

Chief Finance Official of the Year
Ezekiel O. Orji, CPA, Ph.D.

Prior to and during his teenage years, Ezekiel O. Orji's father entrusted him with care of the family's finances and fortune, never counting the "weighed bags" or determining the true value in their native Nigerian country; the father knowing the path of his second oldest son to be that of an honorable money handler. So began the career path of "Zeke" to engage the craft of a certified public accountant, with an earned Ph.D.

To his credit as a finance director for the greater part of his career life, Dr. Orji has twice brought distinction to the City of Opa-locka having, again, received the coveted Government Finance Officers Association's *Distinguished Budget Presentation Award* for 2007. This award recognizes the presentation of budget documents of the very highest quality, reflecting both national guidelines and local GFOA's recommended budgeting practices.

A man of collective wisdom for financing strategies, Dr Orji engaged an initiative that commenced in 2007 and culminated this past April to secure sufficient funding to address the City's aging and inadequate water and sewer systems. Dr. Orji, with benefit of the City's administration and outside consultants, dared to marshal water and sewer utility rate increases at a time when State legislative actions seemed most adverse to local governments. Notwithstanding and subsequent to individual meetings with each elected official, the utilities rate increase measure received unanimous City Commission support; the support being so far reaching that its action will prove an advocate for the City's future and its water and sewer systems as dollars become available for maintenance and capacity expansion.

Likewise, Dr. Orji is noted for his expertise in sales tax bond financing and is heralded as one of few having secured, in the past, well over \$100 million bond revenue dollars for a regional transportation district.

Dr. Orji is the consummate, professional chief finance official and is one of two assistant city manager's in the City; his oversight being administration and internal affairs which in addition to finance, includes human resources and information technology systems; the former requiring a measure of the City's pulse on employee-citizens relations, the latter being responsible to automated all City departments by 2010, the year of workplace technology.