

WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL

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COMMENTARY

GOLD MEDAL



ALLISON LEE ISLEY, JOURNAL

Cyclist Ivania Blondin warms up for the Streets of Fire Sprint Races on May 24, 2024, downtown in Winston-Salem. Blondin won gold and silver medals in speed skating competitions at the 2026 Winter Olympics.

Kind cyclist who slept in our basement wins 2 speed-skating medals during Winter Olympics

In our household, eyeballs were glued to television sets over the few days of the 2026 Winter Olympics in northern Italy.

The ice, more so than ski slopes or bobsled runs, commanded an inordinate amount of attention.

And how could it not? World-class athletes, separated by the thinnest of margins, racing to dramatic finishes to determine who stood where on the podium, which flag was raised highest and which color medal would be awarded, made for appointment viewing.

Especially with Shania Twain's "Feels Like a Woman" played in the background. Um, what?

Yeah, OK, the U.S. v Canada men's gold-medal hockey game was pretty spectacular. Perhaps you saw.

But for us, the highlight of the Olympic Games was seeing a diminutive Canadian who slept in our basement two years ago win a gold and a silver in speedskating.

A long way from Sochi

Ivania Blondin, 35, who's maybe 5 feet, 4 inches on tiptoes, stood tall in these Olympics. Her fourth, by the way.

She won a matching set of medals at the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing with a gold in the women's long-track team pursuit — three skaters racing in a tight, aerodynamic line against another team of three for 2,400 meters, about 1 1/2 miles — and a silver in the mass start, 16 skaters in a 6,400-meter race (about 4 miles) jostling each other at speeds of more than 35 mph.

We learned all that not because we're Dutch or diehard fans of speedskating, the national sport of the Netherlands.

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SCOTT SEXTON

Ballot for District 2 features 18 candidates

Primary has 8 Democrats, 10 Republicans for school board

LISA O'DONNELL
Staff Reporter

There is no shortage of candidates from which to choose in the District 2 primary for the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Board of Education.

The Democrat primary has eight candidates, and the Republican primary features 10, including incumbents Robert Barr, Susan Miller and Steve Wood. Leah Crowley, the other District 2 school board member, is ending her tenure on the school board in November.

District 2 encompasses the area of Forsyth County outside Winston-Salem's urban core. Voters in each primary may vote for four candidates.

Please see **DISTRICT 2**, Page A4

'The void created will be great'

Superintendent reflects on friendship with deceased Wilkes leader

LISA O'DONNELL
Staff Reporter

Don Phipps, the superintendent of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, is among those mourning the loss of Wilkes County Schools Superintendent Mark Byrd.

Byrd was found dead of a gunshot wound at his home in Wilkes County, authorities said.

"I considered him one of my best friends in the superintendent world," Phipps said.

Before coming to Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools in December, Phipps had been the superintendent of Caldwell County Schools since 2018. Caldwell County borders Wilkes County.

"He was authentic in his personal and professional roles and was always concerned with supporting his students and staff and community. He had



Byrd

Please see **SUPERINTENDENT**, Page A9

Eden man facing charges in fatal wreck dies in custody at Central Prison hospital.

NEWS, A3

Weather

Partly sunny and chilly
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Forecast • A10

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LT. GEN. H. R. MCMASTER

Moderated by Nick Schiffrin

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