

Construction of new Lowrance school, other bond projects to start in 2017



Watts

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

County bonds projects will begin next year with the construction of a new Lowrance Middle School and replacements for two other schools.

In November, voters ratified a \$350 million school bond, a \$65 million Forsyth Technical Community College bond and \$15 million county parks bond. The county will issue its first allocation of \$107.5 million for bonds to be used next year, with more allocations to come over the next eight years.

"It really is a decade commitment to improve schools," said County Manager Dudley Watts in a county briefing last week. Many education proj-

ects begin next year. One will be a new school for Lowrance, which made headlines in 2015 when concerns over pollution at its former site caused both it and Hanes Middle to relocate. The school is currently located at Atkins Academic and Technology High School, but was in need of a new building before the toxicity scare.

The new Lowrance will be built on the campus of Paisley IB Magnet School, which will also have a replacement school there that'll break ground next year and increase the school's capacity from 627 students to 1,027.

Konnoak Elementary, which was cut from the last bond, will have a long overdue replacement that will increase its capacity.

Ground is expected to be broken on these projects by April and they should be completed by 2019.

The school system will also begin equipping all schools with new technology, which is expected to take six years. They will include interactive boards and computers for all classrooms and a 3-D printer for every media center. Assistant Superintendent Darrell Walker said that this will put all classrooms on the same footing.

"It'll allow us to bring some equity to every classroom in the district," he said.

The school system will also start various maintenance and capital projects that will span eight years and begin traffic and safety improvements at various

schools that should be complete by 2018.

Projects will also begin for county parks in 2017, like renovations at Union Cross, Walkertown and 421 River playgrounds. There will also be architectural and engineering design work done for the many bond projects at Tanglewood Park.

Playground renovations at all county parks are expected to be completed by 2019. Tanglewood's projects are expected to begin in 2018, with most scheduled for completion by 2022. Construction of a multi-use agricultural event center is expected to begin in 2021, with its final phase scheduled for completion by the end of 2024.

Forsyth Tech's projects are not scheduled to break

ground until 2018. This includes Oak Grove Center renovations, which are scheduled for completion in 2019, as well as the creation of hangar and classroom space for an aviation program at Smith Reynolds Airport, which is expected to be completed in 2020. Construction of the new Learning Commons on campus is expected to run from 2020-2022 and the expansion of the Transportation Center on Patterson Avenue will be from 2022-2023.

Future start dates for school system projects are:

- Six additional pre-kindergarten classrooms and a new middle school on Robinhood Road in 2018.
- Philo-Hill Magnet Academy renovations and

Easton Elementary School addition in 2019.

• Security cameras at various schools, Wiley Magnet Middle School expansion and a replacement school for Brunson Elementary in 2020.

• Renovation of North Forsyth High School and purchase of land for a future school in the eastern part of the county in 2021.

• Additions to Griffith and Ward elementary schools, renovations at East Forsyth and Kennedy high schools and construction of a new middle school at State Farm in 2022.

• The design for the replacement Ashley Academy will be done in 2023.



Kelly



Photos by Todd Luck

IFB Optical employee Damarrious Bowens recently became the third visually impaired person in the country to earn American Board of Opticianry (ABO) certi-

IFB

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currently helping others get their certification. He's preparing nine other IFB employees, including three blind employees, for the test with weekly review sessions and a study guide he prepared himself.

Bowens said he's glad to be an IFB employee, and

the lawsuit possibly shutting IFB Optical worries him.

"It makes me uneasy because I'm working very hard at the job I'm doing and I have the opportunity to grow at this job," he said.



IFB Optical, which fills prescriptions for more than 240,000 veterans annually, could be affected by a lawsuit over AbilityOne contracts.

Legacy

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children from low income households to shoot for the stars. While teaching at Philo-Hill, after his tenure as NCAE president, Ellis spearheaded a step team, a book room for students, and other programs.

Those who knew him well say Ellis always put children first.

"He dedicated many years of his life advocating for all children to make certain they revved the best education possible," said current FCAE President Rhonda Mays.

Before voting unanimously to rename the classroom in his honor during the school board meeting on Tuesday, members of the school board talked about the impact Ellis had on the hundreds of students he came in contact with over the years. Board Vice Chairman Robert Barr, who worked with Ellis in the early 2000s, said if anyone could reach priority or low performing students, it was Ellis.

Longtime board member Elizabeth Motsinger said Ellis had tremendous courage and wasn't afraid to say what needed to be said.

"Every one of us can learn a thing or two from Rodney," said Motsinger. "He showed us how to be fierce and yet kind in our protection of our children."

Superintendent Dr. Beverly Emory said what impressed her most about Ellis was his willingness to return to the classroom after serving as NCAE president. She said that says a lot about what kind of person Ellis was.

Emory also thanked the staff at Philo-Hill for helping make Ellis' dream a reality.

"Of all the things he could have done, he chose to return to Philo-Hill, that was the place he wanted to be," continued Emory. "He had this vision of things he wanted to do for students - a step team, this book room and no one should ever be hungry."

"Many of Rodney's visions have come to be, and his legacy will live on. We appreciate everything he has done for this district."

A special ceremony to honor Ellis is expected to be held at Philo-Hill next week. According to Emory, the staff at the school has been working for months to prepare for the event.



Winston-Salem native Vincent Wilkins performs during poetry night at the W.R. Anderson Center.



Poetry night organizer Teayne Vinson performs a piece during poetry night at the W.R. Anderson Center.

Photos by Timothy Ramsey
There were over 20 acts that came out to perform for a packed room poetry night at the W.R. Anderson Center.



W.R. Anderson rec center offers poetry night

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY
THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem Local Organizing Committee (WSLOC) sponsored a poetry night at the W.R. Anderson Recreation Center last Thursday, Dec. 8. The event was the brain child of Teayne Vinson, who spoke with Effraing Muhammad, facilitator of WSLOC and local representative for the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, about the idea, and it took off from there.

The WSLOC was founded as a result of the 10th and 20th anniversaries of the Million Man March.

Local organizing committees are designed to unite African-American communities in that they are not focused on any one specific religion. The goals are to promote, organize and mobilize African-Americans to operate independently outside of governmental agencies.

Vinson said she reached out to people via social media about the event and had a high number of responses. She reached out to Bryant McCorkle, director of the W.R. Anderson rec center, and he was more than happy to help her.

There were many individuals who came out and recited their original poems. The theme of the night seemed to be the

uplifting of the African-American community and embracing the culture.

"People got up there and were vulnerable and as long as you can be vulnerable with someone you can always build a relationship," said Vincent Wilkins, a poetry night participant. "It's hard for people to be vulnerable, especially when they are talking about their real lives, and that's what resonated the most with me."

"I never want someone to be in awe of me when I perform," Wilkins said. "I hope that they think and go home and unlock the treasures that are within them. It's therapeutic for me and hopefully someone can dig within themselves to see

what they can find."

Vinson says since the event was such a success, she definitely plans on holding another poetry night.

"I'm a very artistic person and in my heart I'm a singer, writer and poet," said Vinson. "I was very pleased with the turnout and the level of consciousness and content is exactly what we wanted. The purpose was to promote awareness and consciousness in one another so that we can be doers of our words."

Vinson said she wants to build upon the first poetry night by possibly adding music.

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