

# **Chris Treadway: Doing things the Fred Jackson Way**

By Chris Treadway  
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A round of chemotherapy and a case of gout that put him in a wheelchair weren't about to keep Fred Jackson from attending the Richmond City Council meeting.

After all, the meeting and the month of February were being dedicated to the longtime Richmond activist via a Black History Month proclamation celebrating Jackson and his long-standing efforts to better his community.

Jackson, who turned 73 this month and just started treatment for liver cancer, said Wednesday, "I'm feeling fine, feeling great, feeling optimistic."

He was also feeling humble the day after the tribute as he reflected on the outpouring of love and appreciation at Tuesday's meeting.

"I was awestruck," he said. "I was kinda in a time warp. It didn't seem real -- it seemed like a dream."

The city proclamation "honoring Fred Davis Jackson for his exemplary service to the community" cites his long history of working for equality; advocating for the young, old and disadvantaged; and serving as a community peacemaker. It calls him "an inspiration to all who are seeking to overcome challenges."

Mayor Gayle McLaughlin said in an e-mail Thursday that she proposed honoring Jackson for Black History Month "because he is such an incredible asset to our community and loved by all. I admire him not only for his warm spirit and incredible activism, but also for his sharp intellect and creativity. Fred is a giant in our community."

Jackson received a standing ovation from the packed council chamber, and a line of speakers stepped forward to pay tribute to one of the community's most beloved figures.

Jackson said he was touched by the announcement that a list of his accomplishments will be read into the Congressional Record by Congressman George Miller, D-Martinez.

"I never thought it would get that far, but people in high places moved on it," he said. "I'm just doing what I do. I'm humbled."

It was Miller who selected Jackson to go to Washington, D.C., in December 2008 to cast the electoral vote for his 7th Congressional District certifying the election of Barack Obama as president.

Even more lasting than the proclamation was the announcement made at the meeting by the office of county Supervisor John Gioia of plans to rename the main roadway that connects

Richmond and North Richmond as Fred Jackson Way.

The renaming would be a symbolic unifying of the thoroughfare now known as Third Street in North Richmond and Filbert Street in Richmond.

"Fred has worked tirelessly to unify our communities," Gioia, whose district includes Richmond, wrote in a letter to McLaughlin. "In his spirit of unity, having one common name for the street makes sense."

The county process to rename Third Street has already started, and McLaughlin said she will work with the city Planning Department to start the process in Richmond.

Jackson said he is touched that his name would be used as a lasting reminder of his work to bring people together.

"I just want people to know all that was said and done," he said. "The focus was upon my work, but it was more of a celebration of the advancement of the human spirit. And that's worth jumping for, crying for, clasp hands for, embracing each other for."