

Not seeking Ward 5 reelection: Samuels to run for mayor

Written by Harry Colbert, Jr.
Monday, 04 February 2013 16:24



Minneapolis 5th Ward Councilman Don Samuels has announced his candidacy to become the city's next mayor. The announcement comes on the heels of current Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak announcing he would not seek a fourth term. Samuels, who this past year had a failed bid to become a Hennepin County commissioner, said as mayor his number one goal is public safety. Samuels said though he had the economic means to live elsewhere, he chose to live in the Jordan neighborhood of North Minneapolis – a neighborhood that he said has been adversely affected by drugs and gang violence.

"As an executive for a Fortune 500 company, I came home to one of the toughest neighborhoods in the city because that's where I chose to live," said Samuels. "We've seen gun violence take down our babies. I think I'm uniquely fitted to the task of changing that. As mayor, I'm going to make this the largest city with the lowest crime rate in the nation."

Former Minneapolis Police Chief Tim Dolan agrees. Dolan came out in support of Samuels during Samuels' campaign launch held Jan. 30 at the A Loft Hotel in downtown Minneapolis. Dolan said Samuels is tough, but fair.



"Sometimes when we spoke, the actions of police officers were at issue and we had frank and

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honest discussions," said Dolan. "In 2006 I became police chief and I suspect Don had a lot to do with that. He has the heart and soul to be a great mayor."

Samuels pulled few punches when he discussed the issues facing Minneapolis.

"Not everybody has been able to share in all of the opportunities that Minneapolis has to offer. Unfortunately, we have a tale of two cities," said Samuels. "For every person who has had access to all of what Minneapolis has to offer, there's another who hasn't. Minneapolis has one of the worst achievement gaps in the nation. That leads to the worst graduation gaps (and) incarceration gaps. It has one of the worst STD gaps, teen pregnancy gaps, income gaps, employment gaps and home ownership gaps, that takes away, not only the economic future of our people but, the soul and character and reputation of our city."

Samuels said though divided, Minneapolis has the opportunity to come together.

"We must end to tale of two cities and create one city in which everybody has access to opportunity," said Samuels. "(We must create) one city where our performance is transparent and we hold each other accountable; one city where we all have skin in the game; one city, where we are focused on outcomes, not effort. Everyone must take ownership in Minneapolis."

Samuels acknowledged he is facing an uphill battle in his quest to become mayor.

"I've got opponents who are well connected and well funded," said Samuels. "But long odds is the story of my life." Samuels said as a Jamaican immigrant, he arrived to America with little more than \$85 in his pocket, but became a successful businessman and politician.

Showing that he is a serious contender for mayor, Samuels has hired an outside consultant to manage his campaign. According to Samuels, Patrick Layden was the campaign manager responsible for getting Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter elected. Layden will temporarily relocate to Minneapolis within the next couple of weeks to direct Samuels' campaign.

Samuels is known for his no-nonsense approach to crime. According to Samuels and Dolan, on numerous occasions, the 5th ward councilman has confronted drug dealers in his neighborhood. Samuels also makes it a point to attend every vigil for a slain citizen.

"Regardless of how they lived, they are human beings," said Samuels.

That type of compassion is one reason Velma Korbel is supporting Samuels. Korbel is the director of the city's department of civil rights, but made it clear her support comes as a personal endorsement and not as a department head.

"I know how much he cares about this city," said Korbel, who said Samuels has been a staunch supporter of the department of civil rights.

Samuels said he is fully committed to his run for mayor and has no plans to seek re-election to his 5th ward seat.