

Hanes-Lowrance community residents still wait on action

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

After waiting more than two months for an update on the groundwater contamination in their neighborhood, residents who live in the Hanes-Lowrance neighborhood will have to wait at least another month before they know if they are in danger in their own homes.

During a meeting held at Hanes Hosiery Recreation Center, Director of Storm Water and Erosions Keith Huff said the results from the groundwater testing should be available by April 12.

A number of residents said that while they are waiting on test results, they could be exposing themselves to dangerous chemicals. Brenda Williams said she hasn't been told anything about the testing or the possibility that she could be in danger.

"This is eerie to the

Flint, Michigan situation," continued Williams, "as in the lack of transparency and communication."

"I know there are a number of people in this community just like me who don't know what's going on. It shouldn't be this hard to get information."

The city is testing for two chemicals that have been linked to cancer, tetrachloroethylene (PCE) and trichloroethylene (TCE). While residents do not consume the contaminated groundwater, vapors from the chemicals can work their way through the soil and into the air.

According to records, 22 homes in the area have been tested for the cancer-causing chemicals.

While the city designated only 19 homes for testing, three voluntarily participated. A presentation shown during the meeting noted 29 indoor air sam-

ples have been collected, as well as eight sub-slab samples.

Huff mentioned that while testing has halted, they are still monitoring water wells in the area on a regular basis. He mentioned anyone who is concerned and would like to have their home tested can still do so.

"We want to make sure everyone is safe," Huff said.

Another meeting to discuss the test results has been scheduled for 6 p.m. on April 22 at Hanes Hosiery Recreation Center, 501 Reynolds Blvd.

For more information on the testing that was conducted and to have your home or property tested, visit the city's official website, www.cityofws.org and click on stormwater-erosion-control listed under departments.

Photos by Tevin Stinson
Mayor Pro Tempore Vivian Burke speaks to residents during a meeting held at Hanes Hosiery Recreation Center to address groundwater contamination in the area.



(L) Director of Storm Water and Erosions Keith Huff and (R) Assistant City Manager Greg Turner discuss the testing done in the vicinity of Hanes and Lowrance middle schools on Thursday, March 17.

Commissioners split on MWBE requirements for parking deck repairs

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Forsyth County Commissioners split 5-2 in their Monday, March 14 meeting on a contract to repair the Sheriff's Office parking deck.

The two dissenting commissioners, Walter Marshall and Everette Witherspoon, objected that Frank L. Blum Construction Company, the lowest bidder, did not meet the 10 percent minority and women business enterprise (MWBE) participation goal. The second lowest bidder, which was about \$8,000 higher, exceeded the MWBE goal.

"When you're dealing with public dollars, then you have the responsibility to meet these MWBE goals,"

said Witherspoon.

The contract is \$841,969 to repair structural issues in the sheriff's parking deck. The Sheriff's Office is located in the former Phillips Building, which was built in the early 1970s. The Sheriff's Office moved into the renovated building in 2013 and issues with the parking deck were discovered the next year. The deck continues to be used with problem areas being roped off. The repairs involve removing and replacing steel and concrete, as well as providing a protective sealant to prevent moisture from seeping in.

Everette said that larger jobs that require a variety of disciplines like the renovations of the Forsyth County

Library, which is also being done by Blum Construction, usually have no problem meeting MWBE standards. He said it's smaller, specialized jobs like the parking deck repairs that keep coming in below the MWBE goal.

Ten percent minority and women contractor participation is a goal but not a requirement, as long as the bidder can meet county standards for "good faith efforts" to try to get MWBE participation, which Blum did according to county officials.

Both Witherspoon and Marshall said they believed the requirements for MWBE participation and the standards for good faith efforts on County projects are too low, especially when compared to other counties.



Marshall



Witherspoon

N.C. GOP's 1st black chairman feels the heat

BY GARY D. ROBERTSON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH, N.C. — Less than a year after the North Carolina Republican Party's first black chairman was elected over an establishment candidate, a powerful committee has reprimanded him and restricted his duties, accusing him of overstepping his authority.

The state GOP's Central Committee censured Hasan Harnett on Sunday with a "no confidence" resolution partly due to his actions on the party's upcoming convention and its computer system.

"I certainly think that he has not demonstrated the leadership capacity that is needed to be the chairman of the Republican Party," said state Rep. David Lewis, a Republican National Committee member and Central Committee member. He called Harnett's actions the result of either "intentional malfeasance or just ineptitude."

Lewis himself faced an unsuccessful effort by party activists to remove him as an RNC member in January. The committee's resolution alleges Harnett wrongly acted on personnel decisions and improperly evaluated attempts to remove party leaders.

Harnett declined to comment when reached by phone. But he has recently defended himself in social media postings, referring to "silly tricks, attacks and lies" against him.

Daniel Rufty, one of his allies on the Central Committee, called the committee's actions part of a "witch hunt" by party leaders against Harnett's efforts to give more influence to grassroots

Republican activists who elected him last June.

"They're out to destroy Harnett, and they've been doing that since day one," Rufty said Monday. The state GOP also said the committee had censured Rufty on Sunday "for false and malicious statements about other Republicans."

Removing Harnett from office would require a two-thirds vote of the 500-plus member GOP executive committee.

The fight comes as Republicans in North Carolina hold control of the legislature and the governor's mansion simultaneously, a prize they won in 2013 for the first time in more than 140 years. But redistricting lawsuits and Donald Trump's potential presidential nomination raise uncertainty about how GOP down-ballot candidates will fare in November.

Harnett, from the Charlotte suburb of Harrisburg, had been a campaign manager for a 2014 congressional candidate and minority outreach director for the state GOP when he ran for chairman last year. Gov. Pat McCrory, Lewis and nearly every top elected Republican politician in the state endorsed Harnett's rival.

Harnett has tried to shake things up from the

beginning. Arriving for his nomination speech, Harnett entered the delegate hall with a small marching band drum line banging out a beat to rev up the crowd.


By September, the Central Committee, with about 50 voting and non-voting members, chose veteran conservative activist Dallas Woodhouse as the party's executive director, instead of a candidate favored by Harnett's allies. And GOP legislative leaders passed a bill letting them control their own caucus funds otherwise overseen by the party brass.


Earlier this month, when he was locked out of his party email account during what Woodhouse called a server security sweep, Harnett referenced his race, seemingly out of frustration.

"I really question your purpose and motive," Harnett wrote in a March 9 email to Woodhouse and the party treasurer. "I mean seriously, is this some form of ritual or hazing you would put the first black chairman of the NCGOP state party through? Or is it because I am not white enough for you?"

The conflict climaxed recently with a dispute over the cost to attend this May's state convention, according to Republicans. The Central Committee resolution said Harnett reduced prices unilaterally and usurped the committee's power to set the rates.


The party's financial health "has suffered greatly under Mr. Harnett's tenure because he has fallen well short of his own fundraising goals and promises," the state GOP's news release said.



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Visit WakeHealth.edu/BestHealth for class descriptions and other events. Events are FREE of charge and require registration, unless otherwise noted.

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