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# The Extra

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## Laurens City Council honors leaders in inaugural Black History Month ceremony

By Judith Brown  
Staff Writer

Willie Paden said that perhaps there was a bit of a mistake when he was honored Tuesday night by members of Laurens City Council, since he claimed others had sacrificed more than he did when many in the African American community began working toward single-member districts in the 1980s for the City of Laurens and Laurens County.

Paden was one of three local African American leaders honored Tuesday evening by Laurens City Council and the African American city council members in a Black History Month agenda item initiated by council members Alicia Sullivan, Marian Miller and Sara Latimore.

"If it was not for Mr. Paden, I would not be serving on city council and no other African American would be serving here, and he paved the way for all of us," Miller said.

"It's more than me who deserved recognition," Paden said, explaining that in the early 1980s, two different petitions to request litigation to change the at-large council systems to single member districts.

Eventually the American Civil Liberties Union and the NAACP took up the fight for the Laurens County residents, but not until several local petitioners had lost their jobs because of their signatures on the



AMERICAN HISTORY — Willie Paden tells about some of the work and sacrifices by Laurens County African Americans in the early 1980s when they petitioned for single member districts. Paden and others were honored by Laurens City Council in recognition of Black History Month.

controversial petitions.

"I was in the union at Laurens Glass, and the union protected me, but others really sacrificed," Paden said.

John Carter had already been elected to a town council seat under the at-large system in Gray Court,

and Luther Craine had been elected at-large in Laurens, but Carter said it remained difficult for that to happen.

"I came onto council in 1976 but that wasn't really possible elsewhere," said Carter, who is now seeking a tenth term as mayor of Gray Court.

"I follow after some great people," Paden told council and the audience Tuesday night. "John Carter, Ullis Byrd, David Smith and others. All these awards I've won, some of them belong to them because they did all the work."

Photo by Judith Brown

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## Museum seeks lift in elevator fundraising

By Judith Brown  
Staff Writer

The Laurens County Museum Association, while developing plans to be somewhat self-sustaining with event space and rental property, points to Newberry County as an example of governmental entities and non-profits joining forces for the benefit of the local economy.

LCMA President Carolyn Shortt issued an invitation to Laurens City Council to attend a March 21 Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours event in order to see the \$650,000 in renovation work which has already been accomplished completely debt free.

"We are wanting people to realize we are very assertive in all that we do and we do promote sustainability for the LCMA," Shortt said. "We are not sitting still!"

Shortt said almost all of that funding was raised through hard work by volunteers and from business donors such as Firmin Ford and others, as she made her case to members of city council Tuesday evening, requesting \$25,000 annually for four years. Laurens Mayor John Stankus invited Shortt and others to come present requests to council's budget workshops in early March.

In the meantime, museum board members and partners are working to increase the funds already raised to install the needed three-story elevator. The elevator will provide greater accessibility to the upstairs Magnolia Room event space over the Witherspoon building and the

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