

http://www.sanfordherald.com/news/bipartisan-effort-secures-state-funds-for-s/article_c551c9ea-6062-11e8-bb08-dffa9585360.html

Bipartisan effort secures state funds for S3

By Zachary Horner | zhorner@sanfordherald.com May 26, 2018



From left, Sanford Mayor Chet Mann, Bread of Life Ministries Executive Director Bill Hicks and N.C. Rep. John Sauls spoke to The Herald Friday about \$57,000 being allocated for the S3 Housing Connect task force in the upcoming state budget.

Asia Muhammad | The Sanford Herald

State Rep. John Sauls said Friday he secured funding from the state budget to help a Sanford homelessness initiative.

"I think it's our obligation to help those less fortunate than us, less fortunate than we are," Sauls, a former pastor, said. "I don't look at the person and try to figure out why he's in the position he's in. That's not for me to try to determine. My obligation to humanity is to try to help them. I believe everybody needs not just a hand out but a hand up."

Sauls said he secured \$57,000 in the upcoming state budget for the S3 Housing Connect homelessness task force. The money will go toward making the Bread of Life Ministries' building grant-ready.

He said he learned of the program and its needs when he called Mann a few weeks ago and asked if there was anything the city needed money for and Mann rattled off a few projects. But when the Bread of Life came up — a program for which Mann has been requesting money from the city council in recent weeks — the question was solved. The church Sauls used to pastor, Crossroads Ministries in Broadway, has helped with the work of BOLM, which is also a food pantry and serves meals to the needy on weekends.

There are some needed upgrades and renovations to the building in order for them to become grant-ready.

Bill Hicks, executive director of BOLM, said one particular need was a new air conditioning unit. Those upgrades will make the old McIver School eligible for grant money to start the McIver Achievement Center, a day center and shelter designed to help the homeless get back on their feet.

Hicks said the extra funding — coupled with \$60,000 from the city — is a “huge boost.”

“There’s some things that we have been doing in the community for some time,” Hicks said, “but we felt that there were a lot of untapped areas that need to be addressed.”

Mann said Sauls “has always had Sanford and Lee County in mind” and also expressed his appreciation for the funds.

“With John’s leadership, we’ve allowed the county to move away from that and work on something else that will be easier for them to do and just as impactful,” Mann said. “But we would not be in a position to do what we need to at S3 without the state and Rep. Sauls’ help.”

He added that he’s been in conversations with county officials about putting funds toward sewer line extension to the Raleigh Executive Jetport instead of S3.

Both Sauls, a Republican, and Mann, a Democrat, spoke about the uniqueness of the funding. They agreed it's uncommon for both sides of the aisle to come together on a project. Sauls said that he and Mann may disagree on some things, "but there's more we can agree on than disagree on."

"God can do things, but he works through us," Sauls said. "I think this is an area where he's using Bill and has been using him to help feed people for years. He's using our church. He's using me in my position and the mayor in his position to make change happen for the better."

Mann added, "I hope that other elected leaders, not only in Lee County but other counties, will understand that this is how you help your constituents. You go across the aisle."

"We're just making the case that if we can do it, anybody else can."

The state budget will likely be voted on by the end of next week. Mann said the funds would be allocated to the city, which would then direct them to S3.

Reach Staff Writer Zachary Horner at 919-718-1217 and on Twitter at @Zachary_Horner.

Zachary Horner

Reporter

Zachary Horner joined the Herald newsroom staff in September 2016. He covers local and state government and religion.