

Town tries to get grasp on budget Group to take 2nd shot at allocations

BY JAKE POTTER
STAFF WRITER

The hazy components of Chapel Hill's impending budget became a little clearer Monday after Finance Director Kay Johnson fielded questions from the town's budget review advisory committee.

Johnson responded to several questions, submitted by committee members after the group's meeting last Monday.

The committee is looking to help the Chapel Hill Town Council avoid a projected 9.6-cent property tax increase.

Committee member Julie Brenman raised concern about low tax growth rates. The town's preliminary estimates assume a 1.5 percent property tax increase and 1 percent sales tax increase.

Johnson said constantly changing factors, such as University refunds from sales taxes on campus construction projects, create a challenge in determining final tax-rate recommendations.

"We will continue to look at projections as we go along in the budget," she said.

Questions were raised about

AREA MUNICIPAL TAX RATE COMPARISON

A comparison of the county municipalities' tax rates, including fire services and the special city schools district tax, as presented to the town of Chapel Hill's budget review advisory committee.

County and Municipalities	Special School Districts	City or Town Property Tax	Total of all Jurisdictions
Orange	---	---	\$0.8800
Carrboro	\$0.2000	\$0.7148	\$1.7948
Chapel Hill	\$0.2000	\$0.5750	\$1.6550
Hillsborough	---	\$0.6200	\$1.5000

Note: The county-wide tax rate of \$0.8800 applies to all areas.

Twelve Fire Districts Levied by County or Municipality			
Cedar Grove	\$0.0730	Eno	\$0.0640
Chapel Hill	\$0.0200	Little River	\$0.0520
Damascus	\$0.0300	New Hope	\$0.0650
Efland	\$0.0465	Orange Rural	\$0.0510
		Orange Grove	\$0.0390
		South Orange	\$0.0920
		South Triangle	\$0.0300
		White Cross	\$0.0480

SOURCE: TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

DTH/MICHELLE FURLER

how the town's transit system would factor into the budget.

Transportation Director Mary Lou Kuschatka said the town's marketing budget for the transit system last year was about \$30,000.

Committee member Gene Pease asked whether boosting that number or creating low-cost fares could

potentially help the town.

Another of Brenman's concerns centered on costs for Chapel Hill's public housing program.

Town Manager Cal Horton said the program, which provides 337 housing units, will have a safe place in the budget's intricate equation. "What we have forecasted for housing is a balanced budget."

Johnson noted that the town's public works department provides \$125,000 for landscaping services for the housing.

"We don't have a single public housing unit that I wouldn't be willing to live in," Horton said.

Several commended the tax base's "healthy mix" among the departments, as coined by council member Bill Strom.

"The fact remains that whenever there's a tax here, no one shows up to complain," said committee member Aaron Nelson.

And that balancing act has not gone unnoticed.

The Government Finance Officers Association named Johnson and the town as recipients of its Distinguished Budget Presentation Award on Friday for last fiscal year's budget.

It marks the seventh time the town has taken home the award.

But, Nelson warned, the town must find funds to counter the projected tax increase this year.

"We either need to raise money or to cut back on spending money," he said.

Cutting back on some expenditures might not be ideal for the town. The town paid almost \$1 million in consulting fees in 2004, according to a memo from Town Information Officer Catherine Lazorko.

Fourteen of the 35 consultants hired earned \$15,000 or more for their work. Included in that group is MAXIMUS Inc., the firm hired to assist the budget committee.

Johnson said the budget typically does not include contingency funds for unexpected consulting studies.

Budget discussions will resume when the committee meets Feb. 24.

BY KATHERINE EVANS
STAFF WRITER

After almost overextending their budget, members of Student Congress' Finance Committee now are trying to balance the equation.

The committee was forced to temporarily cut funding for the executive branch of student government by \$33,000 Sunday night in order to avoid individual meetings with the 94 organizations that receive funds.

The budget now is in limbo as members of the committee plan to create a more conservative baseline and more defined priorities before Budget Weekend in two weeks.

"It's a fixable problem," said Natalie Russell, student body treasurer. "There is plenty of money in the annual budget. We can provide every group with a limited but reasonable budget that will help them fulfill their mission as a group."

While officials said they will not rework all of the allotments, any cuts will correspond to priorities outlined in the Student Code.

Top priority is gauged based on the number of students involved in the organization, the uniqueness of a program to the student body and the amount of outside funds generated by the organization.

Student Congress leaders credit the committee's fund overextension to long hours and lack of foresight. Russell said the committee traditionally gauges how much money to allot to groups by maintaining a balance as it processes requests.

However, this balance has been knocked off kilter because 20 additional groups were eligible to receive funding this year.

"There were a bunch of large requests at the end," Russell said. "It's always harder to make cuts the first day because the committee wants to give all groups as much money as they can."

Committee chairwoman Daneen Furr echoed Russell's complaints, noting that 30 hours of finance meetings in one weekend make it difficult to analyze the first group in the same manner as the last group.

"Once we set a pattern with one group, we wanted to do the same for all the others," Furr said. "We were a little overzealous."

Organizations expressed mixed reactions to potential budget cuts.

The Carolina Athletic Association was allotted only \$521.29 — almost \$9,500 less than its original proposal.

Treasurer Ginny Franks said that if this amount is certified, the CAA will not be able to raise the bar for next year's Homecoming concert.

Franks credited the allocation problems to the changeover in members of Congress and increased organizational demands for funds.

Zach Howell, treasurer of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender-Straight Alliance, said his group receives only half of its budget from Student Congress and is not too concerned about budget shortfalls.

"I don't think we have a lot of room to complain," he said. "None of our projects will be cut."

But Howell also said that because of curtailed funds, the group will pursue other sources of funding, such as alumni development and grants.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

THE Daily Crossword

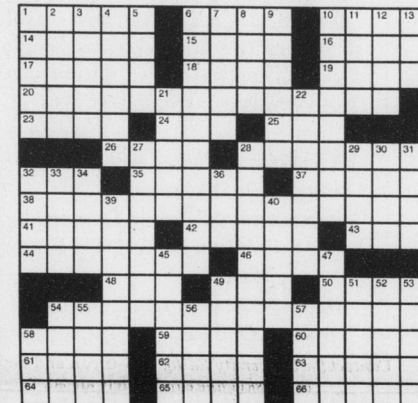
By Doug Peterson

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- ACROSS**
- Big Mac layer
 - Pueblo people
 - Stare stupidly
 - "My Own Private ___"
 - Black, to Blake
 - Angler's doodad
 - Jotted down
 - Skimpy skirt
 - Oscar role for Julia
 - Chow down
 - Parched
 - CIA forerunner
 - "Monsters, ___"
 - Cruise the mall
 - Take a chill pill
 - Psychic's gift
 - Catchall category
 - Backwoods
 - Get into scoring position
 - Ill-humored
 - WWII riveter
 - Smoked salmon
 - As a group
 - Light on one's feet
 - Broadway background
 - Routing word
 - Windmill element
 - Flee from police
 - Island near Sumatra
 - Crisscross

- DOWN**
- Sonar echoes
 - Love
 - Steppes settler
 - City on the Nile
 - Luke's Jedi mentor
 - Globe division
 - Final bios
 - Corn dish
 - Ab ___ (from the beginning)
 - Singing group
 - Invisible emanation
 - Court document

- Author Kesey
- Sends packing
- Requested but not yet delivered
- The Pope's jurisdiction
- Enter under multiple headings
- Roberts U.
- Burkina ___
- Display muscle
- Latin 101 verb
- Knock senseless
- Salon treatment
- Earth-friendly prefix
- Kodiak populace
- Attack like a puppy
- Mark of Cain
- Actress Mimieux
- Give tongue to
- Sacred stand
- Toe protectors
- Host at a roast
- Fanfare syllables
- Enthusiastic
- Stumble
- Padlock's partner
- Iota



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Coca-Cola

Fund to pave way to UNC system

Money will aid employees' children

BY RACHEL BROCK
STAFF WRITER

Roberta Massey, a UNC housekeeper, never thought that her son would become part of the community she serves everyday.

Although her son, Joshua, is only 3 years old, Massey already wonders how she will pay for his college education.

But a new scholarship to provide the children of UNC employees with a shot at a college education might put an end to Massey's worries.

The Family Scholarship Fund, established by employee Bruce

Egan, will award need-based scholarships to children of UNC faculty and staff members starting this year. Recipients can use the money to attend any of the 16 schools in the UNC system or any of the state's community colleges.

"By doing this, we're promoting education all across the state," said Egan, associate director for UNC-Chapel Hill's Information Technology Response Center.

He said the program is unique because students have a variety of schools from which to choose. N.C. State University has a similar pro-

"As a single parent with two kids in college, I have struggled to keep them there."

TOMMY GRIFFIN, FORUM CHAIRMAN

gram, but students can only receive funds to attend NCSU.

A \$200,000 seed grant from the Office of the Chancellor and \$4,000 in contributions from faculty and staff members laid the foundation for the fund.

Applicants will be evaluated on the basis of need by UNC's Office of Scholarships and Student Aid. A committee of two faculty and two staff members then will allocate the scholarship funds, which Egan said should be at least \$4,000 for the program's first class of students.

The fund not only will cover a student's first year at the University but also will reserve the scholarship for the student's future years in college.

Egan said the University's commitment to the program is evident in the funding that has flowed from several corners of campus — especially because those who will benefit from the program are helping to pay for it.

The program's benefits are twofold, Egan said, noting that employees want to provide opportunities for education at the same time as they foster a deeper sense of community.

Chairwoman of the Faculty Judith Wegner said the program's creation demonstrates a University-wide commitment to education.

"The next generation has a chance for the future," she said. "A scholarship can make a big difference. I know that it did for me."

Tommy Griffin, chairman of the Employee Forum, said staff members think the program is a great idea. "As a single parent with two kids in college, I have struggled to keep them there," he said. "In today's world a college education is not cheap."

Peter Desaix, president of the University Managers Association, which aims to identify ways to recognize UNC employees, said his organization wholeheartedly supports Egan's efforts.

"We are all very excited with the fact that Bruce has taken this initiative across the University," he said.

Massey stressed that the fund will allow parents to send their children to college when they might not have had that chance.

"The important thing is that people who work on the lower level understand the impact this could have on their families," she said.

Egan credited his colleagues for making his vision come to fruition.

"It's one thing to come up with an idea and it's another to roll up your sleeves and make it happen," he said. "Because of their support this dream is becoming a reality."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

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