

Compliance and Monitoring Efforts Implemented by Mayor Richard Thomas

Mayor Thomas has taken a number of steps to strengthen the Urban Renewal Agency's program compliance. He has named a new Acting Commissioner and has retained the services of several former HUD staff to bring transparency and accountability to the Agency. In addition, based on the findings of an internal investigation that revealed more than \$6 million in potential unrecoverable loans made by the URA, Mayor Thomas has appointed a Special Counsel -- Richard Frankel -- to investigate Urban Renewal Agency records and operations. The public announcement of Mr. Frankel as Special Counsel is included below.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Former FBI Agent Appointed to Probe Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Agency

(Monday, July 31, 2017) – Today, Mount Vernon Mayor Richard Thomas announced the appointment of Richard M. Frankel, a highly respected 26-year career law enforcement official, as special counsel to commence an investigation into the records and operations of the city's Urban Renewal Agency.

Mayor Thomas said, “Mr. Frankel’s assignment will be to conduct an in-depth review of the agency’s operations and investigate possible irregularities that date back as far as 2006. Since taking office I have had serious concerns about the agency’s work and its use of federal funds. Six months ago, I hired former Obama administration officials to review whether the Urban Renewal Agency was in compliance with federal law. Their feedback to me has necessitated the appointment of a recognized white collar criminal expert to take a deep dive into the records of the agency and utilize sworn testimony to review the agency’s operations. Under Section 66 of the City Charter, the Mayor has these powers.”

“Among the findings of the initial investigation of the agency was that it had an estimated \$6 million in loans that are listed as “uncollectable or undocumented.” Reports that should have been filed with the Department of Housing and Urban Development were disregarded and communications to the agency

staff were hidden by a veil of silence. We also need to know why certain federal funds remain unspent. Of particular concern, is the fact that city funds are being transferred to the agency with no explanation as to why.” Thomas stated.

About the Special Counsel: Richard Frankel spent the majority of his [career](#) with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He has led numerous FBI field divisions as the Special Agent In-Charge of the Newark, New Jersey, overseeing criminal investigations, as well as undercover and tactical operations with an emphasis on threat-based, intelligence-led law enforcement. Mr. Frankel is a recognized authority on complex investigations, asset recovery, cybersecurity issues and crises management. He served as the Associate Director of National Intelligence and Senior FBI Representative to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. His public service began as an Assistant District Attorney in Suffolk County, NY. He is of counsel to Ruskin Moscou Faltischek P.C.