

(L to R) Environmental toxicologist Will Service and director of stormwater and erosions control Keith Huff update the community on the groundwater testing that was completed in the area.



Citizens from the Hanes-Lowrance neighborhood gathered at Hanes Hosiery Recreation Center last Wednesday to get more information on groundwater contamination discovered in the area last year.

# Citizens concerned about health issues linked to underground chemicals

BY TEVIN STINSON  
THE CHRONICLE

Concerned citizens lined the walls of a conference room at Hanes Hosiery Recreation Center last Wednesday, with a number of questions for city officials about the groundwater contamination near Hanes and Lowrance Middle Schools. "We need answers," said Brandon Williams who lives near the schools located on Indiana Ave. "More needs to be done to keep the community informed," he said. "We only know what we hear on

the news or read in the paper. They should be in direct contact with the entire community." Last year the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School Board decided to close the two schools after parents and students began to question the health risk linked to the chemicals found underneath the school and surrounding neighborhood. Now citizens who live in the area say they need to know more about the contaminated area and if they are at risk inside their own homes. A number of taxpayers said they wanted

more homes to be tested for contaminants as well. Director of storm water and erosions control Keith Huff said the city has tested a number of homes in the area and intends to test more homes in the future. "We have tested inside and underneath a number of houses in the area. We will be testing more houses in the coming weeks, but we need permission from homeowners to do so," said Huff. "We want to make sure everyone is safe." According to Huff, seven homes have been tested in the area for tetrachloroethylene (PCE) and

trichloroethylene (TCE), the two most concerning chemicals found in the area. Both chemicals have been linked directly to cancer. During the test, experts obtained ground samples from underneath a number of homes and tested the air quality inside a number of others believed to be in the affected area. Huff said none of the homes tested positive for PCE and only one home tested positive for TCE. Environmental toxicologist Will Service said the amount of TCE present in the home that tested posi-

tive would not cause any health issues because the amount present was so small. "The risk was extremely low in that one finding," he said. "A one-in-a-million cancer risk." Service mentioned large amounts of both chemicals have also been linked to a number of complications with the human liver. The chemicals only pose health risk when released into the air. According to Service, the chemicals do not pose any risk when present in the ground. During the meeting

Mayor Pro Tempore Vivian Burke said she understands the citizens' frustration. Burke mentioned she would personally ensure more homes are tested in the area and the community is kept up to date with any changes that may occur. "I totally understand the frustration of the community members," she said. "Many of these people have been living here for years and they deserve answers."

# Public art gets a city-county commission

BY TODD LUCK  
THE CHRONICLE

Winston-Salem and Forsyth County will soon be taking steps toward creating a City-County Public Art Commission to help foster local public art. Forsyth County Commissioners approved a city-county inter-local agreement for the commission on Monday. The City Council approved the agreement last month. The Public Art Commission will include artists, civic and business leaders, and community members passionate about public art. The commission will have a budget from the city that will be used for public art projects in Forsyth County and will be assisted by City-County Planning staff.



Beal

"There's been a big interest in public art over the years and it's actually been difficult to implement projects just because

there's been no dedicated group to do it," said Kelly Bennett, a project planner with the City-County Planning Board, who added that most major cities in the state already have a public art commission or advisory board. One common issue with public art, according to the city-county public art plan, is that often artists or art groups have a challenge finding space to put public art. The commission can ease that process by finding city or county property for such projects. Public art will be done all over the city and county, not just in downtown where it's most often found. The public art may be on public or private property and may be art in the public realm or art paid for by public funds.

According to the public art plan, the commission should reflect Winston-Salem and Forsyth County in race, ethnicity and



Photo By Todd Luck  
"Together We Rise" by African-American artist Vandorn Hinnant, which was commissioned by the City to honor its centennial, stands in Corpening Plaza.

demographics. County Commissioners will choose three to five appointees from nominations made by the towns that approved the public art plan. The mayor will choose six appointees, which will be approved by City Council, from applicants in Winston-Salem. Bennett said that a variety of members in the local art community were consulted in crafting the public art plan, like mural artist Marianne DiNapoli-Mylet, Arts Council President Jim Sparrow, Delta Arts Director Nadiyah Quander, and Endia Beal, director of the Diggs Gallery at Winston-Salem State University. Beal, who is also an artist known for her photography, said that she felt that the commission will be diverse and include

diverse artists in its projects. "There'll be a variety of perspectives coming from various cultural backgrounds to really create an inclusive way in which individuals can showcase their talents," she said. Beal said African-American artists are well represented in local public art. She said Winston-Salem State University has the largest collection of public art in the city in its sculpture garden on campus. She also said Corpening Plaza in downtown Winston-Salem is home to a sculpture called "Together We Rise" by African-American artist Vandorn Hinnant, which was commissioned by the City to honor its centennial. Bennett said that the new commission will help make projects like that one easier, since the City Council had to create a panel just to choose the design for the centennial art. The commission is expected to begin work later this year. Applications for the commission are currently being developed, which will be on the city and county websites.

# City finance committee approves police/fire pay raises

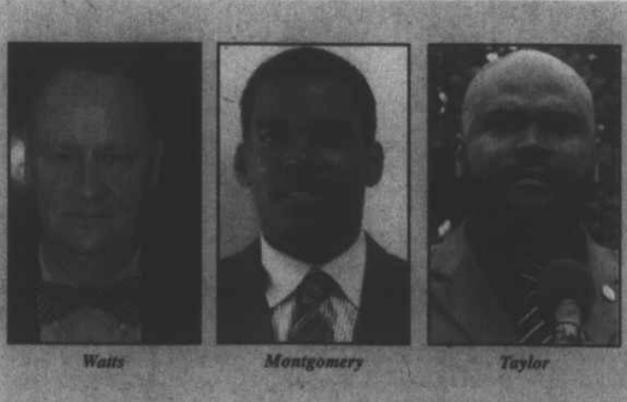
BY TODD LUCK  
THE CHRONICLE

The City's finance committee approved a plan on Monday, Dec. 11, to increase police and fire pay that's expected to pass the full City Council next week. The finance committee approved a plan that would raise the minimum pay for sworn police officers and certified firefighters by 7.5 percent on Feb. 1, with those paid below that getting an adjustment so their salaries meet the new minimum. In addition, there would be a two percent annual supplemental raise on Feb. 1 for those with at least one year of tenure that, pending approval in future budgets, would continue to happen annually in January. This is in addition to normal merit raises in July. All members of the City Council were in attendance and expressed sup-

port for the plan, which is expected to pass unanimously before the council on Tuesday. The plan addresses retention issues with police officers and firefighters as they leave for other departments that pay more. Winston-Salem is behind other Triad and other North Carolina cities with populations over 100,000 in police and fire pay. "If we're losing the brightest and best, we're not being responsible when it comes to public safety," said City Council Member James Taylor, who chairs the Public Safety Committee. Derwin Montgomery was among the council members who said he supported the plan, but also wanted to look at pay for other city employees and benefits as well, such as 401k contribution. A 2014 analysis found that 80 percent of positions in the city

paid less than similar jobs in other markets in the state. With the exception of police officers, Winston-Salem does not contribute to an employee's 401k. Contributing to an employee's 401k is a common practice for cities and towns. "I'm not in any way lowering the concern on police and fire, but just raising the concern for the rest of the employees that we have because of the fact that they are not organized like police and fire are," said Montgomery. Captain Danny Watts was among two officers that spoke about police pay before the City Council last year, bringing attention to the issue. He was among several officers in attendance at the meeting. Watts, who at the time was in charge of recruiting for the Winston-Salem Police Department, said he was glad the City Council is

taking action. "We're still going to be a little below a lot of the other departments, so there are going to be departments that offer more pay, officers will have those opportunities, but I think the people who want to be in Winston-Salem ... as far as living here and have roots here, this is going to help them stay," said Watts, who was recently promoted to head the WSPD Professional Standards Division. David Pollard, president of the Winston-Salem Professional Fire Fighters Association, said he was also glad that it was being addressed, but has heard many complaints among firefighters about compression. "This compression is



Watts

Montgomery

Taylor

going to cause even more people to walk out the door than retaining them," said Pollard. He also said benefits, like 401k and a greater contribution on health insurance need, to be dealt with. Health insurance has been going up annually by about 5 percent for city employees, which Pollard said has been making the small merit raises in the past few years feel negligible for many firefighters. The money for the police/fire pay plan comes out of the general fund. The City can cover it because it had more revenue than

expected from sources like property taxes, registered motor vehicles, and an increase in sales tax collection, which are expected to continue in future years. City Manager Lee Garrity told the City Council that to do more than the regular market and merit increases for non-public safety city employees in the 2016/2017 budget would require looking at taxes and other revenue sources. A draft of the budget is scheduled to be presented to the finance committee in March and approved by the City Council in June for implementation in July.