



Mayor Tempore Vivian Burke addresses the crowd.

Residents want next chief to be inclusive, broad-minded

BY LAYLA GARMS
THE CHRONICLE

Less than two dozen people attended a meeting held Tuesday night at the Hanes Hosiery Community Center to allow residents to weigh in on the search for Winston-Salem's next police chief.

Police Chief Scott Cunningham is retiring in June. City officials are aiming to have his replacement by the time he bows out.

Many of the residents in attendance listed the city's growing diversity, and learning to work with one another across racial and socio-economic lines among the city and the Police Department's most pressing concerns.

"One of the biggest things is actually building relationships with minority groups, especially within law enforcement," said Zuleima Villa, vice president of the Hispanic-American Democrats of Forsyth County. "We need Latino officers who can speak the language, who can relate to these groups."

Marva Reid, an outspoken East Winston community advocate, said she wants a chief who's willing to take a proactive approach in battling crime rates.

"I'd like to see a police chief who exercises more crime prevention in the communities that are most affected," she said. "I'd like to see more proactive than reactive (efforts). I think we'll have a better community and less people in prison."

Darryl Hunt, founder of the Darryl Hunt Project for Freedom and Justice, said the next police chief should be sensitive to the needs and unique challenges of ex-offenders.

"Sometimes the police can be a hinderance in helping them get those jobs or that housing that they need," said Hunt, who spent nearly 20 years in jail for a crime he did not commit. "We need somebody who can relate to the impacted people and be more responsive."

Daniel Dwight, an engineer and longtime city resident, said the community, including those at the Hall of Justice, should work harder to ensure that the work of officers is not done in vain.

"I think it's important to have a strong leader, but it's also important for police officers to get support," he said. "It's very frustrating for police officers to have to arrest the same person over and over ... I think we need to work with the judicial system to find a way to get those people off the street. We need somebody to work on the merging of those two things and doing what's right for the majority of the community (law abiding citizens)."

Steve Straus and Willie Williams of Developmental Associates, a Durham-based consulting firm that specializes in helping governmental, educational and non-profit organizations



German Garcia

select the best candidates for key positions, led the meeting. They have been hired by the city to help find the next police chief. The firm will begin the process immediately by advertising the opening through a variety of outlets.

The Developmental Associates team will put potential candidates through a rigorous process that begins with an online application that is tailored to Winston-Salem specifically and takes between 30 minutes and an hour to complete. City officials will then review the applicants' responses and select roughly 20 applicants to continue on to the next step in the application process, which includes a scored phone interview with Williams and an "EQ" test, which rates a person's emotional intelligence, Straus explained. The team will then recommend around seven candidates to visit to the city from April 18-19. While here, the candidates will complete an in-person interview and take part in a variety of exercises designed to assess their competencies in various areas. Straus said the exercises, which engage actual citizens and city leaders in staging real world-inspired scenarios where the candidates must act as police chief, are a key component in the process.

"For a critical position like this, we do not believe in relying simply on the interviews," Straus said. "...The best way to get an accurate assessment of the candidate, is to be able to see what they can do directly ... then we can have a lot more confidence that what we're getting from a candidate is accurate information."

City Manager Lee Garrity said the city will publicize its top two or three selections and provide opportunities for the candidates to meet with community members prior to the final selection being made.

Throughout the meeting, community members were invited to ask questions about the process or the police chief job in general. Hispanic-American Democrats President German Garcia asked how closely the city would monitor and/or control the movements of the police chief, and whether he or she would have free reign to address problems and create community initiatives. Last year, the Hispanic-American Democrats were among

the local groups that accused the Winston-Salem Police Department of setting traffic checkpoints in specific neighborhoods in order to target minority motorists. Cunningham denied the charge, yet the Department changed its checkpoint system after the ACLU of North Carolina threatened to file suit.

Garrity said the city would allow the chief to lead the department as he or she sees fit, within reason.

"What the (City) Council wants - what I want - is results, more than anything," he declared. "If the chief can do that and not break the law, we're going to give them the leeway to do that."

City Council Members James Taylor, Vivian Burke, DD Adams and Derwin Montgomery attended Tuesday's meeting.

Those who are still interested in contributing their input to the process may visit www.cityofws.org and fill out the Police Chief Selection Process form or call City Link, 311, to have a member of the city personnel fill one out for them, Garrity said. The forms will be submitted directly to the Developmental Associates team.

Williams

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served as a dean at North Carolina Central University. He said he and his longtime wife Carole are excited about relocating back to the South and becoming a part of the Fisk family.

Fisk is home to just 650 students. The university, whose alumni include Nikki Giovanni, O'Leary, W.E.B. DuBois, Dr. John Hope Franklin and Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole, is continuously ranked among the nation's top colleges. For the 20th consecutive year, the Princeton Review included Fisk on its 2012 list of "The Best 373 Colleges" in the nation and on its list of "The Best Southeastern Colleges" and Forbes magazine ranked Fisk among the top 25 percent of 650 higher education institutions in 2011. Williams said the school's rich history and commitment to educational excellence are what inspired him to make the move to Fisk.

"It's really the grandfather of all HBCUs. Fisk is it. It was founded in 1865, right after the passing of the 13th Amendment," he declared. "The school was founded to educate freed slaves, and it's been graduating African Americans ever since, and it's doing a wonderful job. It has an absolutely pristine academic reputation. That's what attracted me, because I think that history portends what we can do in the future."

Despite its strong academic reputation, the university has struggled financially in recent years, prompting the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to place the institution on accredita-



Students and alumni mill around the Fisk campus during Homecoming 2011.

tion probation. Williams said Tuesday that getting the university's finances back in good standing is among his chief priorities. In order to have the probationary status lifted, the school must balance its operational budget for fiscal year 2013 - which Williams says will require at least \$5 million in unrestricted gifts - and have an audit without any findings. The former New Bethel Baptist Church member said this week he was confident the university and its supporters would rise to the challenge.

"It's going to be important for us to continue to gain philanthropic support that we've had over the years and we need to increase that, so that's another challenge for us," Williams said. "It's going to take a lot of work, but that's certainly an achievable goal. Folks around here understand what the challenges are and they're ready to attack them, so I think we'll be successful."

Fisk's student body is a fraction of the 3,500 students he governed at Grand Valley, affording Williams a much more intimate setting, and he has wasted no time in getting to know the students. Since arriving on campus Saturday, he's enjoyed

breakfast in the school dining hall alongside his students. He was slated to address the greater student body Tuesday during a town hall assembly and subsequent reception.

"I'm getting to know the students," he reported. "That was a priority for me because that's what this is all about - the students."

Though his ever-advancing career has taken him all over the nation, Williams said the city he hails from still holds a special place in his heart. He credits the Winston-Salem community with helping to give him the foundation upon which he's built his remarkable career.

"They talk about it taking a community to rise a child, and one of the things I'm really proud of is that my experiences in Winston-Salem as a child were affirming. Folks there were very supportive," he commented. "... I love Winston-Salem and I'm proud of the fact that it's been able to sustain itself over the years and adapt to the changes in the economy. I hope that Winston-Salem will continue to be a place where students and children in particular can feel supported and inspired and encouraged to achieve as much as they can achieve."

For more information about Fisk University, visit www.fisk.edu.

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