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Hundreds meet in hopes of healing city

BY NAOMI R. PATTON • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • SEPTEMBER 7, 2008

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With hands held and arms raised, nearly 300 people turned out Saturday afternoon for a rally at city hall seeking healing and unity in the wake of Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's resignation and plea to felony charges.

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Though the day was about moving the city forward, Detroit City Council President and incoming Mayor Ken Cockrel Jr. addressed the federal investigation of the City Council.

"The sooner the indictments come down, the better," he said after the rally, adding, "so we know what we're working with."

Cockrel was referring to the FBI corruption probe of at least four council members in the rewarding of the Synagro sludge-removal contract last year. On Friday, Councilwoman Sheila Cockrel said she is scheduled to testify Wednesday before a federal grand jury investigating the allegations. Ken Cockrel Jr. said Saturday he has not been subpoenaed to testify.

He also said he had spoken briefly with Kilpatrick on Saturday morning, calling it "positive and productive." He said he would abstain from voting with the council on whether to hold a special election for mayor to avoid a conflict of interest as sitting mayor.

Earlier, hundreds gathered for a two-hour rally hosted by Councilman Kwame Kenyatta in the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center.

"This is not about a celebration of someone's demise; this is about celebrating the people's rise," Kenyatta said.

He compared the eight months since Kilpatrick's text message scandal broke in the Free Press to "a very difficult pregnancy."

"We all have this new baby before us ... that must be nurtured," said Kenyatta, warning of difficult days ahead and offering Cockrel his support.



Photos by ROMAIN BLANQUART/Detroit Free Press

At the unity rally on Saturday in Detroit, Kenyatta said: "This is not about a celebration of someone's demise; this is about celebrating the people's rise."



Detroiter Clareth Robinson, center, holds hands with John Maxey, right, and Tracie McKissic on Saturday during a two-hour unity rally organized by Detroit City Councilman Kwame Kenyatta at the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center in Detroit.

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Kenyatta joined colleagues Cockrel and Councilwoman Alberta Tinsley-Talabi, along with talk radio host Mildred Gaddis, and various clergy in a call to move the city forward.

Kilpatrick, who is to leave office Sept. 18, pleaded guilty to two felony charges in his perjury and obstruction of justice case and no contest in his assault case. He is to spend four months in jail, forfeit his law license and his pension from the state Legislature, pay up to \$1 million in restitution and serve five years of probation.

Kilpatrick admitted to lying under oath in a police whistle-blower trial last year, and in a related deposition last year, denying he had an extramarital affair with his former chief of staff, Christine Beatty.

Tracie McKissic, a Detroit and Detroit Public Schools social worker, said Kilpatrick's resignation is "a horrible thing that has happened," but said she sees a new beginning.

Next for the city, she said, is insisting upon "integrity and excellence" in Kilpatrick's successor, "so we can start holding him accountable."

Contact **NAOMI R. PATTON** at 313-223-4485 or npatton@freepress.com.

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bonest wrote:

The Manoogian Mansion should be turned into the Kilpatrick Museum of Corruption. I'm serious! "Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it", to paraphrase some famous guy. If any city needs to learn from their mistakes as citizens and voters, it's Detroit. When we as citizens realize we are responsible for what our elected officials do, the better off we'll be. This applies to all of us, from electing and holding accountable the school board, all the way to the President of the USA. By no means should the contents of the museum be limited to Kwame, there is plenty of corruption in this city's past, and still more to be uncovered in the present to be included. This museum should be visited by every middle school student i

Detroit has a once in a lifetime chance to clean out the rest honest government. True healing only happens by fixing

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cgtymes wrote:

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