

Competition spurs format change

By TOM PARKS
Staff Writer

Recent changes in the format of the Chapel Hill Newspaper are in response to the escalating competition between local papers for Chapel Hill readers.

Marty Durrance, circulation manager of the Chapel Hill Newspaper, said the changes at the newspaper are in response to the growing competition between local newspapers.

Area publications are currently involved in a "newspaper war" for Chapel Hill readers and advertisers, he said.

The Chapel Hill Newspaper, the Chapel Hill Herald and the Raleigh News and Observer all feature coverage of Chapel Hill news.

Chapel Hill has the highest per capita newspaper readership in the

country and this is the reason for the intense competition between publications, Durrance said.

"Everybody has always been going after Chapel Hill," he said.

The high education level of Chapel Hill's population is another major reason for the competition, Durrance said.

Mike McCormick, a Raleigh News and Observer sales representative, said Chapel Hill is also attractive to newspapers because of the high income of area residents.

Doug Rogers, publisher of the Village Advocate, said Chapel Hill is causing competition between newspapers, because most residents are not loyal to any one paper.

"What everybody is fighting for is the advertising revenue," Rogers said. On Feb. 16, the Chapel Hill

Newspaper began a series of changes, including a new, more colorful format.

Durrance said the changes were also designed to make the newspaper easier to read. The front page now has four columns instead of six and the print is enlarged.

Beginning Sunday, the newspaper will be delivered free to approximately 19,000 nonsubscribers in the Chapel Hill and Carrboro area each Sunday and Wednesday to attract more readers, he said.

Other changes to the newspaper include the cancellation of The Picture, the Chapel Hill Newspaper's weekly shopper's supplement, Durrance said.

The newspaper began publishing The Picture 10 months ago in response to a growing demand among

readers for a weekly shopping guide, he said.

In addition to advertisements, The Picture consisted of local and national news articles and an entertainment calendar, he said.

The last issue of The Picture was published on Wednesday.

The paper made these format changes in response to requests from readers and advertisers, he said.

Advertisers wanted readers to see their ads in a newspaper instead of a weekly supplement, Durrance said.

The newspaper released the first issue of Cue Magazine, a weekly entertainment supplement, on Thursday.

The newspaper has received "literally thousands of letters of support" in favor of the paper's new look, Durrance said.

Newspaper holder debuts downtown

By TRACY LAWSON
Staff Writer

In response to recommendations made by the Chapel Hill Appearance Commission Ad Hoc Committee, a redesigned multi-newspaper rack holder was placed on the sidewalk in front of Taco Bell on Franklin Street Wednesday.

Committee Chairwoman Cassandra Sloop said the size of this holder and the number of holders will increase if the response is favorable.

"At present the newspaper rack holder only contains five racks," she said. "However we may place more racks at this site and at other sites if the response is good."

Danny Fox, a committee member, said he supports the use of the holder even though he had other intentions.

"My desire would be to limit the number of sites on Franklin Street, but no municipality or group can do that (limit distribution sites) because of First Amendment restraints," Fox said.

"I personally think the structure works well as an organizational tool; however, it has not gone far enough in covering the back of the machines," he said. "It has, though, given the area a more uncluttered look."

Marty Durrance, circulation manager of the Chapel Hill Newspaper, said local newspapers are planning to plant shrubs in front of the holder to cover the back of the machines.

"The public works department is going to draw up a sketch of the number of shrubs that will need to be planted," Durrance said.

"I think the new holder is cute. I think as long as the city is paying for it, it's even cuter. It gives the racks a nice, little home."

"My only hope is that the college community acts responsibly and doesn't destroy it or cover it with flyers and announcements," he said.

Phoenix editor Ed Davis said he does not oppose the holders if they don't incur other costs.

"I haven't seen the structure, but anything the town wants to do that makes it easier for someone to read our paper is fine as long as it doesn't cost us anything," Davis said.

The construction of the newspaper rack holder is part of a series of actions the committee has recommended to improve the appearance of the racks.

The committee has established 10 guidelines that newspaper distributors must follow to improve the appearance of the areas around the racks. If the guidelines are not met the violator is notified and has 30 days to comply.

The committee is working with an attorney to determine if it is legal, without writing an ordinance, to remove the rack if it is not repaired within the designated 30 days.

Currently, the newspaper vendors will be responsible for self-policing the areas around the vending racks.

"The areas will be policed on a daily basis by individual papers," Durrance said. "There will be on site inspections conducted by the on-site inspection committee every 60 days."

"I think the guidelines are reasonable, and anyone who can't adhere to them shouldn't be (selling newspapers) on the street," he said.

Davis said he agreed with Durrance. "On the surface the guidelines don't seem unreasonable," Davis said.

"The only sad thing is that imposing guidelines on racks appears to be the only thing the town council has to think about," he said.

Committee members said they were generally pleased with the recent events.

Groups team up for social issues

By JESSICA LANNING
Staff Writer

In an effort to address more social welfare issues, the Inter-Faith Council (IFC) and the Public Private Partnership are discussing possible projects and presenting them to their respective boards for approval.

Richard Edens, president of the IFC, said the council and the Public Private Partnership Shelter Task Force are discussing four issues they feel are vital to area social welfare needs.

The four issues include low income housing, employment opportunities, the formation of a downtown advisory council and fund raising, Edens said. These are all possible ways to address the homeless issue.

Salley Jessee, chairwoman for the Public Private Partnership Shelter Task Force, said a low income housing project would include providing boarding houses for those who need several months to save enough money to rent housing.

A low income housing project could also possibly provide temporary housing for North Carolina Memorial Hospital patients, Jessee said.

The two groups are interested in creating a better working environment for the homeless, she said. The proposal would make the public more aware of the unemployed homeless who may be able to fill temporary positions or work at cleaning up downtown, she said.

"Some stores need people right away (to fill temporary openings)," Jessee said. "The shelter has people to fill those needs."

Formation of an advisory council for downtown would offer a chance for many representative members from the downtown area to meet, hear complaints and deal with them in a constructive manner, she said.

Finally, a suggestion was made for the Public Private Partnership to help with fund raising for the activities of the IFC, Jessee said.

"At this point these are all suggestions," Edens said. "These are just explorations being made."

The next step is for the two leaders to present the ideas to their boards for discussion and additional suggestions and get their reactions.

Jessee presented the issues to the Public Private Partnership Monday. She said they were receptive to all the ideas except fund raising.

There are too many groups within the Public Private Partnership to start another fund-raising project, but individuals would continue the fund-raisers they are already conducting, she said.

Edens said he was unsure how helpful the Public Private Partnership would be since only discussions have taken place.

"If programs generate out of this and we get greater cooperation with sections of the community, that kind of thing will help," he said.

Jessee said this effort follows a long period of concentrating on the issue

of the location of the homeless shelter, Jessee said.

Edens said the recently formed Public Private Partnership Shelter Task Force initially became involved over the conflict of the homeless shelter location.

After much debate last fall, the IFC made the final decision to keep the homeless shelter at the Rosemary Street location despite complaints from the merchants that this would possibly hurt business and lower property values.

The homeless shelter took over the old Chapel Hill Municipal Building and will be renovated this April to include the shelter and the community kitchen.

Both the IFC and the Public Private Partnership Shelter Task Force had focused so intensely on the site location, other issues were not being addressed, Jessee said.

"Now we want to put our energies somewhere else," she said.

Developer revises land zoning request

By TOM PARKS
Staff Writer

A developer has modified his request to the Chapel Hill Town Council to rezone a stretch of land south of town to block the neighborhood's protests against a proposed office park and shopping center.

Grainger Barrett, the developer's attorney, said the rezoning request was changed to exclude a 100-foot wide stretch of land bordering U.S. 15-501 and Mt. Carmel Church Road and the land to the east of the highway. This land will remain a low-density residential area.

Jon Hoetger, president of Protean Group Ltd., originally proposed the rezoning of approximately 50 acres of land to the east and west of U.S. 15-501 near Mt. Carmel Church

Road from residential to mixed-used. "The slope and topography (of the 100-foot buffer) make it almost impossible to develop," Barrett said.

According to state law, the change could mean that some signatures on a petition protesting the proposed rezoning are invalidated.

State law requires that if 20 or more percent of the landowners within 100 feet of the area to be rezoned sign a petition against the rezoning request, then the council must approve the developer's rezoning request by a majority of at least three-fourths.

Pete Andrews, a local resident, said the change in the rezoning request is an attempt by the developer to block such a petition. Signatures have been collected from 250 area landowners

and residents against the proposed development.

"All they are trying to do is block us," Andrews said.

Andrews said that now the two major landowners within 100 feet of the proposed rezoning are the State Highway Department, which does not usually sign petitions, and the man who sold the land to Hoetger. The group will continue in its efforts.

Margaret Taylor, president of the Alliance of Neighborhoods, said the alliance opposes the rezoning request.

Two and a half years ago the land was zoned for residential use and the alliance believes that nothing significant has changed to justify rezoning, Taylor said.

"There is no legal basis for the

rezoning," she said.

As of now, the Chapel Hill Planning Board is scheduled to consider the amendment on April 4, and the town council has scheduled a public hearing for May 15. These dates may be changed.

Taylor said a representative from the Alliance of Neighborhoods should be at the planning board meeting.

Re-election

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enough. Misunderstandings on the parts of the candidates and the Elections Board caused the problems, Robertson said.

Stricter supervision of the pollsites

is needed to ensure that students vote correctly, Esposito said.

"If no one tells them not to (vote for a candidate outside their district), they're going to," he said.

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