

# The Charlotte Post

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## School board could make Cochrane Middle a magnet

By John Minter  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Cochrane Middle School would become a magnet in 1997, if the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board moves ahead with ideas discussed during a pupil assignment work session Tuesday night.

Board chair Susan Burgess said the school system has asked IBM to donate computers and multimedia workstations to Cochrane, as it plans to do to schools in the new Education Village.

Those new workstations could be the core of a communications magnet for Cochrane, which will become 80 percent African American next year.

Students in neighborhoods around Cochrane could still attend the school, since the enrollment will drop since the school board is leaning toward assigning Newell Elementary students to the new eastside middle school, rather than Cochrane. Newell area parents packed a public hearing last week to seek that change.

Burgess said the moves don't mean the school board is bucking to public pressure.

"Parents are listened to and when they have reasons that make sense to us, the board is willing to adapt the plan.

The Newell attendance area is naturally integrated, 75 percent white and 25 percent black," she said. "One of our guiding principles for pupil assignment is to identify integrated communities and assign them to neighborhood school. Newell's attendance is across the street from the new school. It is my projection they will be included."

The Education Village was to be a "workplace" magnet for parents who work at University City area businesses. Several of those businesses

promised to provide resources, such as computers, for the new school.

Shifting some of those donated resources to other schools affected by the new magnet, such as Cochrane and Statesville Avenue, would address the concerns of school board members about whether resources are being allocated equitably to schools.

George Dunlap, for example, suggested two weeks ago that Education Village schools not become magnets since the donated resources would make them naturally attractive to parents.

Burgess spoke to that concern.

"The Education Village is

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## Wanted: Candidates for District 2 county commissioners race

By Winfred B. Cross  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Has apathy taken a stronghold in the Mecklenburg County Commission District 2 race?

The filing deadline is Feb. 5.



Stevenson

Only one candidate, former Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board member Sarah Stevenson, has filed.

The lack of interest has political observers and retiring commissioner Jim Richardson baffled. Richardson holds the seat but is not running for reelection.

"I'm really surprised," he said. "Filing isn't over yet, but I'm surprised."

Richardson has held the seat since 1994 when he filled the unexpired term of Bob Walton. Walton died July 12, 1994 of a heart attack.

Walton won the Democratic primary and was seeking his eighth term on the board. Richardson was nomination to replace Walton on the fall ballot. But it was a fight. Richardson won easily, but several others - including N.C. NAACP President Kelley Alexander attorney James Exum and Stevenson - campaigned for the spot.

The campaign raised a lively debate over whether a crop of new politicians should take the leadership reins from the older generation.

"I think it's a shame we're always hearing this old guard-young guard (stuff)," Richardson said. "But when the day of reckoning comes, where are the young folks? I'm all for young people running. I think they should. This race is

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## GRAVE CONCERNS



PHOTO/ CALVIN FERGUSON

Patricia and Jerry Black, (l.), with Lillian Roberts and Jackie Ferguson in abandoned Cedar Grove cemetery. The members of the Taylor/LaSalle community group want the gravesite and a nearby wooded lot cleaned up.

## Taylor/LaSalle residents want old cemetery cleaned up

By John Minter  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The overgrown graves, many sunken and unmarked, lie amid an overgrowth of trees and bushes.

It is a place where old tires and bottles seem as much at home as the engraved gray stones marking the final resting place of dearly departed loved ones.

Located on Hildebrand Street off Beatties Ford Road, the old Cedar Grove Cemetery is adjacent to Northwest

Middle and University Park schools. The latter will reopen in the fall as an arts magnet.

Failure to properly maintain the cemetery may not only be unsightly, it could be tragic, says Lillian Roberts, chairperson of the Taylor/LaSalle community association around the cemetery.

School children walking or riding to the renovated University Park school pass by the cemetery and a similarly overgrown lot at Taylor and Hildebrand.

They see it as they get off

and onto their buses. They can see it if they look out of their classrooms.

"It is really hazardous," Roberts said. "There is no fence around it or anything. Those children could run up in the cemetery playing and fall in one of those holes. Children like to go into the woods. It is just dangerous.

"Children may be walking in the area to school and who knows, they might say 'let's cut through these woods.' They are just children and we have to be responsible for

them."

The history of the cemetery, perhaps, mirrors the history of the small African American community of which it is part.

As the story goes, the cemetery came into being sometime around the turn of the century when the Misenheimer family was developing Oaklawn cemetery for the city's whites and thought to provide space for African Americans also.

When the city took over Oaklawn Cemetery back in

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## Reparations urged for U.S. blacks

By Sidney A. Moore Jr.  
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Leaders of a national effort to get the United States government to pay black people for slavery and subsequent oppression met in Charlotte last weekend.

Hannibal Afrik of Chicago and Johnita Scott of Baton Rouge, La., co-chairs of the National Coalition of Black for Reparations in America, were hosted by the Charlotte chapter of the Washington, D.C.-based organization. They were among 10 members of the group's 15 member national board of directors here to attend a quarterly meeting.

African Americans deserve compensation from the government for centuries of oppression based on skin color, reparations supporters say. It may not heal the economic and social damage done to black people, but it's a start, they argue.

"You really think about the word 'reparations' coming from the word repair," Scott said.

She and Afrik led discussion of plans the group has for its 1996 program, which includes seeking broader support of reparations legislation at the federal level.

N'COBRA encourages members to promote the reparation campaign by sending letters to congressional representatives supporting H.R. 891, a bill sponsored by Rep. John Conyers, D-Michigan. The group is also planning its seventh convention in Atlanta in June. Afrik said it is no coincidence that the Olympics will be held there during that time.

"We want to internationalize our concern for reparation and this will give us an invaluable opportunity to get exposure," he said.

Another activity being planned by the group is its annual "Reparations Awareness Day," which originated in 1993. Set for Feb. 25, N'COBRA chapters sponsor efforts to heighten public awareness of all issues related to reparations.

In addition to legislative and international advocacy, the group encourages its members to lobby locally.

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## Blacks need 21st century computer skills

By John Minter  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Few Americans can get through the day without encountering a computer.

But for many African Americans, that encounter is outside of the home.

The African American community is in danger of being left behind as this country and the world rushes headlong into the computer-based 21st century.

It will be a world of "drag-and-drop," "open architecture," and "net cruising." Bits and bytes. RAM and ROM.

Hard drives and peripherals. Motherboards and daughterboards. DIMMs and SIMMs.

Failure of African Americans to become computer literate and to train children to do so could have devastating effects on the continued economic and social viability of the race.

Many African American professionals, educators and social activists agree blacks aren't doing enough to prepare their children for the information age.

In summary, they said:

A growing number of everyday life activities can be done from home with computers,

including banking, paying bills, filing taxes, purchasing products and services.

One day, the home computer may be the only way to conduct everyday affairs. And that doesn't include the educational and entertainment value of having them in the home.

Businesses are replacing people with technology and the jobs will be held by those who understand and master that technology.

Unless African Americans move quickly into the computer age and bring their chil-

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PHOTO/ JAMES BROWN

Christie Ochieng, 8, center, works on computer in the Public Library Main Branch with her brother, Jeremy, 6, foreground, and Jalrus Jenkins, 8, in background.

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