

Public comments on city budget; New IDR initiative pleads for funding

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Community grants, fire inspectors and city worker pay were among the topics at the city budget public hearing on Thursday, June 9.

For two hours, the City Council heard public comments on the proposed budget. Most comments were from nonprofits the city supports with grant funds. Those



Pollard

Bass said it was a project that reflects the principals of unity and anti-racism he's been championing.

Rev. Gary Williams told the council that Share is looking at sites in the southern part of the city, but needed start-up money for feasibility and market studies on the locations.

"We can't do that without some sort of initial funding from the city of Winston-Salem," he said.

Williams said Share is following the model of Greensboro's Renaissance Community Cooperative, which broke ground on its store in March. The City of Greensboro gave Renaissance a \$250,000 grant to help it start. Share is requesting \$116,725 from the city.

Other organizations were also turned down in the proposed budget—like the Josh Howard Foundation, Industries for the Blind and Whole Man Ministries—but Share was the only one that spoke.

A variety of groups are receiving funding in the budget like The Sergie Foundation, which helps low income families afford veterinary care for their pets, and Eureka Ministry, which helps offenders find housing. Other groups included the National Black Theater Festival, NABVETS, HARRY Veteran

Outreach Services, Experiment in Self Reliance, Shepherd's Center, SciWorks, Old Salem and IDR, which will receive \$33,350 in its regular city funding.

David Pollard of the Winston-Salem

"In some ways, it's like we're having DSS subsidize our jobs."

—Dee Washington, Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods

Professional Fire Fighters Association spoke in support of the first of three new fire inspector positions in the budget that will eventually handle all fire inspections, a job currently done by firefighters.

"Winston-Salem is the only major city in North Carolina that does operations-based inspections and there is a very clear reason for that," he said. "Most cities abandoned that years ago because of the fact that the inspections done on the operation level are just not able to be done thoroughly enough."

He said it's hard for firefighters to enforce a 47 chapter-long fire code's on top of their other duties like training, hydrant maintenance, public education and smoke detector installations. He said firefighters will sometimes have to leave in the middle of an inspection to respond

to a fire alarm.

Several also spoke about city worker pay. The budget includes a 3 percent market pay increase and a 1.5 to 3 percent merit pay increase. But Philip Carter said that wouldn't be enough for those making the lowest wages.

The original proposed budget would've increased the minimum wage for city workers from \$10.10 to \$10.40. Dee Washington of Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods said a lot of residents are concerned with a living wage and are organizing around the issue. She asked how many city workers live below the poverty line.

"In some ways, it's like we're having DSS subsidize our jobs," she said.

The proposed budget has now been revised so that the minimum wage for city workers will be \$11. A plan for a central city police district in and around downtown has been removed, which eliminates five new positions, so the police can devote the funds to increased recruitment efforts. There are also three new positions for upcoming splash parks and two new analyst positions that have been eliminated. There's now also increased funding for the Urban League Summer Youth Employment Program and to Successful Outcomes After Re-entry (SOAR) grants.

The city council will vote on the budget in its Monday, June 20 meeting.



Williams

community organizations were chosen based on the recommendations of the Community Agency Allocation Committee. The committee is made up of nine citizens who review city grant requests. One organization whose request wasn't in the proposed budget was a new initiative of Freedom Tree at IDR (Institute for Dismantling Racism) called Share Cooperative of Winston-Salem. Share wants to open a member-owned grocery store that will sell affordable, healthy food in a food desert. IDR founder Rev. Willard

Discussion continues on early voting

BY TODD LUCK
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Several members of the public spoke in support of an early voting site at Winston-Salem State University during the



Forsyth County Board of Elections meeting on Tuesday, June 14.

The BOE continued its consideration of early voting sites during its canvass meeting for the June 7 primary. During the comment session, several said the BOE should use the WSSU's Anderson Center, which was an early voting site from 2000-2012.

"I would just like to point out that this is part of a broader concern with people at schools and universities who may not have vehicles, particularly schools that have a large residential population, should be taken into consideration to make sure that those people have easy access to the polls," said Katherine McGinnis.

Freshmen at WSSU cannot park on campus and the nearest early voting site would be more than a 30-minute walk from campus. Other large local universities either let freshmen park on campus or shuttle them to and from an off-campus lot.

Forsyth County Democratic Party Chair Eric Ellison said the concern BOE Chair Ken Raymond voiced publicly about a WSSU professor giving extra credit for early voting wasn't a valid reason to take away early voting from the site after he became chair in 2013.

"I really ask that you reconsider," Ellison said. "If there's a more substantive reason for denying the Anderson Center, please share that with the community and the public; they would like to know."

Raymond, then a poll worker, filed a complaint about the alleged incident in 2010, but couldn't find the professor who supposedly gave the extra credit. The Forsyth BOE at the time dismissed the complaint because nothing of value was exchanged for voting for a particular candidate or party.

"I think that you're hearing a lot of voices from colleges that do have good access and hearing about all the concerns about the Winston-Salem State community, I think it's very important to take that into consideration," said Wake Forest Student Zachary Bynum.

BOE member Stuart Russell said that it wasn't the 2010 incident that kept it from being included in 2014 early voting. He said he didn't recall the incident coming up when they discussed the early voting plan back then, which passed unanimously.

The sole Democrat on the board, Fleming El-Amin, has said he was trying to reach census at the time. That changed during the discussion for March primary early voting when two petitions with a total of 10,000 signatures were presented to the board in support of the site.

Raymond assured attendees no one was trying to make it harder for college students to vote and that "we will see how that turns out" on the Anderson site.

"Access to voting for college students throughout the county will be fair and equal," he said.

Of the three board

members, El-Amin is the only one with Anderson and Sunday voting on his early voting plan. El-Amin has said he'll appeal to the state if WSSU is not in the final plan.

Sites that all the board members agree on are the BOE office, Mazie Woodruff Center, Polo Park Recreation Center, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Kernersville Senior Center/Library along with the Clemmons, Southside, Walkertown, Lewisville and Rural Hall Libraries. All members also want to look into sites at Reynolds and Hanes Hosiery recreation centers. Staff said they were still trying to get in touch with Industries for the Blind on its request for a possible early voting site.

One site that's attempting to get off the early voting list is South Fork Recreation Center. Recreation and Parks Director Tim Grant told the board that it has conflicts with two shows, the Gingerbread Festival and the Holly Jolly Crafts Show, happening simultaneously during early voting. When it was used in 2014, it had only one craft show during early voting and was able to eventually make accommodations. He said canceling the shows would be an \$80,000 revenue loss for the center.

"We would respectfully ask for this board to consider another location for early voting," said Grant.

Raymond and Russell were still interested in the site, asking staff to continue to see if a solution can be found. Russell said since it's a public facility, they could compel it to host early voting, if needed. El-Amin said considering the revenue at stake for the center, he could no longer support an early voting site there.

Also on Tuesday, the BOE completed its canvass of the June 7 primary and released the final official results:

Fifth District House of Representatives (Republicans)		John Larson	97062	99%
Virginia Foxx	6,26061	34%	Carolyn Highsmith	570 37 01%
Pattie Curran	3,94538	66%	NC Supreme Court (bipartisan)	
Fifth District House of Representatives (Democrats)		Bob Edmunds	9,331	47.46%
Josh Brannon	5,150 52	32%	Mike Morgan	6,509 33.11%
Charlie Wallin	2,486 25	26%	Sabra Jean Faires	2,490 12.67%
Jim Roberts	2,20722	42%	Daniel Robertson	1,329 6.76%
South Ward City Council (Democrats)		Total ballots cast: 20,602		
		Voter turnout: 8.51%		

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