

# City Council considers Rolling Hills rehab and ballpark development

BY TODD LUCK  
THE CHRONICLE

The Winton-Salem City Council took votes on Rolling Hills Apartments rehabilitation and development around the BB&T Ballpark in its Monday, Aug. 1 meeting.

In an agenda item added by City Council Member Derwin Montgomery, the council voted unanimously to send its endorsement of housing revenue bonds for the 110-unit Rolling Hills Apartments back to the finance committee for further consideration since the estimated cost of renovations was changing.

"The dollar amount did not appear to be substantial enough to prevent us from being back in this place in the not too distant future," said Montgomery, who represents the East Ward that Rolling Hills is in.

Rolling Hills Apartments has been plagued by serious housing code violations, including sewage backup. The city voted in April to endorse the perspective purchaser of the property, Steel Rolling Hills LLC, borrowing up to \$5.6 million in housing revenue bonds to acquire and renovate the property. The bonds do not

involve city funds, nor is the city liable for repayment.

At the time, it was estimated it would take up to \$17,000 per unit to get the apartments up to code. The company recently changed that estimate to \$37,000 per unit. Community and Development Director Ritchie Brooks told the council that he estimated it could take \$45,000 to \$50,000 per unit. Brooks said that Rolling Hills has had a history of being brought up to minimal code and falling back into disrepair. The goal of the higher cost estimates is that it would be enough to keep the apartments up to code so violations won't continue to happen.

The city council also unanimously approved a site plan for development on private property at the corner of First Street and Peters Creek Parkway next to the city-owned BB&T Ballpark. Brand Properties plans to build a four-

five-story, 313-unit, multi-family apartment complex there along with a six story, 133-room hotel and a six story parking deck with 609-669 parking spaces. There will also be 3,000-9,000 square feet of retail space.

According to Planning Director Paul Norby, the developer will still need an encroachment agreement from the city because part of the apartments will come over into city-owned land. Construction is set to happen at the same time as NCDOT's renovations on the Peter's Creek Parkway interchange, which will break ground in October and take 12-18 months to complete.

The City Council also voted 6-2 on a non-binding master plan for the area around the ballpark, with Montgomery and City Council Member Molly Leight voting against it.

Montgomery voiced concerns about the lack of affordable and workforce housing in the master plan, feeling that it wasn't "inclusive" enough. Dan Fitzgerald with Brand Properties said that kind of housing is part of an agreement with the city for future phases of development.

Montgomery said he hadn't heard affordable housing discussed and felt it should've been included in the "upfront thought process."

"It is built on top of a place where individuals who lived there before could not live in any other housing that exists there today," said Montgomery.

City Council Member James Taylor, who did vote for the master plan, voiced the same concerns saying that he's gotten calls from residents asking how they could afford to live in the area.

"The ballpark should be a development for everyone," said Taylor. "It's everyone's living room."

Winston-Salem Neighborhood Alliance President and West End resident George Bryan spoke on the project. He supported Brand's current development, but said that the master plan was "uninspired" and "falls short." Leight, who represents the

South Ward, echoed his concerns. She said she didn't like the possibility of eliminating Brookstown Avenue, and that the park area in the plan would end up being used by the ballpark and not the residents who live near it.

The master plan was amended to eliminate the language of exploring closure of Brookstown Avenue, though the city still plans to explore that option. City Council Member Robert Clark said the plan will change and doubted the future phases will follow the current plan that closely.



Montgomery



Taylor

## July gas prices drop

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

CHARLOTTE - Gas prices continue to drop in most parts of the country due to abundant fuel supplies and declining crude oil costs. South Carolina currently has the lowest gas prices in the country, with an average price of \$1.86. Nearly 90 percent of gas stations in South Carolina were selling fuel for under \$2 per gallon in July. North Carolina's average price of gas is slightly higher than South Carolina's, at \$2.05.

Average prices are about 55 cents less than a year ago, which is motivating millions of Americans to take advantage of cheap gas by taking long road trips this summer. Prices in North and South Carolina are down significantly from a month ago, when North Carolina's average price of gas was \$2.21 and South Carolina's was \$2.02.

Gas prices likely will remain relatively low compared to recent years for the remainder of the summer. U.S. crude oil supplies are about 13 percent higher than a year ago, while gasoline stocks have increased to 240 million barrels as refineries produce significant quantities of fuel. This is the highest ever mark for gasoline supplies during the month of July, according to Department of Energy records.

Despite paying the lowest seasonal prices in 12 years, there is always the possibility that unexpected events could lead to higher prices later this summer.

For example, crude oil costs could rise due to disruptions in supply, stronger than expected economic growth, or geopolitical tensions overseas. In addition, regional prices could increase due to refinery problems, production cuts, stronger than anticipated demand, or hurricanes that impact distribution and production.


The national average price of gas was down 55 cents compared to a year ago.

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