

# Triangle seeks restrictions on billboards

By FRANK PROCTOR  
Staff Writer

The rapid growth of the Triangle has made it increasingly difficult for local governments to maintain a balance between industrial development and natural beauty, but government officials say they're taking important steps to preserve that balance, by imposing restrictions on outdoor advertising.

"We're protecting a substantial public investment — the visual beauty of the area," said Durham County Landscape Architect Duane Coen. Durham County Commissioners initiated a wave of Triangle area legislation dealing with billboards when they enacted an ordinance on Oct. 3 which banned billboards along Interstate-40.

Following Durham County's action, the Raleigh City Council on Oct. 18 passed an ordinance restricting billboard size to a maximum of 150 square feet. Then, on Nov. 7, Wake County officials unanimously approved a moratorium on billboard construction.

In Chapel Hill — where outdoor advertising is not as prevalent — regulations effectively prohibit new billboards, according to Appearance Commission Liaison

Dana Staats. The town has had restrictions on billboards for many years, he said.

"Basically, if you want to put up a sign, it has to be on the same piece of property your business is on." Billboards built along highways for advertisements are prohibited.

Appearance Commission member Jane Norton said the commission was eager to avoid stirring up any controversy on the issue because it did not want its prohibition to be challenged. "We don't want billboards here," she said. "I support the moratorium in Raleigh because I think they (billboards) have gotten out of hand."

Staats, however, said he did not anticipate a challenge to Chapel Hill's regulations anytime soon. "When they (business) come to Chapel Hill, they know in advance what they are working with."

Most opposition to greater billboard restrictions has come from outdoor advertising companies, such as Naegele Outdoor Advertising. Naegele has branches in 16 states and in all major cities in North Carolina except Charlotte.

Naegele Vice President and Legal

Counsel Betty Mann said she considers Raleigh's new ordinance unreasonable.

The moratorium enacted by the Wake County Commission was common practice for counties that are reviewing their sign ordinances, she said.

"Right now Wake County has a sign ordinance that could use some tougher restrictions," she said. "We are working with the county in the formulation of a new sign ordinance, and hopefully we'll have some input," Mann said.

Mann said, however, that she expected the commissioners would ban all billboards along I-40. "We are always opposed to a ban in an industrial area," she said, adding that Naegele had no definite plans about what to do in response to a ban.

Mann was not concerned that actions by commissioners in Raleigh and Durham would have an effect in other areas of the state. Many counties have no billboard regulations at all. Metropolitan areas and municipalities are a lot more aggressive on the billboard issue than rural counties, she said.

"In addition, the Research Triangle keeps people more concerned with aesthetics and the environment," she said.

# Carrboro town manager resigns

By MICHAEL TOOLE  
City Editor

Carrboro Town Manager Richard Hunter announced Thursday his intention to resign.

In a letter delivered to aldermen Wednesday night and made public Thursday morning, Hunter said his resignation would be effective Dec. 30.

Several newly-elected aldermen had criticized Hunter in recent weeks and were expected to ask for his resignation at the new Board's first meeting Tuesday, but Hunter would not say that pressure was the reason for his announcement.

"When I was hired, I told the Board I would stay for three years," Hunter said Thursday morning in an interview. "That three years is up, and I personally feel it is time to move on."

Mayor-elect Jim Porto, however, said that the Board had appeared to lose confidence in Hunter during his term and that Hunter probably would have been ousted had he not resigned.

"If a manager doesn't have the confidence of the majority of the Board, then he can't operate effectively," he said.

Opposition to Hunter was strengthened by the November municipal election when three members of the Association for a Better Carrboro, a conservative group that has been critical of Hunter, were elected to the Board. All of the new members — except Porto, who does not vote except in case of a tie — have been endorsed by the ABC.

Doug Anderson, one of the new aldermen, said that he would not have been able to support Hunter if he remained the town manager.

"I felt he was not giving the Board a good response," Anderson said. "The level of administration that he was providing was not what it could have been."

Anderson said he thought Hunter could have provided the Board with more information so that it could make decisions but admitted that the criticism might be unfair since Hunter's staff did much of the work.

"Still, I do think it's important for a town manager to be aware of what's going on under him," Anderson said.

Hunter, however, said he had done a good job as manager. During his tenure, he said, the town had upgraded its employees' salaries, completed the Carrboro Bikeway System and started the Downtown Revitalization Program.

Hunter said Carrboro's image also had improved while he had served as mana-

# Judge extends restraining order on Village Cable

By SALLY SMITH  
Staff Writer

In Orange County Superior Court Thursday, Judge D. Marsh McLelland extended a temporary restraining order until Feb. 29, blocking an offer by Village Cable Inc. to buy back 10 percent of its stock from the non-profit Village Companies Foundation.

The original injunction, requested by the town of Chapel Hill, was granted Dec. 1 by McLelland. It blocked the foundation from selling the 50,000 shares of common stock back to its parent company, Village Cable.

Also, the town agreed Thursday to dismiss the nine members of the foundation's board as defendants in the lawsuit, leaving the foundation as the sole defendant.

"The foundation as a legal entity is

liable," said Town Attorney Grainger Barrett.

"It (the dismissal) is a voluntary action by the town," Barrett said.

The dismissal followed a request by Dr. Robert Senior, president of the foundation, during an executive session of a Chapel Hill Town Council meeting, Monday night.

The nine members of the foundation board named in the suit were Senior, Mebane Pritchett, Kenneth MacIntyre, Barbara Booth Powell, Thelma Boyd, John Swofford, Miriam Slifkin, Blyden Jackson and Mel Rashkis.

The basis for the town's lawsuit is an Internal Revenue Service law that prevents non-profit organizations from doing business with their parent companies.

Village Cable's offer stands at

\$125,000 for the stock, Senior said, with the pledge of an additional \$1 million to be paid at the end of the decade.

The foundation was established in 1979 as part of Village Cable's franchise agreement with the town, which regulates the cable television firm. Village Cable agreed to invest 10 percent of its stock in the foundation, whose purpose is to sponsor educational, cultural, recreational and social service activities and projects.

The next step on the part of the town, Barrett said, is for the Council to discuss the matter.

The extension Barrett said, will allow the council to discuss mutual concerns with the foundation board.

Barrett said the council's discussion up to this point had been related to the actions that took place Thursday.

## BSM

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religious by nature, but the injunction can't last beyond the end of the fiscal year in which it was issued. Additionally, an organization may have its funding restored by making a "good faith showing" that it will no longer violate the constitution.

The court did not give itself the power to permanently declare a group unconstitutional. "The court has been an aid as it's designed

to be," CGC speaker Exum said. "The decision to fund or not to fund will still rest with the CGC."

"You can never tell what a group is going to be like from year to year," he said.

While the court's ruling specifically declined to provide a definition for a group that is political by nature, the opinion provides a framework under which the political issue could be handled. By slightly modifying the

terms in its religious-nature test, a future court could produce a political-nature test.

"I think it was the intention of the court to make something that could easily be applied to the political situation," said Beth Furr, an associate justice of the court.

Exum proposed that the CGC use the court's opinion to form its own definition of what programs, services or events are of a political nature.

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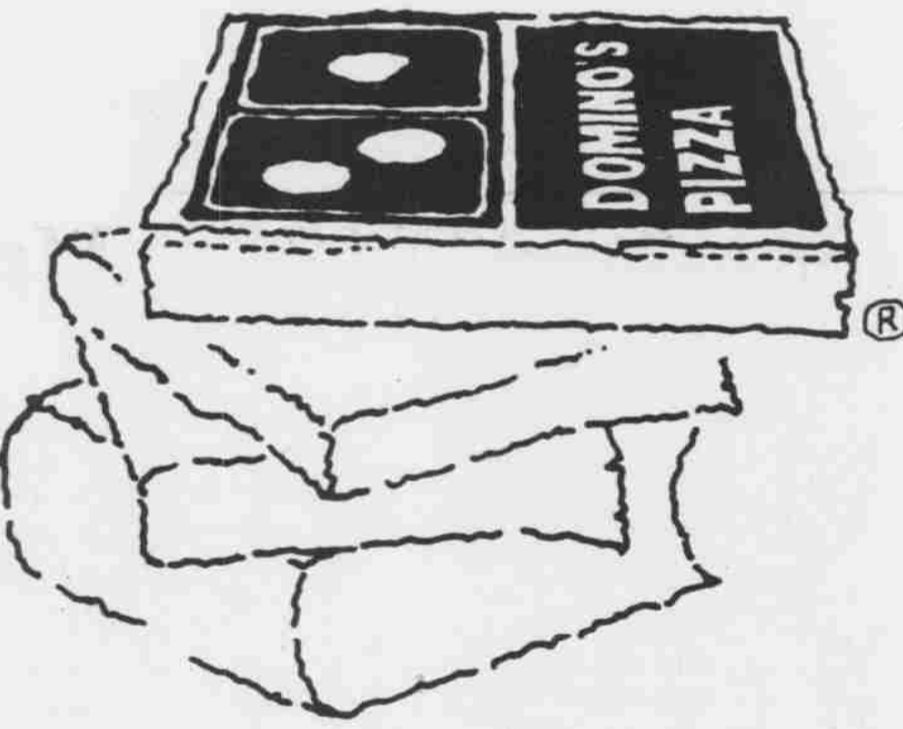
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