

City sign ordinance preserves small-town atmosphere

By JENNIFER FROST
Staff Writer

Main Street — a place where people once could amble quietly along and finish the day's shopping or enjoy the company of chanced-upon friends.

Today, however, Main Street in most towns has changed. It is no longer quiet and uncrowded, but bustling and cluttered. Besides the traffic, there is often a dizzying kaleidoscope of billboards, signs and lights of all sizes, shapes and intensities lining the sidewalks.

Efforts to keep Main Street — or Franklin Street — free of tall signs have been made by members of the Chapel Hill Appearance Committee. They are attempting to preserve the small-town atmosphere by keeping the signs small as well. The key to

this effort is the Chapel Hill sign ordinance.

City Planner Arthur Jackson described the ordinance as a method of "defining signs allowed in zoning categories and determining their sizes in order to protect the visual environment and limit advertising."

"The ordinance is designed to control signage that detracts from the landscape and encourage more informational and unique signs," he said.

The ordinance prohibits signs such as those supported by poles more than eight feet high and those which use more than five percent of a building's facade. Signs illuminated by materials such as neon are also prohibited.

"We're trying to prevent the town from becoming signs, like Raleigh's downtown boulevard," said Cassan-

dra Sloop, chairperson of the Chapel Hill Appearance Committee. "(Raleigh town officials) are going back and removing signs, which is costing a lot of money. We're trying to prevent this from happening here."

Sloop said bringing signs to eye level by prohibiting pole signs and regulating the placement of other types of signs lessens traffic problems caused by people slowing down to look at them.

"The sign ordinance takes the clutter out. You can see the trees, shrubs, and know the place," Sloop said. "You don't need blinking lights or garishness in signs. When a town is neat and attractive that's how you feel, instead of chaotic."

The ordinance also limits the amount of information a sign may contain. Only the name, address and

trademark of the business may be included.

"Studies have shown that more than 10 pieces of information are too much to absorb," Jackson said. "We've limited the information to limit confusion."

Compliance with the sign ordinance, according to Sloop, is not a problem. "People are pretty accepting. Most are willing to plant shrubs or not have intense lights."

Not all businesses, however, are satisfied with the ordinance, especially those which received notices last spring asking them to change their signs because of non-compliance.

John Woodard, owner of Sutton's Drug Store on Franklin Street, said the Appearance Committee notified him that the canopy outside his store would have to be modified within

three years because it is larger than the ordinance allows.

"I agree with signs looking the same and having something to control signs," Woodard said, "but it's frustrating to have a sign that people find helpful and like, except for the politicians."

"I think they (the Appearance Committee) have good intentions, but they've overstepped their bounds," he said. "We are trying to get someone to come and discuss it with us."

Fowler's Food Store on East Franklin Street also received a request from the committee to change its signs.

"They want us to take down all pole signs, signs on our walls, signs in the parking lot — just about every sign we have," said manager Bobby

Leesnitzer.

He said the owners of Fowler's are planning to take action against the ordinance.

"We do need a sign ordinance," Leesnitzer said, "but I don't think it needs to be so strict. There also needs to be a grandfather clause for existing businesses."

Although some businesses have voiced opposition, most residents agree with the restrictions.

"It's a good idea for a strict sign ordinance," said Nana Daley, a sophomore nursing student. "It gives a small-town, more private atmosphere. No one wants to live in a place full of signs and advertising."

"(Signs) are mostly an eyesore," said senior English major Brunson Hoole. "Not having them can do nothing but add character to a place."

Weekend rainfall replenishes water supply

By CAROLE FERGUSON
Staff Writer

If you're grumbling about the rain that ruined your Labor Day beach trip, try to be glad some of the rain fell in Chapel Hill so you can keep your goldfish and take lengthy showers.

The long-awaited rains have poured on Chapel Hill on and off for about a week, refilling area lakes. Water supplies have increased and Orange Water and Sewer Authority officials are confident that the crisis is over. OWASA officials believe the community soon will survive on its own water supply.

Until Sept. 4, lake levels had been extremely low. University Lake was 51 inches below normal, and Cane Creek was more than 61 inches below

normal.

OWASA plants manager Bill Williamson said that recently, most of Chapel Hill's water has been coming from Durham through a water arrangement with Butner.

"Butner built a reservoir several years ago sized to take care of 10 million gallons a day," Williamson said. "They're only using 2 million a day."

The water comes via a line built in the 1940s when Butner was a camp for prisoners of war, Williamson said. Durham sent water to Butner, but when the town of Butner grew in size, a new plant was built and the pipeline was abandoned.

"Last year we had what some people say was the worst drought in 100 years," Williamson said. When

this occurred, the line went back into service in the reverse direction. He said there have been a few problems because the line is old, but the damages have been repaired quickly and the system has worked well.

The incoming water is not extremely expensive. Williamson said the main cost is for the operation of the electrical pumps. "The personnel is there anyway," he said. "It runs about 3-4 cents per gallon."

Chapel Hill pays Durham an established rate for the water, Williamson said. "It's a little less than what a customer of Durham would be paying for water. Since they are selling one customer (OWASA) 3 million gallons a day, it is not as expensive."

Last year OWASA piped in the water until late December. OWASA started using the system again about 3 weeks ago. Williamson said the lakes are usually a few feet below normal in August. They were extremely low last year, and this year has not been much better.

Orange County residents were

asked to conserve water by taking shorter showers and refraining from washing cars and watering lawns.

"Most people do pay attention to the voluntary conservation measures. We usually see a 10 percent decrease in the amount of water used," Williamson said.

However, the students made a big dent in the water supply when they arrived. The amount of water used usually increases by one million gallons when students return in the fall, according to Williamson.

But OWASA is expecting better conditions very soon. This weekend's rain has brought up lake levels. University Lake rose more than 17 inches to just 33½ inches below normal, and Cane Creek rose 24 inches to 37 inches below normal. Williamson said levels will continue to rise from the run-off from the rains. But if Chapel Hill gets more rain, as forecasters predict, the lakes will probably be completely full.

OWASA will continue to pipe in water from Butner until lakes are at the normal level.

Drinking

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functions.

Student reaction to the policy has been mainly one of acceptance, Schroeder said. "I think most students think, 'I don't like it, but that's the way it is,'" he said.

Gary Johnson, Ehringhaus area director, said the policy has worked as well as can be expected, from his point of view.

"It hasn't been as hard to enforce, or as bad socially as people thought it would be," he said. "I think students have adjusted well."

The policy has caused students to take responsibility for their own drinking, said Ann Stevens, area director for Henderson Residence College.

Rustin said the punishment for violating the rules varies from case to case. As with any violation of University Housing regulations, punishments range from verbal warnings to contract terminations.

"It depends on the circumstances," Rustin said. "It also depends on how a person reacts when confronted."

Some of the contract terminations over the last year have been alcohol-related, although no one has been forced out specifically for possession of alcohol, Rustin said.

The responsibility for enforcing the policy falls mainly to resident assistants.

Johnson said the policy does cause some problems for RA's.

"It's difficult for RA's who are trying to get to know the students to have the added pressure of policing them," he said. He added that while most RA's don't enjoy having to enforce the policy, they don't ignore violations.

Stevens, HRC area director, agreed that the RA's have a hard time. "They've done a stellar job trying to be friends and playing the role of enforcer and punisher," she said. "It's hard to be both a student and a representative of the University."

The policy has not ended drinking

on-campus, only made it less visible, said Anne Presnell, Cobb-Joyner area director.

"It would be naive of us to assume that drinking doesn't occur," she said. "I think drinking has gone underground."

Presnell said problems have not been significant in her area. But when they do occur, it's usually someone returning from a party intoxicated rather than openly drinking in the dorms, she said.

Dick Robinson, assistant director of legal services for the UNC system, said each campus in the system has its own policy regarding on-campus drinking.

"It's not uniform," he said. "Each school has the responsibility of making its own policy."

For instance, the alcohol policy at UNC-Wilmington is similar but not exactly the same as UNC's, according to Charlie Maimone, assistant dean of students for residence life at UNC-W.

"For the most part, students who are of age can drink in their rooms, but no open alcohol is allowed in public areas (even for those 21 and over)," Maimone said.

One difference is that dues collected from residents can still be used to purchase alcohol, even though this has not been done since the drinking age went up, he said.

Tomorrow: What students think about the alcohol policy.

Schroeder

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Schroeder, 47, has served in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1972, when she became the first woman to serve on the Armed Services Committee. She is also a member of the Judiciary Committee.

If she decides to run, Schroeder will be the first woman presidential candidate since Shirley Chisholm's unsuccessful campaign in 1972.

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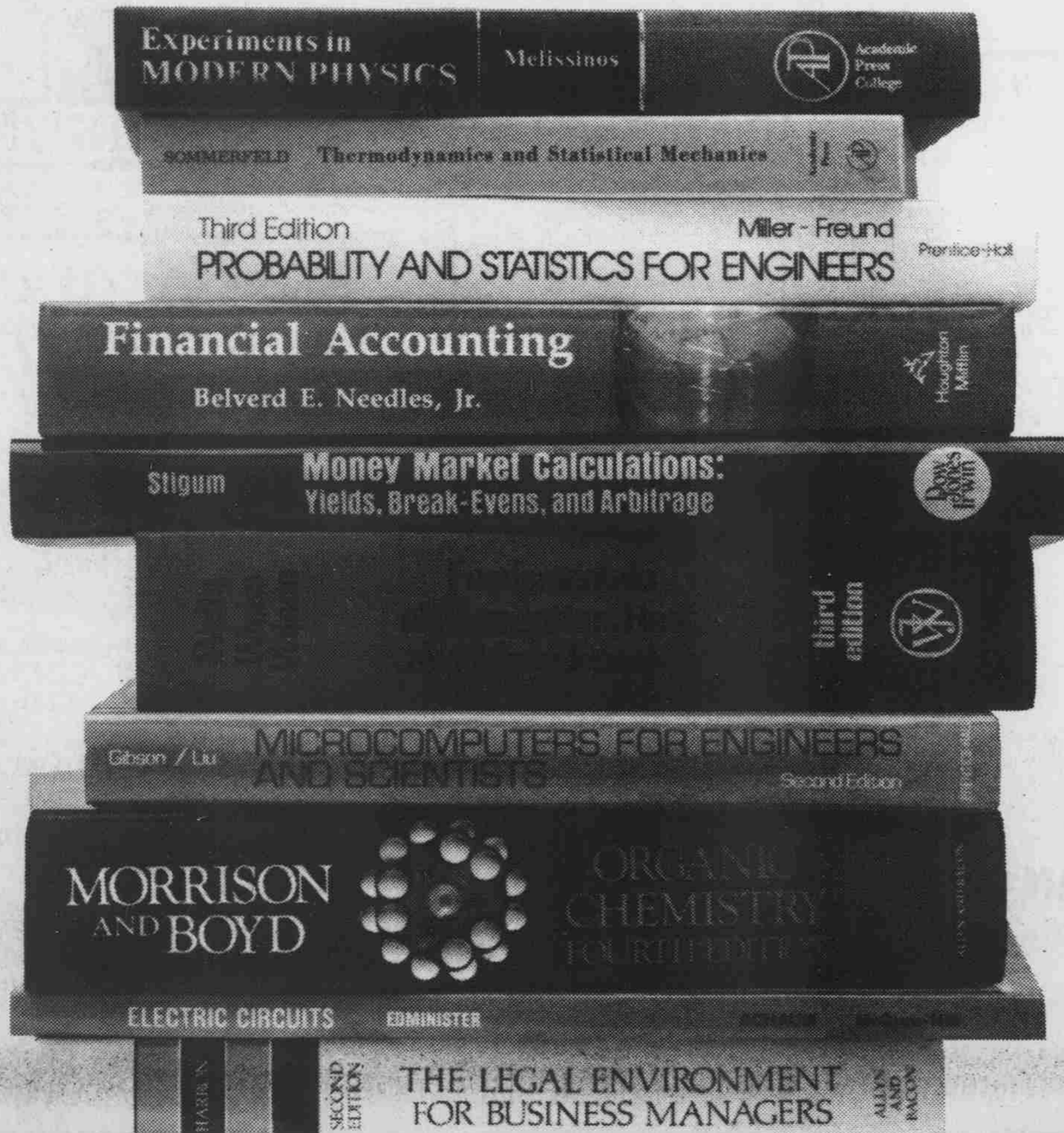
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