



Liza Barron



Evan Raleigh

**Conditions**

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ner or face they would face fines. According to reports, a number of units had rodent and rat infestations.

As if that wasn't bad enough, other units had much bigger issues, including leaking sewage.

"We thought it was important to get the word out about the resources available in the community," said Franco. "Some people may feel like there is nothing they can do. We take it as our responsibility to spread the word that there is something you can do."

To begin the meeting, Legal Aid attorney Liza Barron discussed the responsibilities of landlords under the city code and Fair Housing Act. Barron encouraged tenants to read their leases and keep a record of all unfit living conditions after reporting them to the landlord. She said it is important to keep a record because it can be used as evidence, if they decide to take legal action.

"It's important that you read all the terms of service listed in your lease," she continued. "If the landlord refuses to make repairs or takes too long, there could be a breach of contract and you can go to court."

Barron noted to begin the legal process the city

must first conduct an inspection. Although the city cannot force the landlord to make repairs, they can levy fines every day until repairs are made.

Next, Human Relations Department director Wanda Allen-Abraha and fair housing investigators Adolfo Brieno and Jelani Biggs discussed the inspection process carried out by the city, and how they are handling the complaints they already know about. Brieno and Biggs mentioned while some repairs have been made at the complex, nearly a dozen units still need repairs.

While acknowledging that many people in the community may not know about the Fair Housing Act or their rights as tenants, Abraha said having information sessions can help change that narrative. She mentioned human relations representatives have been going door to door speaking with residents to find out what's going on.

According to Abraha, after talking one on one with tenants, they were able to find out more than half a dozen tenants have experienced some type of discrimination from management.

"We have received allegations based on race discrimination, sex discrimination, and disability discrimination," she continued. "At last count we have about seven open cases that

we are looking into. There could be more."

Abraha said they will continue to speak with residents to find out if any others have had their rights violated.

Following the meeting, residents spoke with *The Chronicle* about what they learned.

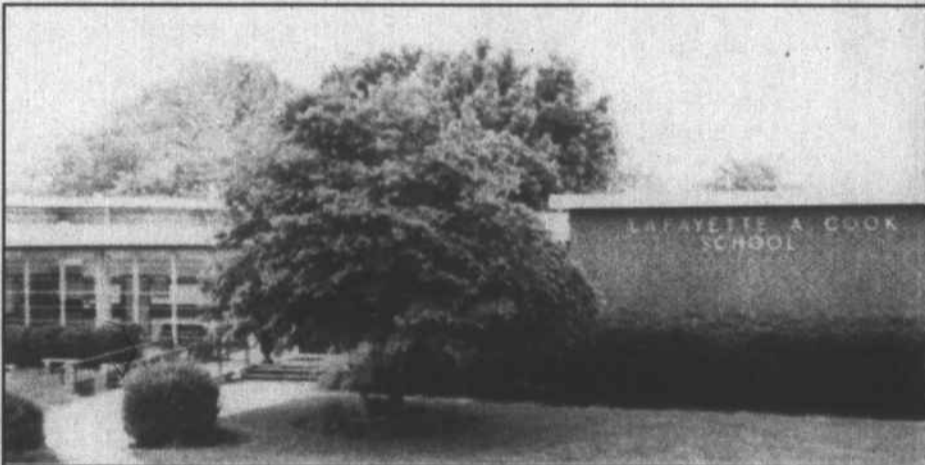
Although she hasn't had any major issues in her apartment, Teresa Archa, who has lived in Rolling Hills for 11 years, said she decided to attend the meeting just to arm herself with knowledge, just in case she has any issues in the future.

As she sat among a sea of empty seats, Archa said she was disappointed that more people didn't attend.

"The people who really need this information aren't here," she said. "They are providing us with the information we need. I learned a lot of valuable information about my rights that I didn't even know."

"I wish the people who are having the real issues were here to get this information. We have to do a better job of taking care of ourselves and our community. It has to begin with us," Archa said.

Later this month the Human Relations Department will host a follow-up session. A date has not yet been set.



WSCFilePhoto

The start of the 2016-2017 school year will officially launch a new instructional model focusing on literacy at Cook Literacy Model School, at 920 11th St. Principal Dr. Paula Wilkins said she is excited about the future of the school.

**Cook**

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with *The Chronicle* to discuss the restart model, and the start of a new chapter for Cook.

Wilkins, who is a native of the city and a graduate of Carver High School, said she decided to accept the position at Cook because she wanted make a direct impact in the community, and Cook seemed like a perfect opportunity to do so.

Before taking the helm, Wilkins served as the director of human resources for professional and talent development here in Forsyth County. She also worked as an administrator with the local district's initiative for Professional Learning Community, a program that looks to widen the availability of early child care development, as well as the Gifted and Advanced Learning Program.

"I've always wanted to make an impact in this community, so I asked myself, what better way to do so than working every day directly supporting students," said Wilkins.

"Although I was making an impact working with the district's improvements teams, I wanted to make a difference on a smaller scale as opposed to the district."

In 2001, Wilkins returned to her alma mater. During her tenure at Carver, the high school was regarded as a priority school, which called for reform as well. She said she is confident and fully prepared to turn things around at Cook.

"I've been through this process before, and I understand there is work to do."

While the summer is usually regarded as the off-season for students and educators, for Wilkins and the 51 new teachers she has hired since March, summer 2016 has been filled with meetings, and professional development courses.

Along with working with a design team to create a new curriculum, administrators and teachers have been connecting with parents and students as well. Wilkins mentioned along with making phone calls, school leaders have been making home visits

to receive feedback from parents.

"The focus has been one band, one sound," continued Wilkins. "For this to work, we all have to speak the same language. We have to know and understand the same things so we can be consistent in our support for students and their families."

Last month, a number of roundtable discussions were held to receive feedback as well. Administrators have also been working with local organizations in an attempt to provide services for families in the community. Wilkins said in order for things to change at Cook, the community must be a part of the change as well.

"The key to this turnaround is letting the community in. The walls of this building don't have the capacity to do the turnaround and impact the lives of these children. But this community has the access to do it."

"We have to wrap our arms around everyone who is willing to do this work with us."

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- Videos on City services & programs

We run the night!

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- Aquatic Park Groundbreaking
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