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'Transit Talk' brings conversation on gun violence to the people

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

Over the past few months there have been several meetings and press conferences about the rise in gun violence and other violent crimes in Winston-Salem. Earlier this week, Assistant Chief William Penn with the Winston-Salem Police Department (WSPD) brought the meeting to the people with his "Transit Talk."

Penn, who is a native of Winston-Salem, said he got the idea for Transit Talks one day while thinking about ways the department could improve community engagement. "I thought about the times of community meetings and city council meetings and I said, wow, people using public transportation and going back and forth from work, I can see how they could miss those opportunities to be heard. So I said, let's take the conversation on the bus," Penn said.

On Monday evening, Penn used Route 87 to bring the conversation on gun violence to the people. As the bus traveled through the city, Penn talked about what the WSPD is doing to stop the violence and asked passengers what they thought the department should be doing. There were recommendations for a Scared Straight program as a means of deterring juvenile crime, a gun buy-back program, more programs for young people, community engagement programs



Photo by Tevin Stinson

Last week Assistant Chief William Penn with the Winston-Salem Police Department used public transportation to talk to citizens about the rise in gun violence and get suggestions on what the police should do to combat the issue.

and several other suggestions.

"We just want to let the people know what the police department is doing, have the discussion and based on what they tell us, we'll take that back to the agency and use that information as we take our next steps," Penn said.

There have been 17 homicides in Winston-Salem this year, more than 60 aggravated assaults, and hundreds of shootings.

When discussing the rise in violence here in Winston-Salem and across the country, Penn said the rise in violence is a result of a lot of social issues coming to a head.

"What you're looking at is a lot of social problems exploding on us," Penn said.

"COVID didn't create this issue, but it exposed it. We have folks frustrated and choosing to resolve their conflicts with weapons and violent acts. So

we have to come together as a community, we have to work through this.

"We have to talk, we have to be engaged, and get all stakeholders on the table and find a way to combat this," he said.

New park honors Nelson L. Malloy Jr.

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Local elected officials made Nelson L. Malloy Jr. Park official last week when they came together for a ribbon cutting ceremony for the 4-acre park located on Bethabara Road. The park is named in honor of Nelson Malloy Jr., who served on the Winston-Salem City Council for 20 years.

The park is designed for individuals with disabilities and also includes a dog park, a splash pool, and a picnic area. The ribbon cutting was scheduled



Submitted photo

Nelson L. Malloy Jr. Park designed for easy access for the disabled.

to be held last summer, but due to the pandemic it was postponed. During the ceremony held last Wednesday morning, Malloy, who is one of the original members of the local chapter of the Black Panther Party, said he was humbled by the naming of the park in his honor.

"It's a humbling experience and I'm deeply grateful to be honored with my name on the park,"

Malloy said.

Mayor Pro Tem "DD" Adams, who is also the representative for the North Ward, recommended that the park be named after Malloy. She said as an elected official and as a member of the Black Panther Party, Malloy always stood for what was right. In her letter of recommendation, Adams credited Malloy for drawing the

ordinance for big box development, strengthening the city's housing code, and advocating for African Americans to be put in positions of power in city government.

"He always stood for what's right and what's just. Even when everybody else was against it, he was for it and he would fight for it," Adams said.

Adams said in the planning phases for the park, she went to staff with the parks and recreation department and talked about the importance of making sure the park was accessible for everyone. She said, "This park is a testament to Nelson Malloy and others like Nelson Malloy." Malloy has been in a wheelchair since the late 1970s, after a shooting

left him paralyzed.

Councilmember Kevin Mundy, who represents the Southwest Ward, said he will soon see similar parks in other wards. He said since the construction of Nelson Malloy Park, several citizens have requested that their neighborhood parks include playground equipment that is accessible by individuals with disabilities.

"Word has gotten out about this wonderful park in the Southwest Ward and other places and we now have requests for similar playground equipment in playgrounds around the city," Mundy continued. "Thanks to this prototype, we know how to do it now, so I think we're going to see throughout the city more accessibility for anyone in a wheelchair and that is something we should be grateful for."

According to city officials, Nelson L. Malloy Jr. Park isn't complete but it is open to the public. The park is located at 2619 Bethabara Road.

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