

Final meeting on city bond proposal is tonight

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

The final meeting to solicit public comments on the proposed 2018 bond referendum will be tonight.

The Capital Needs Meeting will take place at Salem Lake Marina, 1001 Salem Lake Road, tonight at 6 p.m. It's the last of nine meetings held around the city to inform the public and get feedback on the proposed \$122 million in bonds the City Council is considering placing on the November ballot. The Council is scheduled to vote May 21 on publishing a letter of intent and submitting an application to the Local Government Commission that'll set the maximum amount the bond can be. On Aug. 6, the City Council will hold a public hearing and vote to place the bond on the Nov. 6 ballot. The bonds would cause the city property tax to go up 4 cent per each \$100 in property value, which would be \$60

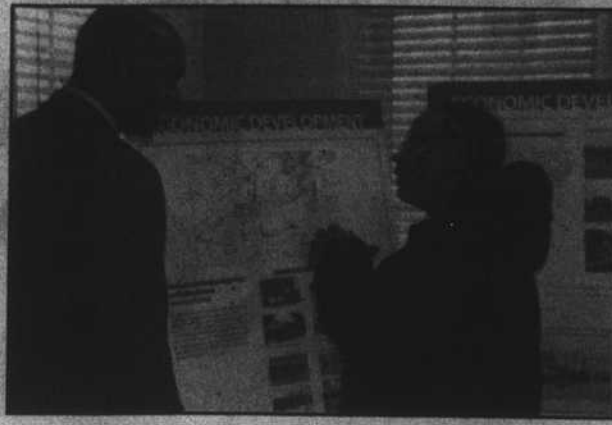
more for a \$150,000 house. The next to last comment meeting on Thursday, April 5, at the Winston-Salem Lake Golf Course Clubhouse drew what City Manager Lee Garrity said may have been the biggest crowd they've had so far, with more than 40 attendees.

After a brief video, attendees got to go around to displays on the different proposed bond projects that were manned with city staff ready to answer questions and listen to feedback. Before they left, attendees were encouraged to fill out and turn in a comment card.

Josetta Timberlake was one of the residents who made the rounds, examining the projects and talking with city staff.

"Capital means money, so I figured I need to come and find out where my money is going to," said Timberlake.

Timberlake said she couldn't make the meeting



Photos by Todd Luck
City Business Inclusion Director Evan Raleigh talks with Josetta Timberlake at a meeting on the proposed 2018 bond at Winston-Salem Lake Golf Course Clubhouse.

closest to where she lives, but last week's fit in her schedule. She said it was very informative and it lets her tell others what's going on with the bonds.

"It's improvements that are all needed, and I see them doing some now, so they are keeping their word," said Timberlake.

City officials say that about 70 percent of the money from the 2014 bond

a decade to spend that money.

Garrity said they've heard little negativity toward the bonds, but have heard many concerns about things that are of interest to each resident, particularly streets that need repairs.

Marshall McDuffie, president of Winston Lake Estates Homeowners Association, came to ask about improvements for the streets and sidewalks in his neighborhood. He had a long conversation with Assistant Transportation Director Jeffrey Fansler, who said he'd research his concerns and get back to him.

"This is what is needed,

just meeting, being able to talk and see how things work out," said McDuffie.

Several golfers using the Winston Lake Golf Course attended the meeting, including Thurmond Carter, who said he appreciated the opportunity to learn about the bonds so he can make an informed decision on them.

"I like the idea of the city having these little meetings informing citizens of what's going on," said Carter.

Information on the bonds can be found at www.cityofws.org/2018bonds (a feedback form is located at the bottom of the page).

Forsyth's health lags behind other counties

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Forsyth County has higher rates of infant mortality and chronic disease than other large counties in the state.

That was the finding of the Public Health Department's Forsyth County Community Health Assessment (CHA), which analyzed several year's worth of health statistics as part of its state accreditation. Public Health Director Marlon Hunter presented the report to county commissioners last week on April 5.

The report lists three major challenges that the local Health Department considers top priorities for the next three years: chronic disease, maternal/infant health and sexual health. Chronic disease and maternal/infant health have been listed as priorities for the last three CHAs. The report says that the Health Department will be working with community partners to develop and implement action plans for each priority.

Opioid overdoses where not included in the top priorities because action plans are already being implemented by the Forsyth County Opioid Taskforce, which is comprised of more than 20 community partners that deal with the opioid crisis. During this week's City Public Safety Committee meeting, a report on the opioid crisis showed that the percentage of opioid overdoses resulting in

deaths has plummeted thanks to the overdose-reversal drug naloxone. However, the amount of overdoses has increased so much that Winston-Salem has had almost as many overdose deaths so far this year as it did in all of 2017.

The Health Department's top priority is chronic disease. For the past decade, cancer and heart disease have been the top cause of death in the county. The death rate for cancer in Forsyth is 168.4 per 100,000 people from 2012-2016 and the rate for heart disease deaths was 144.4. These are higher than the rates for Durham, Guilford, Mecklenburg and Wake. There are racial disparities in chronic disease, with African-American disproportionately experiencing cancer, heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease and stroke.

Maternal/child health continues to be a challenge despite progress in recent years. In 2012, the county's infant mortality rate was 10.2 deaths per 1,000 live births. In 2014, the county had a historically low infant mortality rate of 6.4, though that number rose in 2016 to 9.3.

"Our infant mortality rate is still higher than our four peer counties," said Hunter.

The reduction is due in part to a number of programs like Nurse-Family Partnership, which recently expanded so it can team more nurses up with first-time mothers. Hunter said the Health Department is currently in the process of

gathering 10 year's worth of data on maternal/child health and infant mortality, and will be working with both local hospitals to address infant mortality.

Commissioner Everette Witherspoon praised Hunter for embracing programs like Nurse-Family Partnership. He said infant health has a big effect on the health of the community, and a high mortality rate often means other health outcomes in a county are bad.

"Infant mortality, that's the whole basis for the health of the community," said Witherspoon.

Sexual health remains an issue in the county, with chlamydia among young women being the largest concern. Between 2012 and 2016, two out of every three new chlamydia cases were in residents 24 years or younger and three-fourths of those were in females. Despite this, the report said that only one in two women of childbearing age have had their medical provider talk to them about getting tested for the disease, which can cause poor pregnancy outcomes.

Chlamydia cases rose to 706.8 cases per 100,000 residents in 2016. However, Forsyth County's rates of chlamydia were lower than those in Durham, Guilford and Mecklenburg counties. Its rate of other sexually transmitted diseases were not higher than some of its other peer counties as well.



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