

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Champion hydroplane racer asks City Council to deny Gold Cup permit

Charges APBA racism; press conference Thurs. May 6 after 1 p.m. council committee meeting

DETROIT – Jerry Bell, a Detroit hydroplane racer who has won two championship events, will ask the Detroit City Council's Neighborhood and Community Services Committee to deny a permit to the American Power Boat Association (APBA) for July's Gold Cup races on Thursday, May 6 at 1 p.m. He charges that the Eastpointe-based APBA has consistently denied Blacks and Detroiters the opportunity to participate in their events.

After the meeting, he will hold a press conference detailing problems with the APBA since they took over the races from the Spirit of Detroit Thunderfest. These have included the APBA's denial of participation to Bell's team in 2008 and 2010. In 2008, Bell's team included a group of young Detroiters from the Golightly Technical School. No Blacks or Detroiters participated in the 100th running of the Gold Cup then, and none are slated to do so this year.

Bell will hold an exhibition run featuring four hydroplanes during River Days on June 18, 19 and 20, from 3 to 5 p.m. Although the River Days are sponsored by the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, Bell said he has had to whittle down his plans because the APBA suddenly intervened.

"I've been involved in the sport for 15 years now," Bell told the council committee April 29. "Last year, I did an exhibition run during River Days and I was asked to return this year. But then they told me the APBA was handling the exhibition run, and I knew they weren't going to let me run in my own hometown. If this organization asks to use city resources but will not let anyone from the city participate, I ask you to deny them."

The Council committee, chaired by Councilman Kwame Kenyatta, tabled the APBA's request for permits until May 6 as a result of Bell's testimony, at the request of Councilman Kenneth Cockrel, Jr.

During the April 29 meeting, Councilman James Tate said he has known Bell for many years.

"I've seen the quality of the work you've done with some very, very scarce resources," Tate said. "So I will do whatever I can to work with you within the parameters of the laws we have to convey our concern to the APBA and mitigate this situation."

Bell said APBA members have posted racist comments on the APBA members' message board, including one stating, "I think he just needs to go back to the Ghetto where he belongs." He has also received racist and threatening phone calls.

"I won't let them get away with this anymore," he said. He said he plans to file a racial discrimination lawsuit against the APBA if the matter is not resolved.

For further information, call 313-348-9967 or email bellhydroplaneteam@att.net.