

Urban League Board Chair will not attend planned community forum

By RUDY ANDERSON
Chronicle Managing Editor

Urban League board chairman, Joseph Dickson, says he will not attend a planned public forum on league matters called for by the Forsyth County Voters Coalition.

That group called for the meeting after news surfaced of Delores Smith's dismissal as the league's executive director.

Coalition chair, Marie Roseboro, said last week the group wanted some "straight answers" about Smith's firing and about the affairs of the league.

The coalition wrote the board asking that they attend the forum to answer questions and concerns the community has about what has happened and why.

Dickson said Tuesday that he responded to the coalition by letter that he would not attend the forum on the advice of legal counsel. He also said that he forwarded a copy of the coalition's request and a copy of his response to board members. "I can't speak for other board mem-



Joseph Dickson
File photo

request," Dickson said.

Several of the board members the *Chronicle* contacted said that they too had no plans to attend the forum. Some were undecided, unavailable for comment or did not return phone calls.

But two members, Dr. Constance Johnson and attorney Renita Thompkins-Segers said they would attend the meeting. "Not to address any of the community's concerns because I wouldn't be there in any official capacity," Johnson said, "but at least to hear what those concerns are."

Thompkins-Segers said her purpose in attending was also to determine what the community's concerns are and to report those concerns and perceptions back to the full board.

Roseboro said Tuesday that the meeting will be held whether the board shows up or not. "We believe that the board has acted improperly, that the board is in violation of the National Urban League's mandates, and was warned about it," she said.

That meeting is scheduled for Thursday at 7 p.m. in the Hedgley Fellowship Hall at First Baptist Church on Highland Avenue.

bers about whether they will attend or not. I have only given them my response to the coalition's

African-American community not consulted by all-white board about what they want

By PATRICIA SMITH-DEERING
Chronicle Staff Writer

A plan drafted by one of the members of the all-white, city-county school board to provide representation for African-Americans on school issues was defeated 5-4 at Monday's meeting. Voting in favor were: Mary P. "Candy" Wood, Gerald N. Hewitt, Garlene G. Grogan, and Nancy L. Wooten, who drafted the plan for a black-issues committee. Board members Jane D. Goins, Thomas C. Voss, Gloria D. Whisenhunt, Grace C. Efrid, and Nancy Griffith rejected it.

The plan called for a black-issues committee that would include three board members and representatives of the African-American community. The committee would provide input to the board as an interim solution to the absence of any current African-American members.

Mrs. Griffith, newly-elected board member, has wound up taking the brunt of anger over the plan's defeat, but said afterwards she did not realize that no one from the African-American community had been consulted as to whether or not such a plan would be acceptable.

The new board member said that the ensuing furor has been "a crash course in Politics 101" for her. Initially, Mrs. Griffith felt that a black-issues committee would be an effective means of providing some kind of representation, she said. "Nobody ever really talked to me about this type of committee ... I thought it would be a way for dialogue, (but) I had no clear idea how the black community felt about it."

Mrs. Griffith further explained that at Monday's meeting, when she saw how the issue had divided the board, she decided that perhaps there was a better solution and voted against the plan. Since her vote at the meeting, Mrs. Griffith has been contacted by a number of people in the African-American community who were angered by the board's rejection of the plan. She met on Tuesday with members of the Ministers Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity and explained her rationale. She said, "I'm putting out feelers to see if blacks feel this (the black-issues committee) is a way for them to have dialogue with the board."

Ms. Wooten expressed disappointment, not only with the vote but the lack of interest from the African-American community in the plan she had proposed. "I still think that it's important from the

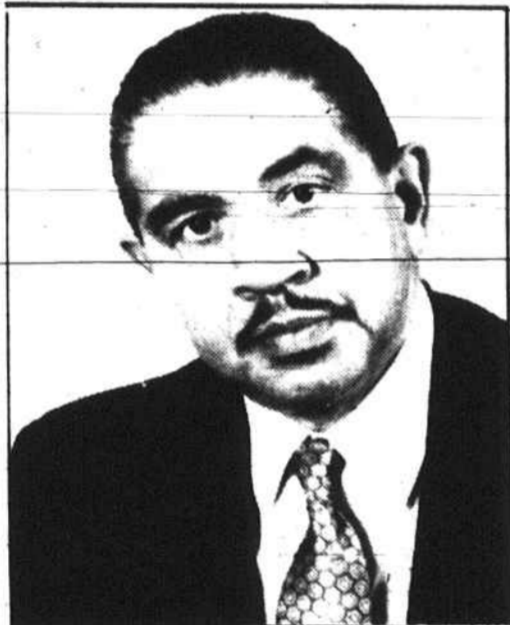
standpoint of being a good interim measure to make input more feasible," she said. She does not view a black-issues committee as a substitute for minority representation on the board, however.

There had been some initial input, according to Ms. Wooten, at a meeting she had which included

vote for it again, I will bring it up," she offered. "A lot of the people I've talked to think it's a good idea, but they want to get back to me," she said.

However, she does not believe it is necessary to wait for a consensus from the African-American

community before putting a black-issues committee in place. As a means for establishing communication between the board and the community not represented on the board, she said, "If the vehicle is in place, maybe people will use it. My feeling is it's worth trying."



Beaufort O. Bailey
File photo

Beaufort O. Bailey, Earline Parmon, Larry Little, and Warren "Pete" Oldham. "I got the impression, I was advised that they supported it," she said. She also said that she hopes Mrs. Griffith reconsiders and resubmits the plan for another vote. But, she added, "It would be helpful if we could get some feedback from the black community."

She also wants those who voted against the plan to be lobbied. "I think (they) should be ... asked to be responsive. I would hope the community response would be such that the entire board is contacted."

Former vice chairman, Beaufort O. Bailey, said that having a black-issues committee is the only avenue that the black community has, at this point, to have input to the board. Bailey, the only black ever elected to the school board and defeated in the recent election, stated, "The committee would have been a good thing to have since we don't have representation. It would give us a direct line to the board." He has spoken with Mrs. Griffith about reconsidering and asking for another vote on the plan which he favors over a previous one to appoint an advisory committee, selected by board members. He added that, despite the makeup of the current board, "I think the board would like to have our input."

Now that she has received input from many in the community, Mrs. Griffith feels that she will bring the matter before the board again. "If I can make sure that the four people who voted for it will

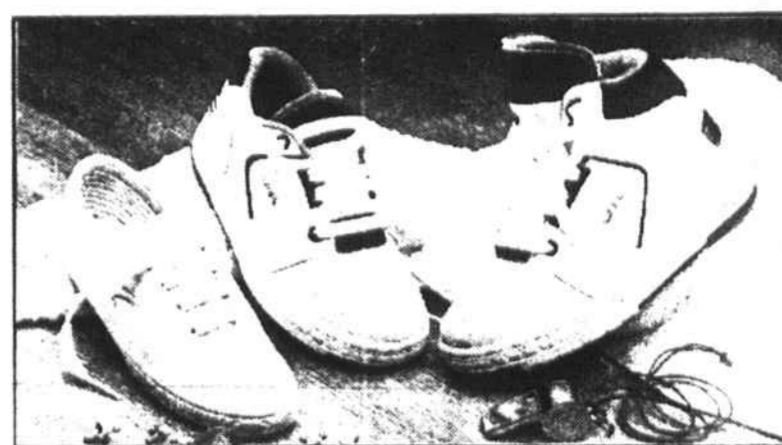
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