

Organizers optimistic about Charlotte basketball franchise

By KAREN DUNN
Staff Writer

North Carolina is synonymous with great college basketball, and in a few more years, it may stake a claim in the world of professional basketball as well.

"It feels great. It took three years to get this team," said George Shinn, general manager of the National Basketball Association's newest franchise, the Charlotte Hornets. Shinn wanted to bring professional sports to Charlotte, and among basketball, football and baseball, basketball was the best bet.

The Dallas Mavericks are the

model for the Charlotte team, Shinn said. The Dallas franchise is the newest active team in the NBA, but it took a gradual build-up to become a viable competitor in the league.

"You have to go through an expansion period so it may as well be in your first few years," said Norm Sonju, general manager of the Mavericks. His main suggestion to Shinn has been to build slowly, Sonju said. Shinn will also spend two weeks in the Dallas office learning how to run the organization.

"It takes several years before you can really compete. We'll be losing and losing a lot," Shinn said.

Dallas now has 10 first-round draft choices on the team and the organization is showing large profits, said Kevin Sullivan, director of media services for the Mavericks. "It is a business."

Shinn estimates that the franchise will bring \$100 million annually to North Carolina. Forty-two games, not including playoffs, will be played in the newly constructed Charlotte Arena per season, and studies predict 15,000 fans per game. "We're expecting to set some attendance records," Shinn said.

But first, Charlotte needs a coach and players. "We still have no hints

on coaches," Shinn said. The NBA season ends on Sunday, so May will be critical for interviewing coaches. Shinn says he has his eye on current NBA coaches, assistant coaches and top college coaches.

"Notre Dame, Kentucky and UNC have top coaching jobs," Shinn said. "Dean Smith is too imbedded at UNC. We wouldn't even try to take him."

But Smith has helped with suggestions for the Charlotte team, Shinn said.

Signing players will also be difficult, he said. Both the Charlotte and Miami franchises will get one player

from each of the other 23 NBA teams, Shinn said. Charlotte gets the eighth- or ninth-round picks on the college drafts.

Shinn is ready to start up the team, but getting it was far from simple. "They were the dark horse from the start," said Terry Lyons, assistant public relations director for the NBA.

Charlotte was last on the list of 11 prospective cities for NBA expansion. In September 1985, the NBA announced expansion of the league, and in October 1986 the expansion committee met in Phoenix, Ariz., and narrowed the field down to five places: Orlando, Fla.; Toronto;

Miami; Minnesota; and Charlotte. Shinn won the committee over, Lyons said.

"George Shinn's presentation (about Charlotte) was head of the class. He showed us a can't-lose situation," Lyons said. Charlotte was chosen to begin play in the 1988-89 season along with Miami. Minnesota and Orlando will begin play in the 1989-90 season, Lyons said.

Professional basketball should be an exciting addition to North Carolina, Shinn said. "Cooperation will make our professional team an asset not only to the Charlotte community but to the entire state."

Town council debates traffic management ordinance at hearing

By BILL HILDEBOLT
Staff Writer

Chapel Hill's proposed traffic management ordinance was discussed at length at a public hearing Monday.

No action was taken on the ordinance Monday. The town council referred the ordinance back to the town staff and to the planning and transportation boards for further review.

Chapel Hill Planning Director Roger Waldon outlined at the meeting what has already been done with the proposal.

The ordinance will address four basic concepts, Waldon said.

"We would establish a threshold for (commercial) development," he said. "Any development over this size would need a transportation special use permit before it could occur."

Anyone applying for such a special use permit would have to prepare statements and plans demonstrating the impact of the development, Waldon said. These plans would have to show how the traffic impact of the development could be reduced, he said.

Chapel Hill's roads and intersections that are already near or above capacity would require more stringent reductions, Waldon said.

"The town will monitor and enforce all of the management that would have to occur because of the ordinance," he said.

"The main goal of this project will be to reduce the number of single-passenger cars on the road."

Planning Board chairman Al Rimer said the University should not be excluded from the ordinance.

"We would like to understand what the economic impact would be on the community, and that community includes the University."

"We have decided to create a subcommittee which will meet shortly to take a much more in-depth look

at this issue," he said.

Joseph Nassif, former mayor of Chapel Hill, spoke at length on the flaws he saw with the proposal.

"Unless you rezoned land, you aren't going to have any new development," Nassif said. "As far as I know, there isn't any land available for development."

The town also needs to address traffic problems that already exist in Chapel Hill, Nassif said.

"The traffic on N.C. 54 every morning going to Research Triangle is a problem," he said. "All you have to do is go sit out there one morning to see that."

"Something is going to have to be done about that, because that is part of the problem, and it has nothing to do with development."

Several real estate developers spoke out in favor of an exemption that keeps residential zones from being affected by the ordinance.

One of the developers, Bill Kalporf, said a town-wide coordination effort would be necessary to improve the traffic situation in Chapel Hill.

Mark Payne, a spokesman for Blue Cross Blue Shield, said the ordinance would have a large negative economic impact on that group.

"We expanded last year, and that expansion might not have been possible if this ordinance had already been enacted."

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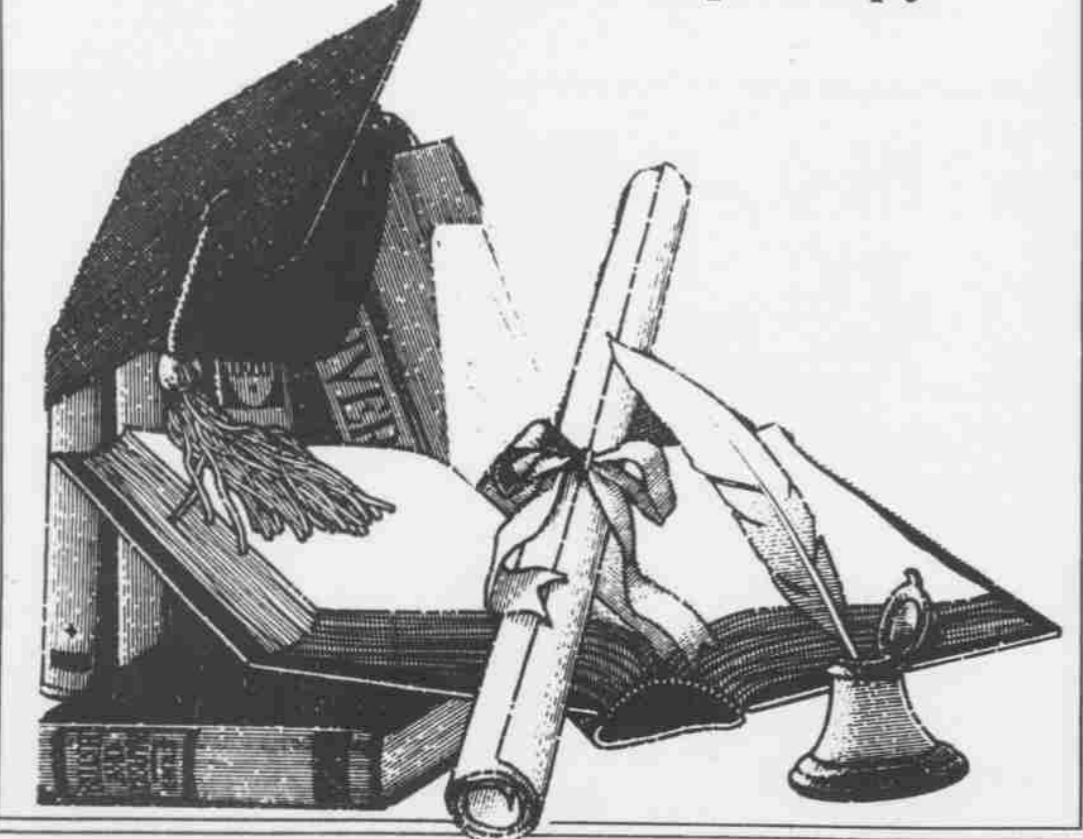
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N.C. hospitals doctor up maternity care

By TROY FURR
Staff Writer

So you're going to have a baby. You make a list of things you need to check out before the birth, and at the top of the list is . . . a hospital room with a hot tub?

It's true, according to local hospital advertisers. To keep up with growing competition in health care, hospitals are offering incentives to make their maternity wards seem just like home, or at least like a five-star hotel.

Durham County General spends about one-third of its budget on maternity advertising, account

representative Crystal Hughes said. Wake Medical Center in Raleigh allotted \$316,000 for its advertising in the past year, a spokesman said.

Durham County General Hospital has renovated its labor-delivery-recovery (LDR) rooms, one of which has a hot tub. New Bern's Craven County Hospital offers a complimentary steak dinner as thanks for choosing the hospital, which recently opened a women's center.

In Raleigh, Rex Hospital has plans for a 40-bed maternity center, and Heritage Hospital in Tarboro

has a new birthing center with seven LDR rooms.

Grace Ward, director of public relations for Heritage, said the hospital wants to create a homey atmosphere and warmth by stocking the LDR rooms with custom curtains and bedspreads, rocking chairs, lounge chairs and televisions.

"When you are pregnant, you should not be treated like you are sick," she said. "We are trying to create more of a bonding between the mother and her family. This way, the father can be with her throughout and the whole child-

bearing experience will hopefully be enhanced."

The LDRs are like home, but do have immediate access to medical help. "We have an emergency unit right across the hall, and if there are any complications they can be taken care of quickly," Ward said.

The rooms also keep mothers from being moved around the hospital from admittance, examining, birth and recovery rooms, hospital spokesmen said.

Heritage has to advertise to compete with larger, established hospitals, Ward said.

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