



Local Winemaker Looks To Expand His Niche In The Market

-- Page 2

Seattle To Begin Booting Cars This Week

-- Page 3



Movie Review: Transformers: Dark Of The Moon

-- Page 8

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First A.M.E. Defends Purchase Of MLK

First A.M.E. Church of Seattle (FAME) has drawn criticism from main stream media regarding the purchase of the Martin Luther King Elementary school building. These reports allege that FAME received preferential treatment during the bidding process for the surplus property.

Based on these reports one might believe that the sale of the school to FAME was the result of a district insider, and prominent member of the church, wheeling, dealing and hand-delivering the property, named in honor of Dr. King in 1971, to his beloved congregation.

However, members of the committee established by FAME, who recently described their version of how the building was acquired and its proposed use to their congregation last week, claim that they did their homework and simply put forth the best proposal based on the criteria established by the School Use Advisory Committee for MLK (SUAC).

Over the course of a year, the committee - which includes many well-respected members of the community like Frances Stephens, Dr. Norward Brooks, T. Marie Floyd, Iva Tolliver and Ted Howard to name a few - worked tirelessly to produce a winning bid for the coveted school property to utilize as a community center with a focus on youth. However, that hard work was recently diminished by allegations in mainstream media outlets of preferential treatment of the FAME proposal by the Seattle School District.

"The media had the audacity to put on the front page of the paper a bunch of inaccurate information," said Rev. Carey G. Anderson, pastor of FAME, to his congregation. "We are going to share the accurate report of what happened with the MLK building."

The first issue that Rev. Anderson and members of the committee addressed was the length of time that they've actually had possession of the building and explain the "lack of tenants" that are either currently utilizing or planning to occupy the building. Although the school board voted to grant the property to FAME in October of 2010, the sale was contingent upon FAME securing a \$2.4 million grant from the Washington State Dept. of Commerce.

"The application process [for the grant] took from October 21, 2010 until January 15, 2011," said Frances Stephens, president of the FAME MLK Committee.

According to Stephens, with the grant approval in-hand FAME was able to secure the property from the Seattle School District on Feb. 17, 2011, but it wasn't until March 30, 2011 that they received an occupancy permit from the Seattle Dept. of Planning.

Even though FAME had possession of the building and the right to occupy it, the building, which had not been in use since June 2006, was not in a condition suitable for occupancy.

"The school was closed for six years," said Dr. Norward Brooks, interim executive director of the MLK FAME Community Center.

"The lighting was almost gone, there was no communications system in the building, there was



Dr. Norward Brooks, interim executive director of the MLK FAME Community Center, stands in front of the MLK Elementary School Building. The building, awarded to First A.M.E. Church of Seattle, is now home to the MLK FAME Community Center. Staff Photo/Chris B. Bennett

mold in the building, there was a lot of work to be done," said Brooks of the condition of the building when it was received by FAME.

However, since occupying the building, FAME has removed mold and asbestos from the property, repaired the roofs of the main building and portables, replaced the hot water tank, made improvements to the furnace, had an architectural and engineering inspection performed on the building, made necessary recommendations from a fire inspection, painted rooms in the building, replaced windows, and cleaned the grounds.

According to people associated with the project, at least part of the asbestos removal was unplanned. According to Brooks, as they were removing the old carpets in the building so they could replace them with new carpets, the tiles, which the carpets were placed on top of, came up with the carpet. These tiles contained asbestos and needed to be removed from the building.

"Had the carpet come straight up without removing the tiles we would have been okay, and just laid down the new carpet," said Brooks. "But that wasn't the case."

Despite these setbacks, the center currently houses FAME's Child & Family Center, CAYA's Summer Youth Enrichment Program, and Literacy in the Community - a tutoring program for young people. All of these programs are in line with FAME's commitment towards youth services with the facility.

Meeting the Criteria

The criteria used to help determine the best use of the facility was determined by the SUAC and approved by the Seattle School Board. The SUAC was established pursuant to a City of Seattle Municipal Code to establish criteria for joint use or reuse of schools, comprised of Ron English of the Seattle School District, a non-voting representative of the Seattle Dept. of neighborhoods, a representative from the Seattle Dept. of Permitting and Development, four community members from the neighborhood

surrounding MLK and an at-large member to represent city-wide education issues.

The SUAC met over the course of a year to establish the criteria for the reuse of the building. According to FAME MLK Committee member Ted Howard, he and fellow committee member T. Marie Floyd attended almost all of the meetings held over the course of the year and paid strict attention to what the SUAC wanted to see the building used for. That information was relayed to the rest of the committee for inclusion into FAME's proposal, with the assumption that other bids for the school would be submitted - including one from the Bush School, which sits adjacent to the MLK bldg. The Bush School submitted the highest bid for the property, however the Bush School wanted to tear down the building to make way for athletic fields and a playground, with free access to the community on the weekends and during the summer time.

"We took our grant and made sure that we met each and every one of the recommendations," said Howard. "We had to be competitive and our grant was well-written."

As a condition of sale, there is a covenant that requires FAME to make at least five of the rooms in the building available to organizations that support youth educational activities or provide social services at rates that are half of what they charge the general public to use the facility. In addition, they must make the gym, playground and auditorium available at no charge for youth activities for at least 8 hours per day. In addition the playground is supposed to be available for community use when the center is not using it for its own purposes.

However, the center has drawn criticism for not having yet opened the playground up to the community, and the lack of an established marketing plan.

"We have not opened up the playground yet because we want to make sure that it is a safe place for youth," said Stephens. "And we are being criticized for marketing even

though that was not part of the covenant."

In addition, according to Stephens in June 2011, FAME's use of the building was reviewed by the school district under a very strict, and sudden timeline.

"We weren't supposed to be reviewed until December," said Stephens. "The School District came to us with a document and asked us to respond and the timeline for doing so was very, very quick."

Many leaders in the African American community question the motives behind the scrutiny of the sale of the building to FAME, but most agree that the community at-large would receive the most benefit from FAME's proposed use of the building.

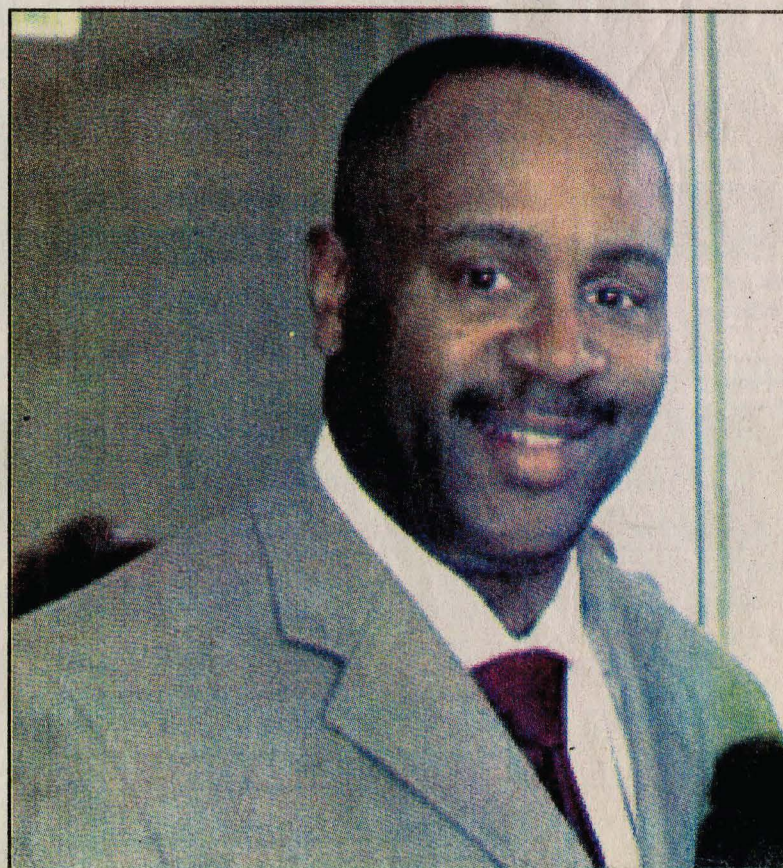
"The early learning focus on African American kids is key to reducing the education achievement gaps, none of the other proposals even addressed this fundamental principle," said Nate Miles, a prominent member of the African American community.

"Which other group has any programs specifically designed for kids of color to stem youth violence, criminal activity, and provide a safe environment for them?" he asked. "This program will help keep down youth violence, especially during the summer now that the state has cut funding due to budget cuts."

While things may not move as quickly as some might have hoped it would have, the committee is in the process of working out agreements with organizations to rent out the facility to community-based organizations. However, as it relates to the awarding of the school, the members of the committee want people to know that they didn't put forth their collective efforts for the benefit of FAME or themselves, but for the benefit of the community.

"We as a committee met the criteria of the RFP (request for proposal), and we submitted the best proposal," said Stephens. "We have the building and it's available for the community to use."

Community Mourns The Loss Of Carl Wayne Ervin



Carl Wayne Ervin was born on January 3, 1958, in Seattle, WA to the union of Charles W. and Christene R. Ervin. He was the youngest of six children.

Carl attended Mount Zion Baptist Church with his parents and siblings. He accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior at the age of nine and was baptized by Rev. Dr. Samuel B. McKinney.

When he was six years old, his father erected a basketball hoop in their spacious backyard. Carl displayed an affinity and talent for this sport. He and his friends spent hours upon hours shooting baskets and perfecting their game. Carl started directing the action on the court and soon had neighborhood boys clustered around selecting teams. Nothing made his parents happier than looking out of their bay windows and seeing a yard full of kids playing together.

Carl went to Stevens Elementary and Meany Jr. High. He began playing organized basketball at the Rotary Boys and Girls Club. When he was 13, he received a scholarship sponsored by Lenny Wilkens to attend the Bob Houbart sports camp. The newspaper article and accompanying picture showing him shaking hands with the Sonic Player/coach is proudly displayed in one of his many photo albums.

When the family moved to Beacon Hill, Carl enrolled in Asa Mercer Jr. High and his knowledge of the fundamentals of basketball flourished under the expert tutelage of Coach Frank Ahern. While at Cleveland High School, that foundation was cemented under the guidance of Coach Fred Harrison.

Carl was a two-time 1st Team All-Metro and All-State performer who led the Eagles to back-to-back State titles in 1975 and 1976. Ervin, the Eagles captain, held assist records for one game (16) and tournament (35) while directing his team to a 50-1 record over two seasons. His perfectly arched 18' jumpshot, with only seven seconds remaining in the game, won the State Championship in 1976. Carl's jersey, along with teammates James Woods and Jawaan Oldham, was retired during the "Celebrating Champions and Legends" ceremony held in January of this year. The Eagles were declared "The Team of the Century."

Recruited nationally, Carl chose to attend Seattle University where he became a four-year starter and the school's all-time single season (179) and career (534) assist leader in the Division I era. As a senior captain, Carl led the Chieftains in 3 categories: scoring (505/18.7), assists (135/5.5) and free throws (87/100). Ervin scored 1,304 points during his career. Blessed with exceptional court vision, unique timing and commanding ball handling skills, Carl is one of the best ever to have played at Seattle University where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Studies. He was inducted into the SU Athletic Hall of Fame in May of 2009.

A 7th round draft pick of the Seattle Sonics, Ervin spent two seasons in the CBA in Alberta, Canada, and continued playing locally in Pro-Am leagues for a number of years. He came back to Seattle U and coached under Al Hairston for ten years.

Carl continued to stay involved with basketball on all levels, coaching youth basketball at the Rotary and Vista Boys and Girls Clubs. He organized, directed and coached pro summer league camps for Doug Christie, Nate McMillan and Jamal Crawford. Last year, he helped to organize Mount Zion's 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament for the Ministry of Christian Education's Department of Recreation and Athletics. He was a member of O'Dea High School's "Dream Coach" team; they finished in third place at the State Tournament this year.

He was employed by Costco, Alpac Corporation, Pepsi-Cola, Winco and the SU Athletic Department. Being recognized as Employee of the Month was common for Carl. At Pepsi-Cola he was also named Employee of the Year and served as the company representative for United Way. Most recently, he worked for the City of Seattle Department of Transportation.

Carl was a meticulous dresser with a phenomenal sense of style and design. He knew fashion and paid close attention to detail. The first and only time he played golf was for the Ed O'Brien Golf

(Cont'd on Page 5)

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