

Photo by Timothy Ramsey

The Ministers' Conference plans action on devalued property in the city.

Ministers' Conference plans action on devalued property in W-S

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY
THE CHRONICLE

The Minister's Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity's (MCWSV) social justice committee has long fought to address issues that plague the Triad community. In conjunction with the local branch of the NAACP, the MCWSV held a press conference last Thursday in support of the residents whose properties they believe have been devalued by the county Tax Administration.

The press conference, which was held at Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church, was held to notify the public of the difference of opinion the conference and NAACP have toward county Tax Assessor John Burgiss.

The major point of concern for the organizers was that the properties in question were all in the eastern portion of the city between Waughtown and Liberty streets where African-Americans are the largest demographic. They also raised concerns that statistics show that 70 percent of the county saw a rise in property value, while the areas in questions did not.

"Our contention is that the devaluation of those properties has little to do with the market and is driven by systemic and institutional racism instead," said Dr. Dennis

Leach Sr., senior pastor of Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church and MCWSV social justice committee member.

Leach went on to speak about an appeal filed by the City Council to the

Forsyth County Board of Equalization regarding the "questionable practices," which resulted with the Board of Equalization informing the City Council that its "hands were tied" by a state statute called the Schedule of Values.

According to the conference, the people in these various communities have been dealing with the devaluing of their property for quite some time. The

MCWSV has been involved with this fight dating back to 2012. They stated the difference this time around is that since their concerns are not being addressed, further action will be taken beyond filing appeals. Leach stated that the U.S. Department of Housing and Development (HUD) has taken over the investigation.

Alvin Carlisle, president of the local NAACP chapter, stated that the chapter is in "full support and full partnership" with the ministers' conference in its efforts to create a plan or strategy to reverse the policy that has led to the devaluation of properties that are located primarily in the

ties." Bishop Todd Fulton, chairman of the MCWSV social justice committee, brought in hundreds of appeals from the affected communities to show how many individuals are concerned about their property values. He stated that it is in the county's best interest to re-evaluate how taxes are calculated in those communities.

Fulton, Leach and Carlisle stated the people in these neighborhoods are deeply concerned about the direction things are going with their properties. Some have expressed the displeasure with the fact the value of their homes are now lower than

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"black community."

"At the NAACP, one of our passions is that we fight against economic discrimination," said Carlisle. "We fully feel that these policies that have been set forth tend to lead toward greater economic discrimination among African-Americans. There is already a lack of investment in primarily African-American communities and we feel like these policies only serve to drain the wealth even more in these communi-

what they purchased them for, which prohibits them from the potential of selling their homes if they wanted to.

At the time of the press conference, there had been no correspondence from Burgiss or the Board of Equalization on the matters at hand. The conference has been in contact with a civil rights attorney pending any unfavorable results from the HUD investigation.

Commissioners to vote on incentives for Johnson Controls

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Incentives for Johnson Controls Inc. will be among the items for consideration at the county commissioners' next formal meeting on Sept. 14.

Johnson Controls, which is part of an international company, is considering expanding its Walkertown facility, which makes automotive batteries. The commissioners will hold a public hearing

before they vote on incentives not to exceed \$465,717, which is half of the taxes brought in by the expansion, over a five-year period if the company can meet certain conditions.

"This would be based on them reaching their goals for their investment and for their jobs," said County Community Development Director Dan Kornelis.

The facility currently has 413 full-time employees. The proposed expansion adds 60 full-time or full-time equivalent jobs that pay almost \$19 an hour on average. Johnson Controls plans to invest \$33 million in machinery and equipment and \$5 million in building improvements.

Johnson Controls is also considering expanding facilities in Ohio, Missouri and Mexico.

Among the many other items commissioners are scheduled to vote on:

- *Appropriating \$229,064 in State Criminal Alien Assistance Program grant funds to improve-ments at the Forsyth County Detention Center, including upgrading cameras, fixing radio dead spots and adding technology to detect cell phones. The federal grant helps with costs incurred for undocumented immigrants who are incarcerated on criminal charges.
- *Selecting Jordan Consultants to provide landscape architecture and

civil engineering services not to exceed \$68,000 for five playground replacements and one new playground at county parks that's part of the 2016 parks bond.

*Selecting Allied Engineering for surveying and civil engineering services not to exceed \$70,000 for an addition to the multi-use trail at Tanglewood Park that will add nearly two miles of paved trails in another 2016 parks bond project.

*Renewing the Forsyth County Public Library's participation in NC Cardinal, a project of the State Library that allows libraries across the state to have a single, shared library.

Currently, it includes 161 locations in 40 counties, with 6.4 million items. The annual cost of the service is \$19,677.20.

Correction

The Chronicle apologizes for an error made in a story in the Aug. 17 edition of The Chronicle with the headline "Member, 101, helps celebrate 125 years of Shiloh Baptist" on the Religion cover. Lois Scales Hilliard, who is 101 years old, is not the oldest member of the

church. According to a church committee chairwoman, Adeline Hodge, who is 103 years old, is the oldest member of the church. The Chronicle regrets any misunderstanding that may have resulted from this error. The Editor

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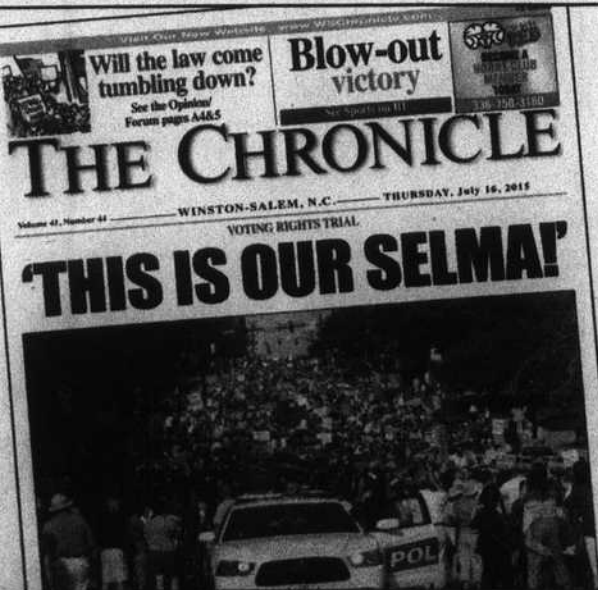
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