



• See Opinion/Forum pages on A5

• See Sports on page B1

Volume 45, Number 43 WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. THURSDAY, July 4, 2019

Current and former elected officials join the push for a mandatory African American history course

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

“Those who do not learn their history are doomed to repeat it.”

That was the quote Reece Johnson used when he addressed the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Board of Education last week. The aphorism from Spanish philosopher George Santayana was the perfect intro to Johnson’s two-minute address to the board on why they should adopt a mandatory African American history course.

The push for a mandatory African American history course began more than three years ago when the Local Organizing Committee (L.O.C.), took their demands to the local school board.

According to organizers with the L.O.C., after initial talks with district ad-

ministrators with the L.O.C., said Simington said he would “get back with him” after they did a little more research.

Three years later and Rasheed, the L.O.C., and now Hate Out of Winston, the local activist organization that led the way for the removal of the Confederate statue from downtown, and countless others are still waiting to hear something from Simington and the school board. Despite receiving countless emails and questions from members of Hate Out of Winston and the L.O.C. since 2016, an African American history course has never been discussed during a public school board meeting and the board does have the power to get the ball rolling on the course being added to the curriculum.

During the board of education meeting on Tuesday, June 25, Johnson and



Reece Johnson holds a sign that reads “Mandatory AA Class Now” during the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, June 25. Johnson was one of many who spoke in support of the local school district implementing a mandatory African American history course.



Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Board Vice Chair Barbara Hanes Burke during the public meeting on Tuesday, June 25. Burke was the only member of the board to show their support for a mandatory African American history course.

ministrators to discuss the idea of an African American history course, they never received any updates from the board or interim superintendent Ken Simington, who served as curriculum coordinator when L.O.C. began their push for the course. During a brief discussion with The Chronicle earlier this year, Ken Rasheed, who helped lead the charge for

several others, including current and former elected officials, joined the movement as well.

County Commissioner Fleming El-Amin brought a copy of the book, “Shelter in the Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism.” The author of the book, Dr. Jelani Favors, is a student in El-Amin’s African American History when he was a teacher at Glenn High School.

Currently, WS/FCS offers an African American history course as an elective at several high schools. At least 17 students have to sign up for

the course to be taught. El-Amin, who was on the committee that pushed for the elective course, said although it was a challenge to get students to enroll in the course in the beginning, once the class began many students started to enjoy the class. He said the course inspired several students, including Dr. Favors, who went on to earn a Ph.D. in African American Studies.

“Academic excellence demands academic excellence,” said El-Amin as he stood before the members of the board of education.

“If a child is inspired to see themselves in the curriculum, they can achieve untold results and accom-

plishments. So I plead with you, give it your full consideration.”

Former County Commissioner Everette Witherspoon also spoke in support of the mandatory African American history course. Witherspoon, who is a graduate of Glenn, applauded the board for making history when they voted to appoint Malishai Woodbury as the first African American woman to serve as board chair and Dr. Kenneth Simington as

leadership, and the vision to not only create African American history once, but twice.” Witherspoon continued, “But the job is not over. I would like for you to continue in that vain of leadership, courage, and vision by making African American history a mandatory class in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County Schools.”

Although they weren’t in attendance during the meeting, Winston-Salem City Council members

African American history course. State Senator Paul Lowe and State House Representative Evelyn Terry are also expected to send letters to the board.

Following the public comment portion of the meeting, Barbara Hanes Burke, board vice chair, spoke up and let it be known that she supports the push for a mandatory African American history course. Burke, who is a former vice principal at Carver High School, said,



Forsyth County Commissioner Fleming El-Amin addresses the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools’ Board of Education on Tuesday, June 25.

the first African American interim superintendent. He then urged them to make history again by implementing the mandatory course.

“I’d like to thank you for your wisdom, your

Denise “D.D.” Adams and James Taylor, who is also publisher of The Chronicle, sent letters to the board members to show their support for the

“I 1,000% support everyone here who spoke out for a mandatory African American history course.” She said since her first Curriculum Committee

See Mandatory on A2

www.wschronicle.com

030*002
WTTX-E-RES & SERIALS MGMT
DAVIS LIBRARY CB # 3938
PO BOX 8890
CHAPEL HILL, NC 27515-8890 90

ASSURED STORAGE
of Winston-Salem, LLC

MOVE IN SPECIAL
\$25
per month

(336) 924-7000
www.assuredstoragews.com
Office Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-5pm; Sat 9am-3pm
Gate Hours: 6am-10pm
4191 Bethania Station Road • Winston-Salem