

Faith leaders call for justice in murder of Andrew Brown Jr.

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

Several local pastors joined faith leaders from across the state last week to call for a federal investigation into the death of Andrew Brown Jr., an unarmed Black man who was shot and killed by law enforcement officers in Elizabeth City.

During rallies on Tuesday, June 2, in Greensboro, Charlotte, Fayetteville, Asheville, Raleigh, Wilmington, Elizabeth City and here in Winston-Salem at First Baptist Church on Highland Avenue, faith leaders demanded truth, transparency, and accountability for Brown's death.

On April 21, Brown, 42, was killed by a gunshot to the back of the head by deputies with the Pasquotank County Sheriff's Office. Deputies were at Brown's home that day to serve a warrant for his arrest.

Last month Andrew Womble, Pasquotank County's District Attor-

ney, ruled that the officers were justified in using deadly force.

"We have gathered today to say there cannot be a repeat," said Rev. John Mendez during the rally at First Baptist. "There cannot continue to be cover-ups and deception and the protection of lies. We are here to recommit ourselves to making sure there is no repeat. We're demanding transparency, accountability, and the facts."

Rev. Paul Robeson Ford, pastor of First Baptist Church, demanded that Gov. Roy Cooper appoint a special prosecutor in Brown's case and that the full body camera videos be released immediately.

Other demands from Ford and other faith leaders included: pass federal and state legislation for police accountability and reform; "pattern-or-practice" investigations into the Pasquotank County Sheriff's Office and into District Attorney Andrew Womble's office in the First Judicial District of North Carolina;



Photo by Tevin Stinson

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and when and if evidence shows any officer committed wrongful murder, there must be an arrest and full prosecution and accountability.

"We're not going to wait 100 years for the truth about Andrew Brown Jr., we're not going to wait 100 years and still be standing around looking for transparency about Andrew Brown Jr.," Ford continued. "We're calling

on Gov. Roy Cooper right now to set aside that DA in Pasquotank County and appoint a special prosecutor to make sure the truth comes out about Andrew Brown, because we believe that man is participating and engaging in a coverup. There was nothing Andrew Brown was under suspicion of that day that warranted execution by cop."

Rev. Craig Schab, pas-

tor of Parkway United Church of Christ, who is white, said more white people must stand with those fighting for justice in Brown's case.

"I'm a person of faith, so I ask the question: what does love look like?" Schab asked rhetorically. "Love looks like all of us burning up the phones to the governor's mansion demanding that independent investigation..Love

looks like burning up the phones to all General Assembly members in the state of North Carolina saying, let's change the law around the release of police body-worn tapes.

"But it also means something else, it means all of us who are European descent do this work every single day. What does love look like? It means soul searching and realizing just how complicit we are as citizens of these communities."

On June 12, Repairers of the Breach, the North Carolina Council of Churches, and B.R.I.D.G.E. will hold a mass march and rally for Brown in Elizabeth City; thousands are expected to attend. For more information about the mass march scheduled for later this month, visit <https://www.breachrepairers.org/andrew-brown-clergy-march-rally>.

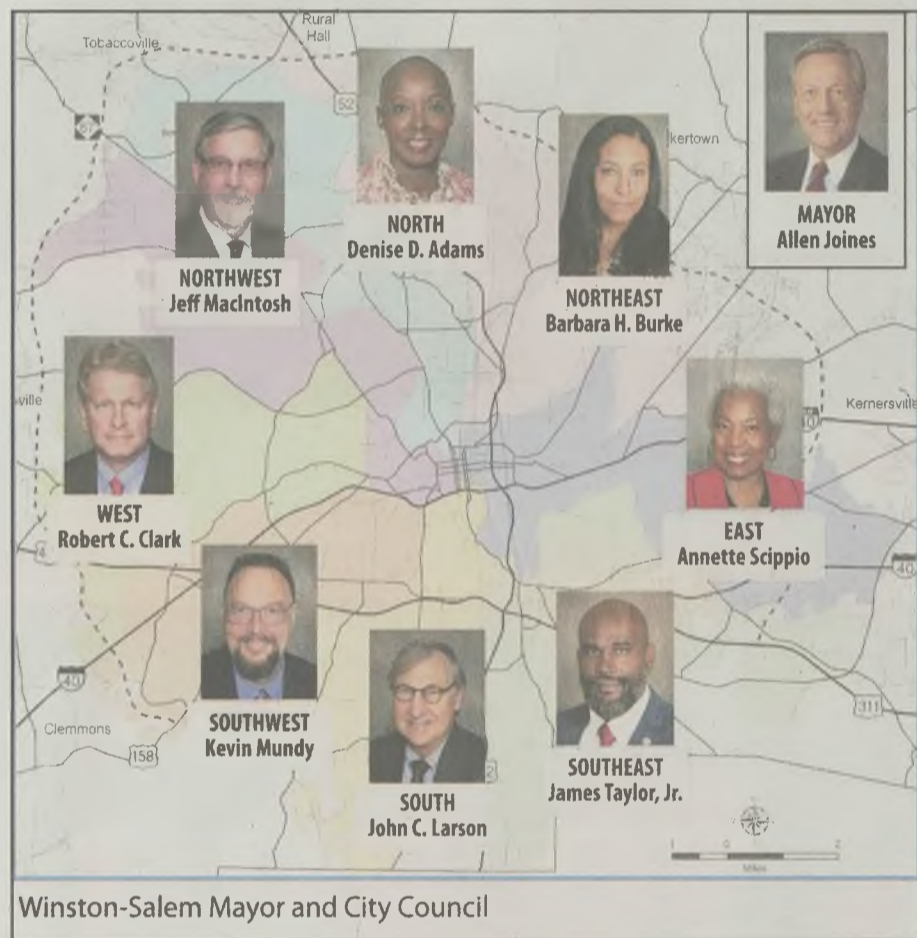
City Council calls for more crime prevention spending

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

There have been 14 homicides in Winston-Salem this year, compared to nine this time last year. In response to the rise in homicides, shootings, and other violent crimes, the Winston-Salem City Council is calling for the budget to include more funding for crime prevention initiatives and community youth programs.

The proposed \$530.9 budget for fiscal year 2021-2022 was presented to members of the council during a public meeting last month. A breakdown of the proposed budget shows \$380.4 million for operations, \$110 million for capital, and \$40.5 million for debt service. Last week City Council had the opportunity to openly discuss the proposed budget for the first time and there were several different recommendations for programs to combat crime, including investments in education, prevention initiatives, a gun buyback program, SOAR, Youth-Build, and several other programs.

Council Member James Taylor, who is publisher of The Chronicle, was the first to call for funding to combat the rise in crime when he called for an \$400,000 increase in funding for the city's SOAR (Successful Out-



comes After Release) and YouthBuild programs. Taylor also mentioned the launch of a partnership between the Winston-Salem Police Department and the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office, while Mayor Allen Joines recommended adopting the Violence Interrupters Peace Initiative at a cost of \$200,000.

Violence Interrupters, INC is a data driven, vio-

lence reduction, research-based initiative that focuses on five components: community mobilization, public education, faith, leader involvement, and law enforcement participation, "... to anticipate and interrupt the transmission of high risk events and change the social norms and behaviors that perpetuate violence." The pro-

gram is currently based in Chicago.

Mayor Tempore Denise "D.D." Adams asked for additional funding for programming, mentorship stipends, and the need for recreation centers in high-crime areas like Piedmont Circle Apartments and Cleveland Avenue Homes. "These areas need a community center like now,"

Adams stressed.

Adams also talked about the need for the city to invest in a Pre-K initiative. While education is usually handled by the county, Adams and others said it's time the city got involved in preparing local students for the future.

Councilmember Annette Scippio, who represents the East Ward, also spoke in support of more programming at recreation centers. She said she believes local recreation centers don't offer programs that attract youth.

"Our recreation centers are not programming themselves to really be attractive to young people where they can come and learn skills, they learn games, they learn techniques," Scippio continued. "The programming in our recreation department needs a lot of attention, along with the facilities themselves."

Councilmember Barbara Hanes Burke, who represents the Northeast Ward, requested that the city set aside \$250,000

for prevention programs and conflict resolution for youth such as the YWCA Teen Court. She also suggested implementing a gun buyback program.

"I understand that we had a gun buyback program in the city some years ago and I've been talking with some of our officers and I've been told that it was quite successful," Hanes Burke continued. "We know that the more guns we get off the streets ... we know those are guns that can't be possibly used to commit any kind of crime."

Citizens had the opportunity to share their thoughts on the proposed budget last week as well. During a virtual public forum citizens had three minutes to talk about the proposed budget.

The Winston-Salem City Council will adopt the budget during the meeting on Monday, June 21. The 2021-2022 proposed budget can be viewed by visiting <https://www.cityofws.org/175/Budget> or by visiting the city's website.

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