

Taxi drivers regain suspended permits

By LYNN GOSWICK
Staff Writer

The Chapel Hill Town Council voted unanimously Monday night to return the taxicab permits of a UNC student and two other taxi drivers.

The taxicab drivers regained their permits after the council amended sections of Chapel Hill's ordinance on taxicab franchises and taxicab driver permits. The three drivers lost their permits under the old town ordinance.

The changes in the ordinance were suggested after three taxicab drivers from Airport and Intown Taxi had their permits suspended after receiving more than four points on their license.

Emma Jean Levi, the drivers' attorney, charged that the town's old ordinance was too restrictive and unfair when compared to the ordinances of other cities.

Levi said the council's amended ordinance was fair to taxi drivers. John Butz, one of the three drivers whose permits were suspended, said he was glad the council adopted the amendments.

Butz, who is a student at UNC, had to withdraw from the spring semester because his vocational rehabilitation scholarship would not pay for food and housing.

To support himself and stay in school, Butz took the taxi driving

job. Butz said he plans to enroll for the University's summer session now that he can work again.

"I'm just glad to be able to work again," he said.

Under the old town ordinance, taxicab drivers were kept under a point system similar to the system that the state requires for normal drivers. Before the amendment, taxicab drivers were allowed no more than four points on their licenses in a two year period or their permits were suspended.

If a driver had five points on his license, his permit would be suspended for 60 days, and if he had six points on his license, his permit would be suspended for 120 days.

A driver's permit was suspended after receiving seven or more points until the proper number of points could be taken off.

The amended ordinance requires that no one applying for a franchise have a criminal record that would make granting the franchise permit "against the public interest and welfare."

The amendment also deletes Chapel Hill's point system and allows taxicab drivers up to 12 points on their licenses within a three-year period. This rule is the same as North Carolina's general statute.

Black legislators reject meeting site

By GLENN O'NEAL
Staff Writer

Black legislators have decided not to attend the Bicentennial Celebration of the ratification of the Constitution in Fayetteville this week.

The decision follows a previous decision by the black caucus to boycott the special legislative session to be held near the Market House in downtown Fayetteville. The caucus boycotted the session because slaves were once sold in the Market House.

Initially, the members of the black caucus planned to go to Fayetteville and not attend the legislative session at the Market House, said Rep. Mickey Michaux, D-Durham, chairman of the black caucus.

"Last evening, the group (the black caucus) decided that because of recent publicity, we would not go to Fayetteville because we felt it would detract from the celebration people down there would be having," he said.

"The national press would detract from the celebration, and we didn't want to be a part of it," Michaux

said. The original decision to boycott the session was based on the history of the site where the session would be held, said Rep. Annie Kennedy, D-Forsyth. "It is a part of history we would like to forget."

History has shown how many slaves were sold at Market House and on what years, said Michaux.

"The major problem is that our building has been labeled a slave market," said Rep. Bill Hurley, D-Cumberland, co-chairman of the Fayetteville-Cumberland County Bicentennial. "It is not a slave market to us. Slave markets were located in seaport towns. The Market House was a public building for auctions."

The Market House was a symbol of slavery for many years, but organizers did not know its past when they planned the event, he said. The organizers might have altered their plans if they had been aware of it.

Hurley said the Market House was chosen because it was the site of the

ratification of the Constitution. The selection was not intended to provoke anyone.

Fayetteville was the state capital in November 1789, said Jason Brady, public information officer for the city of Fayetteville.

The General Assembly traveled around the state and met in different cities, he said. In November 1789, the General Assembly met in Fayetteville and ratified the Constitution, making North Carolina the 12th state. The charter of UNC was established at the same time.

The Bicentennial Celebration was initiated to celebrate the ratification of the Constitution, he said.

Events scheduled for the celebration include a firepower demonstration at Fort Bragg, a tour of the city for the spouses of the legislators, a reception and dinner at the Charlie Rose Agri-Expo Center and a special legislative session near the Market House, said Brady.

The General Assembly will not convene in the Market House

grounds or in the building, Brady said. The House will convene on Green Street, and the Senate will meet on Hay Street.

The organizers started over a year ago in planning the events, said Rosalie Kelly, Hurley's co-chairwoman. The special legislative session is a prelude to the statewide celebration that will be held in November.

Kelly said the dual nature of the site was a coincidence. The state house was located on the site until it burned down in 1831. After the fire, the city decided it needed a produce market more than it needed a state house. The building used as a market is not the same building in which the Constitution was ratified.

Kelly said she did not become aware of the controversy until March 31, 10 days before the celebration was scheduled to begin. The city has been working on the celebration too long to change the site of the legislative session, she said.

State sues to keep student loan funds

By STEPHANIE VON ISENBURG
Staff Writer

The future of student loans in North Carolina could be determined by a state suit brought against the federal government to block the use of \$2.6 million of state student loan reserve funds to reduce the federal deficit.

"(The federal government's action) reflects a breach of contract and a breach of trust in our opinion," said Stan Broadway, executive director of the N.C. State Educational Assistance Authority.

"The money in the reserve fund belongs to the state of North Carolina — not the federal government," he said.

The lack of reserve funds weakens the willingness of investors because they are not insured against defaults or other losses, he said.

But the student loan program should not be hurt by this incident because the state is likely to win in court, he said.

Most of the states affected by the federal government's policy have sued the government and won, said Karl Knapp, assistant for research and policy analysis at the Washington-based National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

If North Carolina loses its reserve funds, it may decide not to continue in the Stafford Loan program, he said.

In order for a student to receive a Stafford Loan, the school must recommend him or her to receive a federal loan, said Thomas Langston,

associate director of the UNC Office of Scholarships and Student Aid.

UNC students received \$24,537,476 in financial aid from all sources in 1987-88, he said. Federal loans make up approximately 66 percent of that figure.

South Dakota discontinued the Stafford Loan program to avoid losing its reserve funds to the federal government, he said.

Relatively small amounts of money offered in federal loans go unclaimed each year, Broadway said.

In the early 1980s, Social Security education benefits were cut and 750,000 students lost some form of aid, Knapp said.

The dollar amount given in aid has increased since then, but restrictions on eligibility have also increased, he said.

Fewer lower-middle-class students receive aid as more money is given to lower-income students, he said.

But private money, not federal money, is used to fund student loans, said Charlie Kolb, deputy undersecretary for Planning, Budget and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Education.

There is \$18 to \$19 billion available in student loans this year, Kolb said.

Borrowing has increased because the federal government reduced the number of student grants, Broadway said. Many students must rely on loans.

"Defaults arise largely out of the heavy reliance on borrowing by students who do not continue their education," he said.

Georgia Sen. Sam Nunn's proposal of establishing a Citizen's Corps, which would require community service by those students who received federal aid, would provide an alternative to borrowing. But such a plan could not replace the existing system, Broadway said.

Eligibility for student aid should not be based on the ability to work, Knapp said.

Broadway said the aid program had plenty of problems, but the problems could be fixed without scrapping the entire system.

Most of the problems in student aid are caused by the interference of Congress rather than by defaults, he said.

"It's never left alone (by Congress) long enough to work — which creates problems in delivery, equity and public policy," Broadway said.

The problem with defaults is only a perceived problem, Knapp said.

The rate of default has remained steady over the past 10 years, but the amount of defaulted money has increased as the program has grown, he said.

"Most of the problems are ones that relate to students being unable to pay loans when they get out of school," Knapp said. "They are either unemployed or being underpaid."

But the Department of Education feels defaults are a serious problem.

"We're very much concerned about the defaults. There were \$1.4 billion defaulted last year and \$1.9 billion this year," Kolb said.

"The real concern is not just the

loss to the taxpayers — some students are being cheated by their schools. They are not being given a quality education," he said.

"We encourage banks (that make the loans) to look at where the money is going," Kolb said.

More restrictions on aid are being considered by Congress to reduce the number of defaults, Knapp said.

One proposal requires that aid checks to first-time borrowers be held until they have been in class for 30 days, he said.

"There's a feeling that a lot of students drop out of school the first month. If the check is held for a month, the loan is smaller to default on," Knapp said.

It would be difficult for someone living off-campus to get an apartment or pay the first month's rent if the aid were withheld, he said.

The federal government will subsidize a loan for a student if he or she qualifies for need, Broadway said.

The capital for loans is provided by banks, which are insured by the state against loss, he said.

The state is reinsured by the Department of Education, he said.

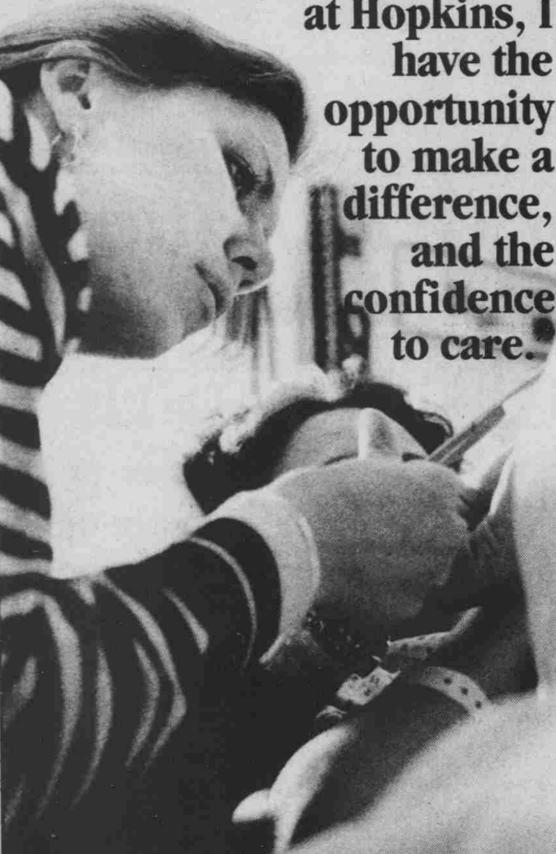
If the guaranteed agency has defaults above the predicted amount, it is reimbursed by the reserve funds, Knapp said.

"The existing student aid system, with all its problems and flaws, is still one of the best in the world in regards to access to higher education," Broadway said. "The problem is that over time it's gotten unbalanced."

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Carrboro PTA thrift shop to get new home

By JOANNA DAVIS
Staff Writer

The Carrboro Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) has decided to purchase land adjacent to its Carrboro thrift shop on Jones Ferry Road even though they have not yet received all their land use permits.

Mary Cay Corr, publicity chairwoman of the thrift shop board, said the PTA thrift formed over 35 years ago and received its first permanent location 10 years ago at the present Jones Ferry Road site. The thrift shop eventually outgrew that location and two years ago the PTA added the Kroger Plaza branch.

The PTA has been looking for a new location for the Jones Ferry Road store for over two and a half years, Corr said.

When the lot adjacent to the

present site became available, Corr said that the PTA decided the lot was exactly what they wanted. "We want a walking distance location to better serve the Chapel Hill area."

Sara Hammond, co-chairwoman of the thrift shop board, said the PTA thrift shop was originally in a contract not to buy the land until they received the land use permits.

But another buyer came along before the permits were issued, and the PTA was going to lose that option, she said. "We feel the process has been much slower than what it should be."

The PTA applied for the land use permits on Jan. 18 according to Trudy Peppers, a spokeswoman for the Carrboro Zoning Department. A standard application for a land use permit usually takes anywhere from

90 to 120 days to process, said Roy Williford, Carrboro planning director.

"We see no problem with them (the PTA) receiving the permits," he said. "They seem to be in compliance with the ordinances."

Williford said the Carrboro Board of Aldermen will vote on the permits at a public hearing which is set for Apr. 16. The permits will be effective for two years from that day.

John Haggart, an architect with Dail Dixon and Associates and project manager of the renovations, said the thrift shop will be much more efficient and much more attractive after its renovations and addition.

The preliminary estimates of the costs of the renovation and addition are \$150,000 to \$200,000, Haggart said.

All of the merchandise in the stores comes from the citizens of the Chapel Hill area as well as from the students, Corr said. "We have enormous support from the student population from both ends."

Many students donate merchan-

dise when school is over and they have to move back home, Corr said. Others come in to buy an inexpensive interview suit or a costume for a party.

The Carrboro and the Kroger thrift shops' combined sales grossed close to \$500,000 last year, and the Carrboro store netted close to \$249,000, Corr said. The profits go to the Chapel Hill-Carrboro schools.

"The schools work out budgets, and we allocate the funds," she said. "Last year the high school received \$42,000, and two junior highs received \$23,000 and \$4,000 respectively."

There was a small building fund of \$10,000 which has already been spent on the planning process, Corr said. "We'll have a mortgage on the land and pay it off a little at a time."

The 10-year mortgage on the present Jones Ferry Road location will be paid off this month, Hammond said. The PTA has planned a ceremonial burning of the mortgage at 2 p.m. at the Carrboro store on Apr. 15.

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