

County approves airport agreement with City

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

The Forsyth County Board of Commissioners approved an agreement with the City of Winston-Salem to provide funding for the Smith Reynolds Airport, potentially bringing to an end the possibility of de-annexation.

The agreement, approved in the commissioner's Monday, May 9 meeting, has the City and County giving the airport \$150,000 each for eight years. City funds will be used for capital expenses and County funds can be used for operating or capital expenses. The City version of the resolution states that the agreement is contingent on it not being de-annexed.

"It's an agreement that's beneficial to all three parties," said County Commissioner Ted Kaplan, who also serves on the Airport Commission.

The City Council finance committee approved the agreement, which will be voted on by the full council on Monday, May 16.

The airport has been a source of tension between the City and County for months. Smith Reynolds is owned by the County and is run by an Airport Commission, which asked the City for relief from stormwater fees on its runways



The Smith Reynolds Airport will stay a part of the city and will receive new funds for capital projects as part of a new City/County agreement.

and taxiways last year, an issue that is still in committee. The Airport Commission voted in March to explore de-annexing the airport out of the City as a solution. The airport officials argued that if the airport didn't pay \$118,000 annually in stormwater

fees, they could use the money to secure state and federal funds for needed capital improvements. They also say that airplane owners paying both City and County taxes make Smith Reynolds less competitive than competing airports in the

state, which are usually outside city limits.

County commissioners presented the idea of de-annexation to Forsyth County lawmakers last month and legislators urged them to find a local solution. That's exactly what they've done, said County Commissioner Walter Marshall, who didn't support de-annexation.

"My whole thing was that we need to sit down and work something out," said Marshall.

County commissioners recently approved a resolution requesting that state lawmakers exempt municipalities from city stormwater fees statewide. Marshall, along with County Commissioner Everette Witherspoon, opposed the measure. Marshall said that the fees are important to fund programs to prevent stormwater pollution, which are federally mandated in larger cities, and doubted the resolution would become legislation.

When the City Council public works committee heard the airport's request on stormwater fees, there was resistance on the committee to granting an exemption just for the airport. Instead, the committee is exploring giving stormwater fee credits, commonly used by other cities, for businesses who install preventative stormwater measures.

County moves to combine Sheriff's Office forensics unit with W-S Police Department's

Sheriff's Office also requests more pay and staff to combat high turnover and understaffing

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Forsyth County commissioners approved consolidating the forensic services of the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office with the Winston-Salem Police Department during its Monday, May 9 meeting.

Currently, the WSPD has 38 non-sworn staff and the Sheriff's office has five sworn staff in their forensic units. Under the agreement, the WSPD Forensics Unit will add five non-sworn positions paid for by the County and, along with its normal duties, will provide

forensic support outside the city limits, excluding Kernersville. After the first year, cost sharing will be determined by how much work is done inside the City versus outside the City limits.

The entire Forensic Service Unit will be on the second floor of the Beaty Public Safety Center on Patterson Avenue when renovations of that space are complete. This will free up space used at the former sheriff's administration building on West Third Street, which SciWorks and the Children's Museum of Winston-Salem have expressed interest in using as a new joint location.

It's the latest in a series of jointly funded law enforcement functions by the City and County including evidence management, arrestee process-

ing at the Forsyth County Detention Center, and an indoor firearms training facility. This latest measure will save the County \$94,000.

"This is another step in the right direction," said County Commissioner Walter Marshall.

The commissioners also heard a budget request for the Sheriff's office last week during their Thursday, May 5 briefing. Sheriff Bill Schatzman told commissioners his office has two big needs: more staff to deal with the increased demand on sheriff services and "competitive and reasonable compensation" to "recruit and retain good employees."

"No law enforcement agency can protect its community without enough people to do the work," he

said. "The people who do the work must be motivated; they must be motivated because they feel valued."

Schatzman asked for \$1.5 million dollars in salary adjustments to make pay competitive with other law enforcement agencies. He asked for incentive pay for officers in SWAT, the detention center's special response team, K-9 units and field training. He also asked for incentive pay for education for all qualified personnel. Both are common incentives for law enforcement agencies, he said.

Schatzman asked for compensation for sworn

and detention personnel be revisited to counter high turnover and vacancies that are costly in training new officers and in overtime paid to compensate for the lack of staff.

For new staff, he asked for 24 full-time and one part-time new positions, which would cost about \$1.8 million, including eight officers for patrol to address increased calls for service, five narcotics investigators, three court bailiffs, two investigators for the joint FBI Safe Streets task force and four civil deputies to help with the backlog on child support cases. Non-sworn

positions are an office assistant for the "dramatic increase" in recent years in pistol purchase and concealed carry permit requests, a public information officer and a part-time accreditation paperwork.

The issues the Sheriff's office has with competitive pay and retention are similar to the ones that the WSPD brought before the Winston-Salem City Council last year. The City took action increasing sworn police pay across the board to get officer wages closer to market.



Schatzman



(l-r) Berline Sima, Charity Hampton, Brian Stroud, Bernie Buckles, Claire Culbreath, Jennifer Finley, Howard Patterson and Anastasia Powell.

7 local singers selected for National Blind Idol semifinals on Saturday

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Seven area singers were selected as semifinalists for the national A Brighter Path Blind Idol competition hosted by Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind (IFB). The seven local area singers are:

- *Bernie Buckles, Winston-Salem
- *Brian Stroud, Winston-Salem
- *Claire Culbreath, Winston-Salem
- *Howard Patterson, Winston-Salem
- *Jennifer Finley, Winston-Salem
- *Charity Hampton, Rural Hall
- *Berline Sima, Winston-Salem

The 2016 Blind Idol singing competition is sponsored by A Brighter Path Foundation, the supporting foundation of Winston-Salem Industries for the Blind. Anastasia Powell, program associate for IFB's A Brighter Path, and Chris Flynt, director of A Brighter Path, are returning as the event's co-organizers.

"Music has the ability to move all of us - young and old, sighted and not sighted."

said Powell. "Blind Idol is a great opportunity to showcase our talents on a national stage and enjoy these tremendous performances."

The 2016 Blind Idol singing competition is open to any legally blind adult who is 18 years or older and a resident of the United States. The Blind Idol winner will receive a Grand Prize package of \$1,000 cash, eight hours of recording time at a recording facility in Winston-Salem, and a professional headshot. The total prize package is valued at \$3,000.

In total, 20 singers from across the country were selected for the semifinal round being held on Saturday, May 14 at 3 p.m. at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA). The public is invited and the event is free of charge.

Five finalists will move on to the live finale competition on Aug. 6, also being held at SECCA. Complete event details are available at www.blindidol.com.

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