

Carrboro officials discuss remedies for traffic problems

By SANDY DIMSDALE
Staff Writer

The Carrboro Board of Aldermen debated for more than two hours Tuesday the possibility of converting at least two downtown streets to a one-way pair to relieve some of the town's traffic problems.

Several of the town officials suggested converting Main and Weaver streets to a one-way pair or making the street entering Carr Mill Mall at the Orient Express restaurant an entrance only, with the exit behind the Harris-Teeter supermarket.

The discussion was prompted by

increased traffic problems at the intersection of Main, Weaver and Roberson streets. Town planner James Dunlop presented a list of suggestions from the NC Department of Transportation's latest study, made in August 1985.

One solution proposed to widen Greensboro Street from three to five lanes and create one-way pairs downtown. The report indicated that one-way streets downtown are the "only low-cost proposal that has been identified that will significantly reduce the congestion in the downtown."

Dunlop said seven major tasks faced the board at present, including: re-aligning the drive into Carr Mill from Main Street; placing a police officer at the intersection of Main, Weaver and Roberson streets; installing a left-turn lane on Main at Roberson street; and synchronizing traffic signals for better traffic flow.

Town manager Bob Morgan told board members they could expect stiff opposition from the merchants of Carr Mill Mall, Orient Express and East Wind restaurants.

A.S. Herje, Carrboro chief of police, told the board that staffing the

intersection with police officers would be impossible with the present number of officers on staff. Only four officers are on patrol at a time, and three of them would have to be pulled from patrol to staff the congested intersections in town from 7:30 to 9 a.m. and from 4:30 to 6 p.m. daily.

Mayor Jim Porto said he wanted to take some action. He suggested testing one set of one-way pairs for a three-month trial period to see if it alleviated any of the traffic problems.

"If we suffer the consequences for three months, at least we'll be doing

something and finding out what does or doesn't work," he said.

Board member Zora Norwood said, "I personally would have trouble deciding which merchants to hurt first. They were (hurt by traffic problems) the last time we had a public hearing, and they were very opposed to one-way streets then."

Board members placed the issue on next week's agenda, when they will discuss holding a public hearing on converting the streets to the one-way pairs.

The board also postponed a decision on the revised joint planning

agreement with Chapel Hill and Orange County until after the public hearing is held Oct. 14 at Grey Culbreth Junior High School.

Board says no to permit

By SUSAN KAUFFMAN
Staff Writer

In a 5-2 vote Tuesday, the Chapel Hill Planning Board recommended that the town council revoke a special-use permit for a proposed development in the Estes Hills area, restoring the property to the original Residential-5 zoning.

The council granted the owner of the property, Goforth Properties, the special-use permit in July 1984 to construct 65 Coker Woods Townhouses on 12 acres near Airport Road, Estes Drive and Piney Mountain Road.

But the developers have now proposed the Coker Woods single-family subdivision for the property. Under the restored R-5 zoning, the lots will have to be at least 5,500 square feet in size.

The 31 lots in this subdivision would range in size from 6,160 to 16,520 square feet. The land parcels would be more affordable for purchasers because they are smaller, said board member Tom McCurdy.

But board member Julian Raney was concerned about the small size of the proposed lots. "I personally don't like single-family projects with R-5 zoning," he said. "It can be an ugly and monotonous area unless general design is done very carefully."

But because of the high cost of property in the area, aesthetics sometimes have to be sacrificed for affordability, McCurdy said. "The only way to get near affordable housing is small lots," he said.

Before the board members recommended the new development to the town council, they tried to predict future impacts on traffic patterns, said Mae McLendon, acting chairman.

Judy White, a board member who lives in the area of the proposed development, said she would welcome the construction of a new road from Piney Mountain Road south to Estes Drive.

"Only God himself can turn left on Estes Drive (going south on Airport Road)," White said.

But she said she was concerned that cut-through traffic from Piney Mountain Road down to Estes Drive could disturb a residential neighborhood.

In other business, board members voted to approve:

- zoning for the proposed Dogwood Place subdivision at the northwest corner of U.S. 15-501 and Dogwood Acres Drive.

- a mixed-use annexation permit for office-, commercial- and residential-uses for Cloverleaf property at the intersection of Eubanks Road and N.C. 86.

- site approval for parking lot expansion and a two-story addition to the Orange United Methodist Church on Airport Road.

Lemons from page 1

he said. "The new law) creates a presumption that the car is a lemon," Kirkman said. If the consumer meets the qualifications of the law, he has a case.

There has long been a need for a bill of this type, said Anne Barnes, state representative for Orange and Chatham counties.

Legislators presented the bill in a prior session, but it failed to pass.

Barnes was a vice chairwoman of the manufacturing and labor committee of the N.C. House of Representatives. The committee worked with the Attorney General's office and representatives from auto manufacturers to produce the most acceptable law. "I think we came out with a good bill," she said.

North Carolina is not the first state to pass such a law, Kirkman said. "Despite the pro-business climate, states have been passing lemon laws," he said.

California and some Northeastern states already have laws like North Carolina's, Kirkman said. These have been fairly effective in supplementing the Magnuson-Moss Act to better protect the consumer, he said.

Grimes said the General Assembly passed an earlier version of the new lemon law. The Automakers' Responsibility Act, passed in June 1983, allowed the consumer to "revoke acceptance" of a defective vehicle, she said. Before this, the consumer could not demand a refund because the manufacturer did not sell directly to the consumer, she said.

Although the Automakers' Responsibility Act made automobile manufacturers responsible for refunds, the system did not always work, Grimes said. "Consumers were very reluctant to bring their cases to court," she said. "The Automakers' Responsibility Act) did not give a clear definition of when you had a lemon."

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