctuality and overall attention to duty, he was praised for his skill with working and communicating with the different factions of the community at large. It was said that Officer Thomas was "consistently the hallmark of excellence." Many of Houston's middle-aged citizens can still recall Officer Thomas taking them back to school when they skipped class, and with great respect, acknowledged that he helped them stay out of trouble because of his intervention and dedication to duty. He was awarded a Chief of Police Commendation in 1989 by former Chief of Police Lee P. Brown and was recognized again by The 100 Club with the "Lifetime Achievement Award" for his 50 years of service in January 1998. Officer Thomas was also honored with a HPD Lifetime Achievement recognition in 2011.

In keeping with the spirit of Executive Order 1-47 that governs the naming of city facilities, Officer Thomas has far exceeded the requirements for Police Headquarters to bear his name. HPD's rank and file support this proposal as is evidenced by the concurrence of the leaders of the Houston Police Officers' Union (HPOU), African American Police Officers League (AAPOL), Houston Police Organization of Spanish Speaking Officers (OSSO), and the Houston Organization of Public Employees (HOPE). Citizen support was also acknowledged by responses received subsequent to the request for public comment. Those who know Officer Thomas know that he is a very humble man who has dedicated his life to HPD and to the citizens of Houston. Giving this recognition to Officer Thomas will also honor each and every patrol officer for the work they do in putting their lives on the line each and every day, which often times, goes unrecognized. As such, naming Police Headquarters in honor of Senior Police Officer Edward A. Thomas is a very fitting tribute to memorialize Officer Thomas' great legacy of Honor, Integrity, and Respect.

The employees of the Houston Police Department would like to thank you in advance for your support of this proposal. This year is the 50th anniversary of major civil rights legislation in our country and individuals like Mr. Thomas who refused to give up has made the greatest impact at HPD.


Charles A. McClelland, Jr.
Chief of Police

cam:hjg

cc: Council Members
Officer Eric Fagan, President, AAPOL
Sergeant Roland Nieto, Vice-President, OSSO
Melvin Hughes, President, HOPE
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