

Lee making mayor's post important

by Harry Smith
Staff Writer

Chapel Hill's mayor is unique. Howard Lee is the first black mayor of a predominantly white Southern town. And, at 37, he is one of the nation's younger, more effective mayors.

The mayor's position in Chapel Hill has changed since Lee was first elected in 1969.

"I have tried to develop the mayor's position into something more than what it has been in the past," Lee said in a recent interview. "I see the mayor assuming a responsible leadership position, even though the powers of this office are nothing more than symbolic."

"I have asserted myself into situations where I thought the mayor belonged. I feel the mayor is in a position to keep open communications with every faction of the community."

"He ought to be on top of the day-to-day operations of the town and

should present new ideas, new concepts, new programs, and establish possible new directions for the town."

"Some people believe that in a city manager form of government, the mayor should be seen and not heard — and not involved. I refuse to be that. The mayor should be able to project himself far enough ahead to spot possible trouble areas."

"He ought to be constantly available to meet with the citizenry to help to solve the small, day-to-day problems."

And Mayor Lee has done this, even though the part-time position of mayor pays only \$1,200 per year. The changes have been many. When Howard Lee was elected, the mayor had no office, no secretary, no staff and no budget.

The mayor now has a spacious office on the first floor of the new municipal building, a secretary and a full-time assistant, Andy Little.

Howard Lee has also brought about a change in the relationship between the

town and the University.

"For a new person coming in, there would be a lack of appreciation of the 'changed' relationship between Chapel Hill and the University, particularly on the official level," Lee said.

"We're now in mid-stream of the city's breaking away from a position of some dependence on the University. We're beginning to assume more responsibility."

Lee said the University has, for a number of years, participated financially in the town's budget, furnishing approximately \$130,000 during each of the past two years.

He added the University also has helped the town with capital ventures, such as the purchase of new fire equipment.

"But in return, the town hasn't had much to offer to the University," Lee said. "The University, in some sense, then found it advantageous to call the shots for the town."

"Two years ago, there was a parent-child relationship between the

University and the town. Now there is more of a partnership."

Lee is particularly concerned with the town's relationship with the students.

"I've tried to create a healthy relationship between my office and the student body," he said. "Too many people in town used to view the students as a 'necessary evil.' But I feel students should have every right of citizens, including voting and running for public office."

Lee is quite concerned with the town's transportation needs. "Unfortunately, we've been slow in meeting the transportation problem. We're now awaiting a report by the N.C. Highway Department which should indicate what we can do to help the situation, including both long and short-range recommendations."

"Something should have been done five years ago, but the city fathers just didn't get on the ball."

Although a bus system was defeated by five votes in a referendum last spring, Lee

still feels public transportation is a tremendous need in the community.

Lee intervened this summer to prevent police from arresting Franklin Street sidewalk vendors. Although the ordinance is presently being enforced, Lee is optimistic.

"I think we're going to have sidewalk vending, and I think we should have sidewalk vending. I disagree with people who say allowing people to sell on the street is stepping on the rights of some. I think passing a repressive law is also stepping on peoples' rights."

Lee did indicate he felt some controls would be necessary, such as buying a permit or making an investment for the right to sell on the street.

Lee, a native of Lithonia, Ga., attended Clark College and graduated with honors from Fort Valley State College in Georgia. In 1966, he earned his master's degree in Social Work from UNC.

Lee headed an educational improvement project in Durham before

serving as director of Employment Relations at Duke University in 1968.

Last October, Lee became assistant director of medical education at Duke and has developed a number of programs, including recruiting of minority students. He also designed an education improvement program for hospital employees.

This year he delivered the main address at the National Association of Social Work conference in Dallas. He is on the organization's executive committee.

Lee is also on the board of directors of the Southern Regional Council and is second vice chairman of the North Carolina Democratic Party.

"I want the students to view Chapel Hill as their home away from home," Lee said. "They are going to spend most of their time here."

"Many of the decisions I make on a day-to-day basis will affect their lives. I hope they would feel free to utilize me as mayor."

6-member board

Aldermen govern town

by Harry Smith
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Chapel Hill's Board of Aldermen act as the town's governing body. The six citizens who make up the board are elected for two- and four-year terms.

R.D. Smith, assistant principal of Chapel Hill High School and mayor pro tem, was re-elected to a four-year term this year.

Smith would like to bridge the gap between the University and the town to work toward common goals.

"We need long-range planning for roads, traffic, housing and public transportation," he said in a recent telephone interview.

"We're getting bogged down in traffic, particularly during the peak hours. And we need to concentrate on the environment, especially if they continue to build New Hope Dam."

Ross Scroggs, director of the University Photo Lab, predicts it should be a very good year.

Scroggs, who was elected to a four-year term in 1969, doesn't believe the utilities issue will become a matter of consideration this year.

He said he feels a public market will be the "long-range solution" for the sidewalk vendors.

Mrs. Alice Welsh, a housewife, is particularly interested in the "aesthetic and environmental issues." She expressed interest in the transportation needs of the community and is an advocate of a system of bicycle routes.

"One of my main concerns right now," she said, "is the proliferation of drive-in businesses. We've become such a car culture, we expect to ride to the front door of everywhere we go."

She stressed the need to preserve the aesthetic, physical and psychological elements of the town which are pleasing and memorable to the students, including the downtown block of East Franklin Street.

Mrs. Welsh feels the sidewalk vendors can be a positive thing in the downtown area, and "in the long run can be a contribution by injecting a vitality now missing."

"If the inequities can be worked out and if regulations to create order and uniformity are imposed, some of the objections might disappear," she predicted.

"It is also important for the students and townspeople to develop rapport," she said, also mentioning the need for students to be able to vote in Chapel Hill.

Joe Nassif, an architect with Cogswell-Hausler Associates, was

re-elected to a two-year term this year.

Nassif stresses the need for planning, including flood-plain control and restrictions on drive-in businesses.

"We must disengage the 'sharing' things between the town and the University. The University is here to teach and the town is here to provide services," he said. "The town must gain control of the water system."

Nassif showed particular concern over the housing situation in Chapel Hill and stressed the need for controlled development.

George Coxhead, an insurance representative for New York Life Insurance, was elected to a four-year term in 1969. He is on the board of directors of First Union National Bank and has shown particular interest in the financial matters coming before the board.

James C. Wallace, elected to a four-year term this year, is a professor at N.C. State. He is the owner of the Continental Travel Agency and is the president of the N.C. Council of Conservation.

The Board meets at 4 p.m. on the first and third Mondays of the month and at 7:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Mondays. The meetings are held in the meeting room of the new municipal building.



Chapel Hill Mayor Howard Lee tells Police Captain Coy Durham that he will handle the disturbance which occurred on Franklin Street the first day the ordinance against selling

goods went into effect. Many of the "hippie vendors" continued to sell their wares in spite of the ordinance. (Staff photo by John Gellman)

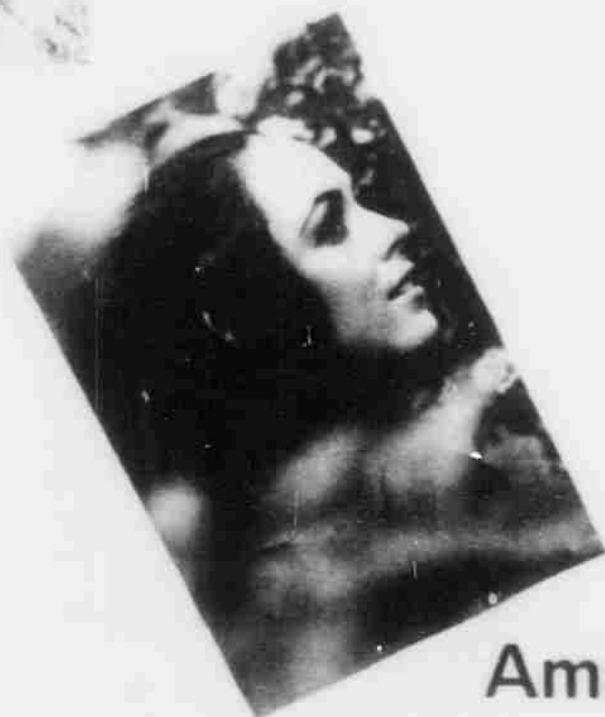
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