

Urban Renewal Agency Board of Trustees Meeting October 19, 2021

<https://www.facebook.com/mountvernonny/videos/222484846492086>

At the URA meeting on 10/19/2021, Treasure of the Board Darren Morton showed the following graphic (I've added the circles and textbox overlays):

Mount Vernon Urban Renewal Agency			
Outstanding Health Ins & Retirement Benefit Invoices thru September 30, 2021			
Vendor	Invoice Dates	Amount	Details
MVURA-Revolving Funds	5/17/2018	94,054	Accts Receivable owed by CMV: paid by URA in 2016. Payment requested from CMV on 05/17/2018
NYS Retirement System	04/1/15-3/31/16	103,573	balance due
"	04/1/16-3/31/17	110,885	balance due
"	04/1/17-3/31/18	110,202	balance due
"	04/1/18-3/31/19	39,251	balance due
"	04/1/19-3/31/20	28,415	balance due
"	04/1/20-3/31/21	28,923	balance due
NYS Retirement System	subtotal	421,249	
PERMA (WC)	6/1/21-7/1/22	0.0	Workers Comp policy cancelled 7/15/21
PERMA	subtotal	0	
NYS Health Insurance	08/1/17-12/31/17	77,455	Balance due
"	01/01/18-12/31/19	121,586	Balance due
"	01/01/19-12/31/19	97,850	Balance due
"	01/01/20-12/26/20	80,900	Balance due
"	01/01/21-09/25/21	53,521	Balance due
NYS Health Insurance	Subtotal	431,312	
Medicare	1/1/2020-12-31/20	14,256	Estimated Balance due Retires
Medicare	Subtotal	14,256	
Total Accrued Costs	ALL Benefits	866,817	

Unpaid dating back to April 2016. Rev. Morton was treasurer in 2016, and Mayor Patterson Howard was Executive Director in 2016.

The table shows the cost of health and retirement benefits that is due (past due) for former URA employees. As of September 30, 2021, the amount owed is \$866,817. The issue is that the URA cannot allocate current URA funds to cover these costs. So, who will pay this debt? The City of Mount Vernon taxpayers. Dr. Morton made a few points about this that I think are worth quoting:

Dr. Morton (Minute 52:40): *“It’s the proverbial kicking the can down the road. Eventually we’re going to have to pay it, right? It’s going to all fall upon the City. Now you remember this because, again, we’ve had a number of employees over decades who have worked for URA but the paperwork has not necessarily been kept. The recordkeeping has been shoddy at best in some cases as to what they’ve been doing and all that and so therefore being able to get the federal government to pay for something that they don’t know actually went towards their program is impossible. And so therefore, you cannot now go*

back and look to get the URA to pay it because there is nothing to pay from federal grants, right? Federal grants are very specific which is a lesson to us that we have to make sure that all of our paperwork is immaculate that we are keeping track of what people are doing, that the logs for peoples work is being retained and that they are submitting those, that information in so that we don't have any of these problems in the future."

My Comment: Mayor Patterson Howard went on to back up Dr. Morton's assessment and reassure the public that they are "cleaning up literally probably 20 plus years of historic challenges" at the URA.

Here's the problem. As he is today, back in 2016 Dr. Morton was the treasurer of the board of trustees of the URA. Along with him on the board of trustees back in 2016 were Brian Johnson and Marcus Griffith, both current board members. The Executive Director of the URA in 2016 was Mayor Shawyn Patterson Howard. Do you see the problem?

If recordkeeping over the years has been "shoddy at best", who is accountable?

If the "can" has been "kicked down the road", who was doing the kicking?

Now, due to this poor fiscal oversight, the taxpayers of Mount Vernon are on the hook for \$866k because, as Dr. Morton said, asking the federal government to pick up the tab for this is "impossible". This is a costly, totally unnecessary mistake.