

CITY

Council increases property taxes, raises salaries for town employees

By Kelly Ryan
Associate Editor

The Chapel Hill Town Council approved a property tax hike June 28 as part of its 1993-94 budget, drawing criticism from two council members who think the town should have worked harder to avoid increasing taxes.

The budget passed 7-2, with council members Julie Andresen and Joyce Brown voting against the plan.

"I think we could have done more to reduce the tax rate if there was going to be a tax increase at all," Brown said.

The budget includes a property tax increase of about 6.2 percent, said Town Manager Cal Horton, who prepared the budget plan.

Although the council set the tax rate at 59.1 cents per \$100 property valuation—less than last year's 62.125 cents—county property revaluations will mean that residents will pay more in taxes than last year.

Horton said it was difficult to predict

exactly how much each tax bill would increase for the average property owner. "The change in assets could vary greatly from house to house."

Assuming that the average increase in property valuations was about 14 percent, a resident who owns a \$100,000 home could expect the property's value to increase to about \$114,000. In the 1992-93 fiscal year, residents paid about \$621 annually for a \$100,000 home.

So, for the 1993-94 fiscal year, the owner of the \$114,000 home could expect to pay \$674.88, which is about \$52.88 more than last year, Horton said. "Houses and property tend not to go up at the average," he said.

The budget will provide two additional narcotics investigators for the Chapel Hill Police Department beginning in October, more street lighting downtown, more police and public works overtime for special events and funding for the new public library on Estes Drive.

The council also set aside \$324,000

for a water and sewer fund to connect residents in four Chapel Hill neighborhoods to the county sewer lines.

Council members also included salary increases for town employees, which will go into effect Sept. 1 instead of July 1 to save money. Lower-paid employees will receive 4.75-percent salary increases, while higher-paid employees will receive 3-percent increases.

Andresen said she thought the council provided a handsome retirement package to its employees, adding that she might have voted for the budget if the council had proposed a 2-percent pay hike for higher-level employees.

"It's costing an incredible amount a year. I think we're spending more than we should for the size of our town."

Mayor Ken Broun said he supported the budget because he thought the town-employee pay hikes and the services the town was going to provide were right on target with the town's finances.

"I think we had the best budget package we could have had," he said.

AIDS group again seeks grant to build home

By Kelly Ryan
Associate Editor

More than four months after being denied \$280,000 to build an AIDS group home in Carrboro, the AIDS Service Agency of Orange County reapplied for federal funds in July while still settling differences with neighbors of the proposed home.

The agency applied for money from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to build a six-bed home earlier this year, but were denied the funds in March.

Joe Herzenberg, a member of the AIDS Service Agency board, said he thought the proposal would be approved even though it was not dramatically different from the original proposal.

HUD probably will notify the agency by the end of September, but Herzenberg said he thought the decision could come a little later. "Like the president, HUD is usually a little late."

The home would be built in a Carrboro residential section at the intersection of Robert Hunt Drive and Greensboro Street.

The money the agency requested

would pay for constructing the house, but the agency will have to continue seeking private funds to pay for the home's operational costs.

Dan McCannless, director of the Housing Development Division at HUD's Greensboro office, said the agency now was competing with the eight Southeastern states for funds.

The Southeast has a certain amount of money to fund such projects, so the agency will be competing with a wide variety of agencies, not just those concerned with AIDS.

"It may be even more difficult rather than easier," McCannless said. "They're not just competing with HIV. It's the whole gamut."

Although Herzenberg said he thought time had healed all of the wounds caused by the possibility of moving people

with AIDS to Carrboro, the debate still is alive.

Andy Sachs, a mediator at the Dispute Settlement Center, said a planning group, comprised of four neighbors and two agency representatives, still were concerned about landscaping, staffing and the agency's working relationship with the neighbors.

"I think that until the two sides have an opportunity to discuss and resolve issues of concern, the issue won't cool down," Sachs said.

Lane Sarver, the housing consultant who helped the agency draft both of its applications, said he thought HUD would approve the agency's proposal.

"They showed the kind of commitment and the ability to mobilize a tremendous amount of community support."

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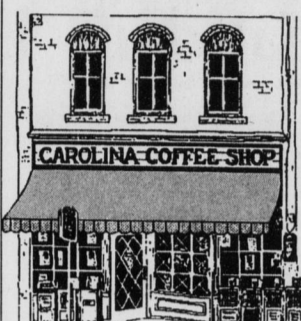
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