

Support for review board grows

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killed by Officer Michael Marlow in November 1996 and Carolyn Stafford Boetticher, 48, was shot and killed last week on State Street in the Seversville community.

Boetticher was a passenger in a car which sped through a police license checkpoint about 10 p.m. on April 8. Two officers fired 22 shots in an attempt to stop the car. Boetticher was hit in the back of the neck by a .40-caliber bullet and died about five hours after the incident.



Thompson

was later charged with possession of a police officer, possession of cocaine and possession of a stolen vehicle.

Both Cooper and Thompson were unarmed, though officers said they felt their lives were in danger. Marlow and Farmer were cleared of wrongdoing by the police department and District Attorney Peter Gilchrist refused to file criminal charges.

The City of Charlotte earlier this year paid \$550,000 to Thompson's children.

Boetticher, a housekeeper at the Doubletree Inn on West Trade Street, is the third victim and second woman in just over three years.

Boetticher family members have begun consulting with attorney James Ferguson, who represents the Cooper and Thompson families. Boetticher's family declined interviews this week.

However, they said she was twice married and that she is a widow. Boetticher had lived most of her adult life in New Jersey and returned to Charlotte about three years ago.

She attended Logan High School in Concord.

Boetticher's funeral was held Sunday in the church in which she grew up, Cedar Grove AME Zion Church in Concord. She had two children - a daughter who lives in Jacksonville, Fla. and a son in New Jersey.

Boetticher's death shocked Charlotte, which has been forced to deal with earlier police shootings. The NAACP has voiced support for the citizens review board and, this week, said it would seek to hold federal law enforcement funds until the board is approved.

Monday's council hearing was a public display of the outpouring of emotion Boetticher's death caused.

A cross-section of the community, from grass roots organizers, to professionals, clergy members and ordinary citizens spoke, some vehemently calling for the resignation of Police Chief Dennis Nowicki and attacking Mayor Patrick McCrory.

Ahmad Daniels said the emotion displayed at the council meeting means the city could be in for a "long hot summer," if the city council does not act quickly.

"I said justice is too important to be left in the hands of the district attorney and the police department," Daniels said. "It must involve citizens also."

"My studies and reading and travels from city to city show that it is very hard for police to investigate themselves. If the police departments feels it has nothing to hide, it should be willing to do this."

"They must give citizens in the black community a win," Daniels said. "They have killed three black persons with impunity. Only the city council can do something about this."

Dwayne Collins, who helped co-found Citizens for Justice after Windy Thompson's death, said Monday's council meeting

was history making. He estimated at many as 700 people attended.

"I was pleased by that," Collins said. "I heard from the person's there. They are definitely willing to do anything necessary to institute a citizens review board in the city of Charlotte."

"I think that more so now than ever before, they (city council) realized the necessity of the movement and need for this board to be implemented as soon as possible."

Local Nation of Islam Minister Robert Muhammad, who delivered a vitriolic speech at Monday's meeting, said he believes criminal charges are called for in the Boetticher shooting.

"I can't for the life of me see any reason how or why a verdict of not guilty would be possible," said Muhammad, who held a press conference Wednesday to announce the Nation's plans to begin a process of independent review of police actions.

"I think we are also at a point where we need to look at having some independent review, not sanctioned by any governmental body," Muhammad said. "It is wonderful to have the Cannon Amendment that Citizens for Justice and the Nation of Islam have been fighting for four years. But there are still some areas that can be covered by an independent lawyer...to look at things from a different view point."

"We want individuals interested in helping to contact us. The Nation is going to put it in place, if at all possible. We are going to spearhead it, but we hope others may come in and take the lead - doctors, pathologists, lawyers and others."

"I'm outraged by the shooting," Muhammad said. "But I'm also outraged because we had a six-month lead time before the shooting and lot of things we had talked about - black and

white - were not accomplished. I am outraged to know a lot of things were put in place in the last week to make it appear a lot of work had been done already."

"I think as a city, Charlotte has prided herself on her great inroads in integration, since the school board decision of 1972, and having a low unemployment rate...but the policy and procedure of the police department and some in city government is indicative of deep problems and intolerance."

Muhammad said he is planning to step up the Nation's efforts against drug abuse and trafficking and the problem of black-on-black crime. The Nation also welcomes the involvement of other groups in the community, he said.

Cannon said he hopes to bring the Cannon Amendment to a vote by the City Council at its May 12 meeting. If will first be considered by the Public Safety Committee chaired by Don Reid. Majeed is co-chair and other members include Cannon, Tim Sellers and Lynn Wheeler.

Monday's meeting should have awakened council members to the need for a review board, Cannon said.

"What we saw was a series of people who had traveled long distances, who took time from jobs, who were literally breaking down in tears to say to this city council to press on with the Cannon Amendment," he said. "I believe that this city has never seen anything like what was before the city council at the public hearing and the city needed to see it."

"As a whole, if the council thought that was something...if people watching on television thought that was something, they haven't seen anything yet, if this city council and mayor don't come to grips with enacting the citizens review board."

"Hopefully they will do the right thing."

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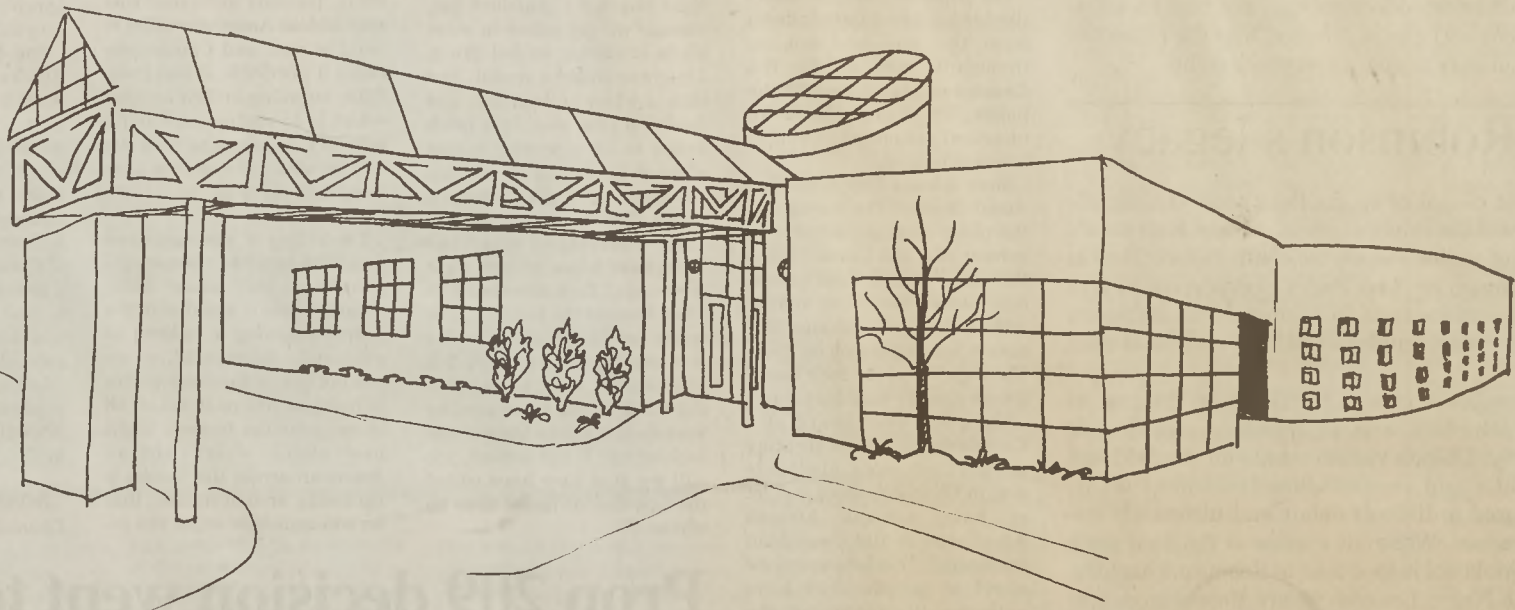
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