

# In Memoriam



*Bob Buckhorn, Mayor*

**WHEREAS**, the City of Tampa takes pride in recognizing those individuals whose commitment and dedication have made a lasting impact on our community and its citizens. One of these individuals was **Walter Lee “Dirk” Gibbons**, one of Tampa’s beloved citizens and well-known Baseball Legend, who passed away on July 24, 2015 at age 86; and

**WHEREAS**, a native of Tampa, Florida and born to the late Abraham and Minnie Lee Gibbons on October 13, 1928, Mr. Gibbons was raised in the Historic Ybor City neighborhood, and his love of baseball at an early age led him to pitching for the Pepsi Cola Juniors at age eight, and the Pepsi Cola Giants and the Tampa Rockets during his teenage years; and

**WHEREAS**, upon graduation from Middleton High School in Tampa, Mr. Gibbons’ talent as a baseball athlete and his passion for the sport brought him to the Negro Baseball League in the position of Pitcher, and during his stellar career beginning in 1946, he played for the Indianapolis Clowns, Philadelphia Stars, New York Black Yankees, and Baltimore Elite Giants, and in 1949, he pitched a remarkable season of 19 wins, 5 losses, and 229 strikeouts. Thereafter, he played for the Manitoba-Dakota (ManDak) Baseball League in Canada where he pitched for the Brandon Grays, the Winnipeg Giants in Manitoba, and he completed his baseball career in 1957 with the Minot Mallards of North Dakota, and Mr. Gibbons was endeared by the Canadians, earning the nickname “Bubble Gum” for his habit of chewing gum and blowing bubbles while on the pitching mound; and

**WHEREAS**, during his baseball career, Mr. Gibbons proudly served the country he loved in the United States Army during the Korean War from 1950-1953 with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division based in Fort Riley, Kansas, and he was a long-time employee of the University of Tampa as a devoted Supervisor, where he was still working up to the time of his death; and

**WHEREAS**, among his many honors and recognitions, Mr. Gibbons is an inductee into the Negro Baseball League’s Baseball Hall of Fame and the Manitoba Baseball Hall of Fame in Canada, he was drafted by the Tampa Bay Rays during the 2009 “Mock Draft” held by the Major League Baseball Association, and he was honored in February 2015 by the City of Tampa as part of its Annual Black History Month Celebration; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Gibbons was especially known as a devoted and loving father and grandfather, a man who cared deeply for others, and he will be remembered for his dedication, sense of humor, friendly nature, cooking skills, and his life-long passion for baseball, and although we are grieved at the loss of this outstanding citizen, his legacy will continue to live on through all he brought to our community, and in all those whose lives he has touched.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Bob Buckhorn, by the virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the City of Tampa, Florida, do hereby urge all citizens to join me in publicly expressing sorrow and heartfelt appreciation to the Walter Lee “Dirk” Gibbons Family, daughter Celeste, son Walter, Grandchildren, Great-Grandson, and other Family Members, and to express our hopes that they will take solace in their cherished memories and the impact of his life on our community.

Dated this 7<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2015.

  
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Mayor

