

WSPD lays out plan to fight violent crimes in 2020

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

Following one of the deadliest years on record, local law enforcement is looking to crack down on violent crime. During a press conference on Tuesday, Jan. 21, Chief Catrina Thompson with the Winston-Salem Police Department, Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough, District Attorney Jim O'Neil, several elected officials, and representatives from other agencies came together to discuss the plan to fight violence in 2020.

Violent crimes are defined as crimes in which an offender uses or threatens to use force on a victim. Some of those crimes include murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. In recent years, while the number of robberies has decreased, aggravated assaults have increased by 14%. When looking at the number of homicides in the city in 2019, there were 31 murders, the most in more than 25 years, up from 26 in 2017 and 2018. According to Chief Thompson, in 2019 the WSPD seized 900 guns and has already seized an additional 19 in 2020.

To cut down on the number of violent crimes, Thompson discussed several initiatives that the WSPD will continue and others that are new. She mentioned the continuation of NIBIN (National Integrated Ballistic Information Network), a network that allows for the capture and comparison of ballistic evidence to aid in solving crimes involving firearms. She also discussed the efforts of the Gang Unit and the newly formed Violent Firearm Investigation Team (VFIT), which is comprised of detectives who are specially trained in the area of ballistic evidence examination.

The WSPD also plans to deploy a gunfire detection system that uses acoustic sensors to detect, identify, and triangulate the source of sounds that represent gunfire in a designated area. The system then authenticates the acoustic signal to classify the event as possible gunfire be-

fore automatically reporting the incident to local law enforcement.

After giving a rundown of the 2020 Violence Prevention Plan, Chief Thompson said, "We cannot do this alone. Violent crime is not just a law enforcement problem, it's not just a criminal justice problem, it is a community problem and it will take our community working together to eradicate the violence."

Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough said his vision for 2020 is to continue the Saturation Patrol, which is a partnership between the Sheriff's Office and WSPD, that will enable officers to respond to discharged firearms calls citywide.

"We are totally committed to all the partnerships that you see present in this room because at the end of the day, we're in this together and crime has no respect of boundaries and we will see that we address it as it occurs," Kimbrough said.

Other agencies, organizations, and individuals who have vowed to join the fight against violent crime in Winston-Salem include the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Matthew Martin, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of N.C., and the City of Winston-Salem.

To wrap up the press conference, Chief Thompson had some stern words for those committing violent crimes throughout the city. She said, "We will not tolerate violent crime in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, period."

"We're not going to allow you to continue to victimize, terrorize, or criminalize our citizens here, our visitors here, our businesses here. You have heard from our partners, you've heard from our city officials, we're going to use every ounce of resources we have available to go after you and prosecute you to the fullest extent. That is our promise, that is our commitment, that is our vision for 2020."

The press conference can be viewed in its entirety by visiting the City of Winston-Salem's YouTube channel.

Candidates

From page A1

"We've got a lot of things going right now, but I think in the first 100 days of the new term we're going to have a public safety summit to address the issues," he said. "We have folks working on it, the Sheriff is working on it, the D.A. is working on it, the U.S. attorney, the alcohol, tobacco, and firearm group is working on it, so we look to bring that together and explore the ideas that can come from the public."

The forum Monday night also gave the public a chance to hear from the candidates running for Forsyth County Clerk of Court, incumbent Renita Thompkins Linville, who was appointed to the position last year by Superior Court Judge Todd Burke after Susan Frye retired, and the challenger, De-

nise Hines, who currently serves as the Chief Magistrate Judge here in Forsyth County.

The Clerk of Court manages a team of about 100 people who are responsible for recording and maintaining thousands of documents, including pleadings, court calendars, subpoenas, injunctions and judgments.

Linville began practicing law in Winston-Salem in 1983. She practiced in the areas of family law and divorce, which includes child support and custody actions, criminal law including traffic offenses, and estate planning and administration. If she wins the primary and general election, Linville said her goal will be to continue to improve and increase automation and access through technology for those in her community and also to resolve complaints and

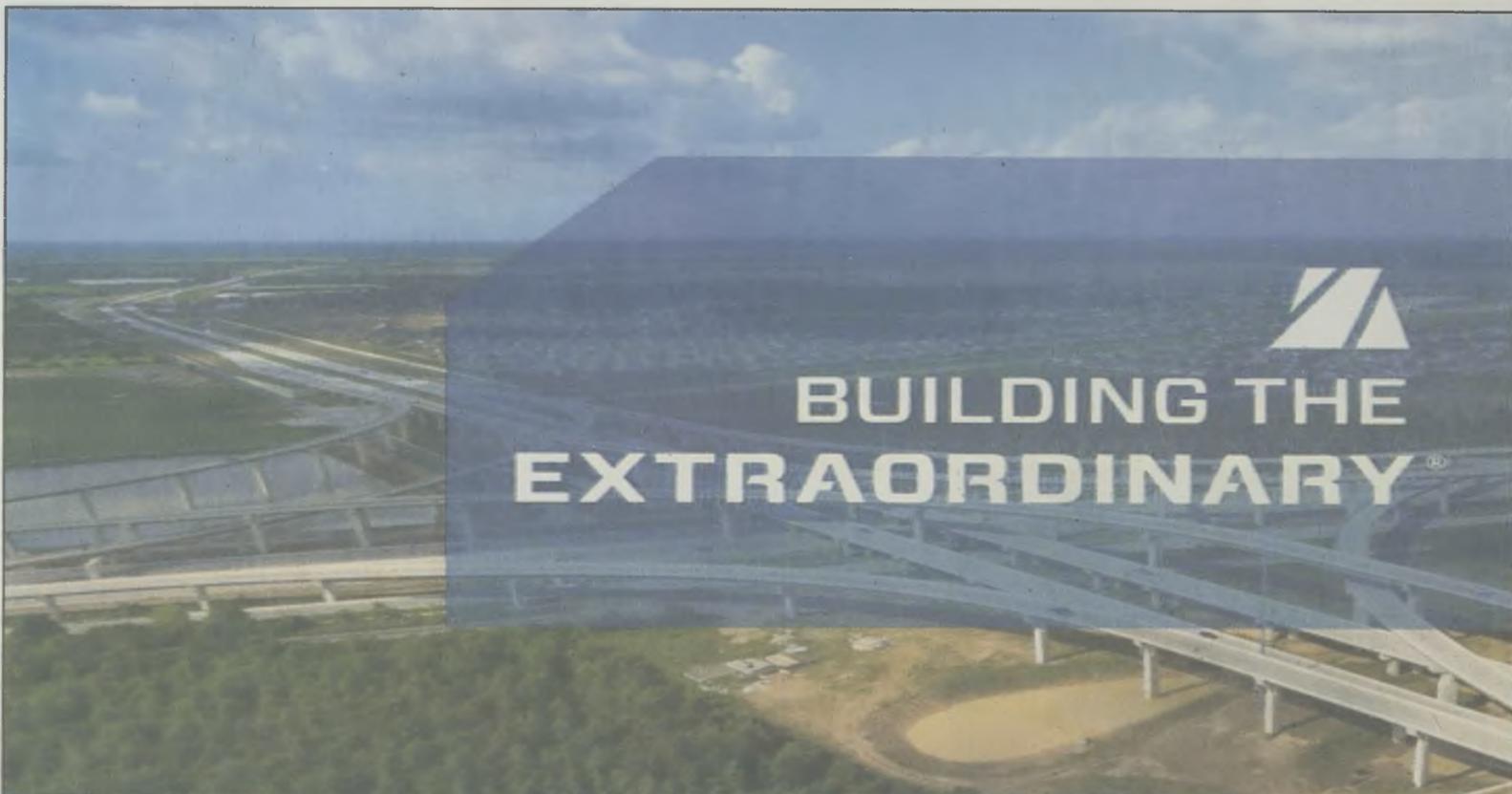
help citizens have a better understanding and deeper knowledge of established processes.

Before becoming Chief Magistrate, Hines, a 1997 graduate of UNC Law School, worked as a teacher for 15 years at the high school and college levels. Hines says she has made it her duty to serve others, which is why she has only worked in public service. If she wins, Hines says her main objectives will be to improve access to courthouse services, train and develop professional and responsive clerks, and educate our community on services available through the court.

The next Candidate Forum will be held on Saturday, Feb. 1, at the Delta Fine Arts Center. The forum is scheduled to begin at noon and will spotlight candidates running for East Ward City Council.

Correction

In an article published in the Jan. 23 issue of The Chronicle titled 'Cling to King's dream,' Winston-Salem State University was omitted from the list of sponsors for the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast. The Chronicle regrets this error and is grateful for the sponsorship of Winston-Salem State University and the other sponsors and supporters who made the 20th annual Prayer Breakfast a success.



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