

Chapel Hill takes responsibility for campus cemetery

By MICHAEL JACKSON
Staff Writer

The Town of Chapel Hill was officially given the right to undertake responsibility for the Old Chapel Hill Public Cemetery last week and plans are now being made to refurbish the area.

The decision came from the Council of State — which includes Gov. James Martin and other state officials — and it clears up questions concerning who is responsible for the cemetery. The decision was also prompted by the findings of a special task force appointed by the Chapel Hill Town Council, which decided that the cemetery would be better taken care of under the town's supervision.

According to Grace Wagoner, UNC's property officer, a 1929 agreement between UNC and the town of Chapel Hill allowed the town to take care of the cemetery by selling lots and using the proceeds to maintain it.

However, by the mid-1950s most of the lots had been sold and no income was being generated for the cemetery's upkeep, Wagoner said. Now that the town has taken charge of the cemetery, it can budget money for the area's improvement, she said.

"The decision assigns definitely



DTH file photo

The old cemetery on campus is now the responsibility of the town of Chapel Hill

who is responsible for the cemetery's upkeep, and before, it was uncertain who to turn to," Wagoner said.

Chapel Hill Town Council member Julie Andresen said, "It is a case where the town wants the cemetery to be well-maintained, and the town will spend money to refurbish it."

Periodically, vandals damaged

tombstones and fences, and Chapel Hill has needed more money to keep the cemetery up but felt it did not have the legal authority to do so, Wagoner said.

Both Wagoner and Andresen noted the vandalism problems at the cemetery, as well as the problem of University visitors using the grounds as a parking lot during football and basketball

games. "It is thoughtless for people to use the cemetery in this manner and it costs all of us in the long run," Wagoner said. "We could lose valuable historical monuments and preservation features."

To refurbish the area, a Raleigh landscaping architectural firm has been hired, Wagoner said. Plans call for work on soil conditions, erosion and tree root problems,

along with planting and landscaping. Vandalized tombstones and stone walls will be repaired.

"The plan is very good for the site and addresses the issues we are most concerned with — maintenance and preservation," said Wagoner.

The plan is expected to be completed this summer.

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