

Council finalizes Rolling Hills help

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Rolling Hills Apartments will soon have new owners as the Winston-Salem City Council gave its final approval for financial help to the troubled complex.

The City Council voted unanimously for its final endorsement of \$7.8 million in housing revenue bonds for Steele Rolling Hills LLC to acquire and rehabilitate the 110-unit apartment complex. The bonds do not involve city funds, nor is the city liable for repayment. Most of the units are in housing code violation and need significant repairs. Residents and city officials have criticized the current management for only doing minimum maintenance that has allowed the units to repeatedly fall into code violation.

City Council Member Derwin Montgomery said the bonds allow for more than \$40,000 per unit in repairs and will be enough to make substantial renovations.

"I am enthusiastically in support of this action because I think it's going to improve the living conditions for the residents there," he said.

Mayor Pro Tempore Vivian Burke expressed concern that the apartments might fall into disrepair years down the road. Project Manager Allan Izzo assured the City Council that Steele Rolling Hills isn't a "buy and flip" company and is in it

for the long haul. Steele Rolling Hills is a part of Steele Properties LLC, a company that specializes in rehabilitating affordable housing. After the meeting, Izzo said that the company is planning on closing on its purchase of the property in November and starting construction in January.

Also during the meeting, the council voted 7-1 to begin an amortization period for the strip club on downtown Trade Street. The club was grandfathered in after 2003 zoning changes prohibited adult establishments downtown. The city says that its "noise, illegal activity and other breaches of the peace," make it no longer compatible with Central Business zoning. It has until December 31, 2019, to move or close. Montgomery was the sole "no" vote because he was concerned targeting a single business would set a bad precedent.

"What happens when it's another type of business that others don't like in a particular area?" he said. "Will we come forward and change our UDO (Unified Development Ordinance) to disallow that use in that particular area because those who come into the community don't like what comes there?"

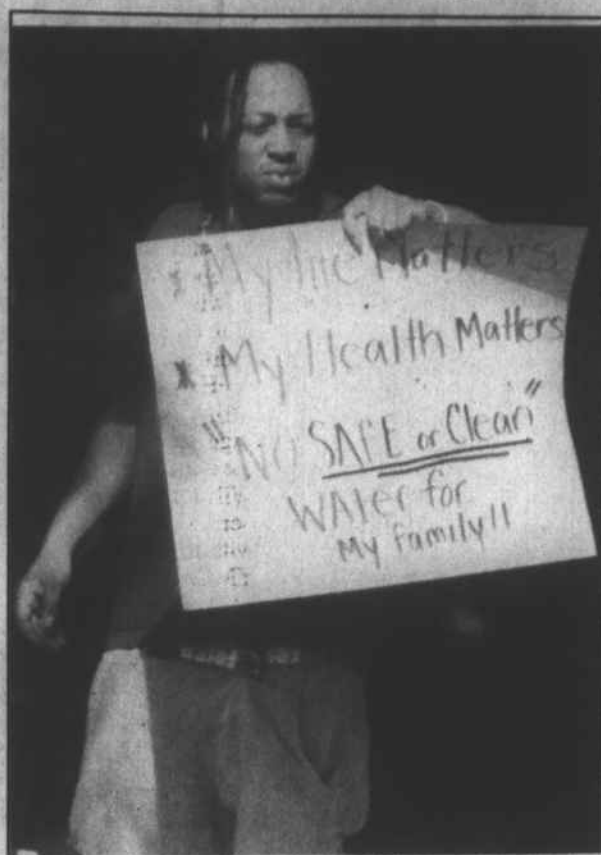


Montgomery

A bid for renovation and restoration of Union Station was delayed after Evon Smith said during the public comment period that the lowest bidder, New Atlantic Contracting Inc., should have met its minority sub-contractor requirement. Smith, a former Minority/Women's Business Enterprise (M/WBE) director with the city, said she believed the 12 percent goal could've been met based on the amount of minority contractors available for that type of work. The Internal M/WBE Committee and the Citizen's M/WBE Advisory Committee found that while it fell below the goal, the company did put in the required good faith effort.

Montgomery wanted to take a second look at the bid, which had already been approved. The council voted 7-1 to hold the item until the council's next meeting. Robert Clark was the only "no" vote, because he said the company had followed the city's rules.

Also during the meeting, the council unanimously approved an ordinance renaming a disconnected segment of



Chronicle File Photo

Residents of Rolling Hills Apartments, like this man above, and city officials have criticized the current management for only doing minimum maintenance that has allowed the units to repeatedly fall into code violation.

Maple Street to Earline Parmon Drive in honor of the late state lawmaker.

A bid for methane remediation for the area around Bowman Gray Stadium was also approved.

Stewart hoping to unseat GOP commissioners

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Selester Stewart is among the Democrats hoping to take seats occupied by Republican Forsyth County commissioners. He is the only African-American running for a seat on the Board of Commissioners. Two African-Americans - Everette Witherspoon and Walter Marshall - are on the board representing District A.



Stewart

Voters will get to choose their county commissioners for District B, which includes western Winston-Salem and the areas surrounding the city. Stewart is one of three Democrats vying for a spot.

Stewart was born and raised in Forsyth county. His

mother was a teacher and his father was a preacher. In his campaign videos, the married father of two said voters want a commissioner who is still working and raising a family. He also said he wanted to be visible in the community and invest in things like education and public safety.

"I see us making great strides in the community, but we need our government to invest in the people," he said in an online video.

His campaign's Facebook videos have gotten as many as 18,000 views. One criticized the commissioners for delaying action on renovating the aging courthouse by showing a can literally being kicked down the road.

Stewart has a criminal justice degree from North Carolina Central University, where he graduated magna cum laude. He has a master's degree from Shaw University and a doctorate from Drew University.

He's been a business owner since graduating college,

having founded Georgia Health Partners in 2007, a private clinic that provides counseling and intervention services in the Atlanta metro area. His website touts his experience managing 175 employees and multimillion dollar budgets among his qualifications to be a commissioner.

He's currently involved with his church, serves on the Jerry Long YMCA board and is a volunteer football coach for Clemmon's Tiny Broncos. He's been endorsed by the Forsyth County Association of Educators and Triad Labor Council.

Other Democrats running in District B are Bob Stitcher and Trent Harmon. The Republicans running to keep their seats are Richard Linville, Dave Plyler and Gloria Whisenhunt, all of whom are longtime incumbents. If the Democrats can gain one seat, they'll have the majority on the county commissioners board.