

# Taylor looking to partner with school district on Easton Elementary renovations

Partnership would bring economic development courses to Easton Community

BY TEVIN STINSON  
THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem City Council is considering partnering with the local school system to bring small business development training, job skill enhancement courses, GED courses and other community and economic development courses to the Easton community.

When the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools was in the early planning stages of the renovation of Easton Elementary School, Council Member James Taylor requested that city staff reach out to the school system to discuss the possibility of incorporating the construction of a facility to house community activities into the plans for the school. Taylor, who is publisher of The Chronicle, said the push to bring the facility to the Easton neighborhood is a community-driven initiative that will provide much needed services.

Taylor said, "We're looking to partner with the school system to provide much needed resources and services to this community." Taylor said they initially looked at another property for the

facility, but it was taken off the market and the partnership with the school district was the next best option.

"We initially looked at another property in the community that we thought was a good fit ... but go figure, when we decided we wanted to go after it, someone had then taken it off the market. This was then the next best thing," Taylor said. "There has been a lot of economic development in many parts of our city and there has been some parts of our city that have been underutilized and this is one of those. And we seek to bring this community back to its former glory."

To cover the cost of the facility, city staff has proposed using funds from the 2018 Bond, specifically \$3 million that was set aside to support economic development in the Southeast Ward. During the Finance Committee meeting earlier this month, Assistant City Manager Evan Raleigh said the facility would be an "appendage" to the main school building. He mentioned that the bond agreement's only stipulation is that the city own the property that

the facility will stand on, which will require a vote from the WS/FCS Board of Education.

Council Member Robert Clark raised questions about the location of the facility. Clark, who is chair of the Finance Committee, said the facility may be a better fit for a community center. He brought up the need to build separate bathrooms for students and those adults who would use the appendage facility, and other concerns with having an adult facility near an elementary school.

"My initial comment would be, would this not fit better as a community center?" Clark continued, "You're going to need adult bathrooms for this room and those are not the right bathrooms for the elementary school. But if it was hooked to a community center that's staffed all day long, you could use the room not just in the evening for adult education or whatever it may be, and you wouldn't have to build separate bathrooms."

Clark also mentioned that the city has already approved the construction of a new Belview Community Center and

that it may be a better fit for the proposed facility. He said, "It just seems to me it makes more sense to hook it with something that's already got some vitality to it versus a school that's really going to have to be a separate building."

Mayor Tempore Vivian Burke also suggested that the facility be placed at the renovated Belview Community Center that will house the S.O.A.R. program when construction is complete. S.O.A.R. (Successful Outcome After Release) is a program offered by the city designed to provide gainful employment for former offenders.

Taylor noted that because the facility will be an appendage, students and school staff will not be able to access that part of the building during the school day. He also mentioned plans to redevelop the entire site where Easton currently stands to create separate entrances, roadways and parking lots for the two facilities.

Taylor said the partnership with the school system is much more than an addition to a building;

See Easton on A3

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