

**MAYOR**  
James Thomas, Jr.  
**CITY MANAGER**  
Billy Edwards  
**CITY CLERK**  
Sarah Lumpkin  
**CITY ATTORNEY**  
Linnie L. Darden, III



**MAYOR PRO TEM**  
Charles Frasier  
**COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
Jason Floyd  
David Anderson, Sr.  
Keith Jenkins  
Kenneth Shaw

## NEWS RELEASE

#2014-02

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### **Hinesville hosts GCBM: Talks about ports, transportation, and legislation**

Hinesville, GA — More than 35 former and current African-American mayors from throughout Georgia convened April 4-6 in Hinesville for the Annual Spring Conference of the Georgia Conference of Black Mayors. The purpose of the organization is to provide information, resources, and assistance to small and rural cities which are commonly led by African-American mayors.

Hosted by Hinesville Mayor James Thomas, Jr., conference participants explored the theme, “Expanding Georgia’s Ports: The New Emerging Economy.” Discussions examined various aspects of the regional effects of the planned expansion of the Port of Savannah, and what rural communities in the region can do to take advantage of this infrastructure improvement project.

“We are a good example of how quickly a small town can grow so you must be prepared and plan for growth,” Mayor Thomas told attendees during the conference opening session.

The conference began Friday with a tour of the Port of Savannah. The attendees returned to the Liberty County Performing Arts Center for a transportation policy forum led by Lee Beckmann, Manager of Government Affairs for Georgia Ports Authority; Allen Burns, Director of Coastal Regional Commission; Edna Jackson, Savannah Mayor; and James Thomas, Jr., Hinesville Mayor. The panelists explained the importance of transportation and identified partners such as Georgia Ports Authority, Georgia Department of Transportation, and local regional commissions as organizations that could assist with transportation planning.

“Roads and rails are the arteries of your city. Transportation is the lifeline of your city,” Beckmann said. “Don’t be afraid to ask us for help, that’s what we are here for.”

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*“Home for a Day or a Lifetime”*

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[www.cityofhinesville.org](http://www.cityofhinesville.org)

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A press conference was held before the attendees met for a welcoming reception with local sponsors P.C. Simonton and Associates; Georgia Power; Liberty Regional Medical Center; and Interstate Paper.

Saturday morning the mayors boarded Coastal Regional Coaches for an infrastructure and innovation tour of Hinesville. Mayor Thomas led the windshield tour to sites including Memorial Drive District, Azalea Street Redevelopment, Fort Stewart, and MidCoast Regional Airport. Georgia State Representative Al Williams served as keynote speaker for the conference luncheon. He gave advice on what it took to be a great mayor by reminding the mayors their most important job is to serve their citizens and positively impact their cities.

“Everybody’s life should be better after you leave office,” he said. “That is the only way you can have a successful administration.”

The day ended with a networking event and tour of Bryant Commons sponsored by CH2M Hill, Jones, Osteen and Jones law firm; Liberty County Chamber of Commerce/CVB; and VIP Office Furniture and Supply.

The conference concluded Sunday with a Prayer Breakfast led by Pastor Richard Hayes, pastor and founder of New Day Community Church and president of the United Ministerial Alliance of Liberty County. Georgia State Representative Dee Dawkins-Haigler, Chair of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus, Inc. provided closing remarks. GCBM Executive Director Willie E. Burns, former Mayor of City of Washington presented awards to Herman Baker, former Mayor of City of Wadley for his dedication and continued support; Hinesville Mayor James Thomas, Jr. for hosting the group; and Kingsland Mayor Kenneth E. Smith, Sr., GCBM President for his leadership.

The 2015 Annual Spring Conference is set for May 1-3, 2015. Visit [www.gcbm.us](http://www.gcbm.us) or call 770-331-6488 for a location and more details.

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Hinesville Mayor James Thomas, Jr.(right) receives award from GCBM Executive Director Willie Burns for hosting the 2014 Annual Spring Conference of the Georgia Conference of Black Mayors in Hinesville.

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2014 Georgia Conference of Black Mayors attendees at a Prayer Breakfast on April 6. The conference was hosted in Hinesville April 4-6.



The Georgia Conference of Black Mayors (GCBM) is a nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization which consists of nonpartisan members. GCBM historically focused on providing information and assistance to mayors of small urban and rural cities.

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