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The Daily Tar Heel

Serving the students and the University community since 1893

Test for potential
copy editors
4 p.m. in
DTH office

Volume 97, Issue 43

Wednesday, September 6, 1989

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

News/Sports/Arts 962-0245
Business/Advertising 962-1163

Chemical fire forces lab evacuations

By AMY WAJDA

Assistant University Editor

A fire in the basement of Venable Hall Tuesday afternoon prompted an evacuation of that building and the adjacent Kenan Chemistry Labs, blocked off South Road from the Bell Tower to Columbia Street and required removing explosive chemicals from the building.

The Chapel Hill Fire Department received a call reporting smoke in Venable at 12:20 p.m., said Chapel Hill Fire Marshal Joe Robertson. Three fire engines responded, and Orange County and UNC HAZMAT (hazardous materials) crews and Chapel Hill and University police were also at the scene. The fire was extinguished at 2:10 p.m. with dry chemical extinguishers.

Another fire started in a wooden window frame in the room at 3:53 p.m. but was extinguished in minutes.

No one was injured during the evacuation or the clean-up, and the cause of the fire is still unknown, Robertson said.

The fire occurred in Room B34, in the far southwest corner of Venable. The UNC Health and Safety Office uses the room to package hazardous and radioactive chemicals before disposal.

The fire was confined to one of two shelves in the center of the room. Half of one shelf was destroyed, and the other half had magnesium solids on it, Robertson said. The clean-up of spilled

poisonous chemicals and flammable materials in the room posed the most danger, he said.

The chemicals involved in the fire were sodium chlorates, potassium cyanide and other cyanide compounds and mercury compounds—all of which are hazardous compounds, Robertson said. Cyanides, which are extremely poisonous, escaped into the air around Venable, he said.

Two 55-gallon plastic drums of flammable liquids and one 30-gallon plastic drum of flammable solids boiled from the heat of the fire and needed to be taken from the building, Robertson said.

"There's quite a potential for explosion if the drums aren't stabilized (cooled down)," he said. One gallon of flammable liquid has the explosive power of six sticks of dynamite, he said.

Firefighters and HAZMAT crews worked to repack the flammable solids before moving them and the flammable liquids outside. Robertson said the repacking would take several hours.

The crews wore heat-resistant clothes and used self-contained breathing apparatuses. Crew members were decontaminated when they came out of the building. Robertson said a Geiger counter used to check whether firefighters had been exposed to radioactive materials registered nothing.

The earliest Venable could reopen is Wednesday morning, Robertson said.



DTH/David Surowiecki

Two Chapel Hill firefighters take a break Tuesday afternoon from working the fire in Venable Hall

Congress to consider proposed SRC re-vote

By JENNY CLONINGER

University Editor

A bill proposing a fall referendum to reconsider an increase of student activities fees to fund the proposed Student Recreation Center (SRC) was sent with an unfavorable recommendation to Student Congress by the Rules and Judiciary Committee of Student Congress Tuesday.

If approved by the full congress, the referendum will appear on the fall ballot, and students will again be given the choice of whether to increase activities fees. The fee increase approved by students in last February's election was \$13 each semester and \$4.35 each summer session. The fees would not be levied for at least two years, until the construction of the proposed center nears completion.

Jeffrey Beall (Dist. 7), the bill's author, said he thought the question of a student fee increase had been affected since February by a tuition increase, a \$25 transportation fee, increased residence hall fees and a rising cost of living in the Triangle area.

"What I'm trying to do is give students a chance to objectively consider funding the Student Recreation Center, a chance I don't think they've had in the past," Beall said.

Also, students were given insufficient time to consider the bill, Beall said. They will lose parking spaces and trees to construction, and no objective justification study had been conducted, he said.

Lisa Frye, president of the Carolina Athletic Association, defended the SRC

"The CAA should represent student opinion, not dictate it."

— Student Congress Rep. Jeffrey Beall

before the committee. She disputed Beall's statements, saying that students voted unconditionally, that the CAA informed the student body and that objective studies have been completed by UNC facilities planning officials.

"I think you have to look a little deeper than that to what you are saying about the student vote," she said. "I feel the student vote should be final. I'm not sure that it's any congress member's role to question that decision. I don't think the merits of the rec center should be called into question."

Beall charged that the CAA controlled the information students received about the SRC, preventing an informed vote. Student attention was not called to the issue in time for sufficient consideration, he said, and CAA support of the issue biased voters.

"The fact that the CAA supported the center made the election fraudulent," he said. "The CAA should represent student opinion, not dictate it."

Frye listed several media through which student opinion and questions were sought. In addition to coverage of the proposal by The Daily Tar Heel, the CAA distributed pamphlets and posters, took polls on campus and went door-to-door to talk to students about

the proposed center and fee increase, she said.

"Certainly, the students made an informed choice. And certainly, if students aren't in favor of this rec center, the CAA does not want to support it."

Another aspect that makes funding the center questionable, Beall said, is that the increased fees would affect future students who would have no voice in the decision.

"There are literally tens of thousands of future students who haven't spoken," he said. "I think students supported this referendum on the basis that this was a good thing and you'll never have to pay for it."

Frye said voting again each time a new group of students entered campus was unreasonable. "They seem to think if we don't vote on it again, we're not giving students a voice. I think the opposite is happening. It's certainly not respectful of the vote that occurred."

Student opinion is welcome and solicited, Frye added. "I wish I were hearing a little more from students. I would really like for students to call us and tell us how they feel about the issue, and certainly I would encourage them to call their congress members."

Figures not yet complete for dormitory occupancy

By JASON KELLY

Staff Writer

Housing and Residence Hall Association officials disagree on the occupancy levels in campus residence halls, but final figures will not be compiled until Thursday.

Last year, the housing department initiated a policy guaranteeing housing to rising sophomores, and the effect of this policy on juniors and seniors is still unclear.

Liz Jackson, Residence Hall Association (RHA) president, said she had not seen official figures, but she could tell housing was not at full capacity. "I met with (housing director Wayne) Kuncel last week, but the figures weren't out by then. But just from talking to people and walking around dorms, I've seen empty rooms and singles whose roommate didn't show up."

The number of housing applications is lower than last year because of the new guaranteed housing policy, Jackson said. "Juniors and seniors thought they would not receive housing, so they didn't put in an application and went ahead and got an apartment off campus."

Kuncel said there were empty spaces in the dorms, but there were no more available than at this time last year. "I have not seen the figures

yet. Because we held all rooms until last Thursday and because of the long weekend, the final data has not been turned in yet. But I would estimate the dorms to be 98 percent full, which is about the same as last year."

Collin Rustin, associate director of housing, said the percentage of housing capacity filled this year was an improvement over previous years. "At orientation, we were 98 percent full. These are not the final figures, though, because some students will become ineligible due to academic reasons. This is actually an improvement from the past when we've dipped as low as 91 percent."

"Last year's figures for Sept. 1, 1988, showed an overall occupancy of 6,702, or 97.6 percent," Rustin said. "But these figures and the figures we have now are before the no-show date and can give a false impression."

Jackson said fewer housing contracts meant less income. "Any loss of contracts is a loss of revenue for the housing department."

Kuncel said the housing situation was proceeding as expected. "The housing department is a self-supporting operation, and we hope to meet our budget."

Changes in the housing policy helped boost the number of students in on-campus housing, Rustin said. "We've had to change our policy in housing,

but in the last few years we're seeing a recovery. We instituted the sophomore guaranteed housing last spring."

"But even with guaranteed sophomore housing, no one got closed out. The plan has not hurt anybody because our demand for housing was less. We had 100 fewer spaces requested than we had space for. Factors made it possible not to force people off campus who wanted to be on campus."

Erik Fidel, a sophomore business major from Harrington Park, N.J., said the housing policy had nothing to do with his decision to move off campus. "The house is much quieter than the dorm, and all of the people I wanted to room with were here. If I were put on North Campus from the start, it might have been different, and I might have wanted to stay on campus."

"But as it is, I'm probably closer to class than I was last year, and the accommodations are much better," he said.

Cindy Scheele, a senior from New Bern, said she moved off campus for the change. "The housing administration's policies had nothing to do with my decision. I wanted to move off campus for something different."

Meeting addresses questions on house for AIDS patients

By JESSICA LANNING

Assistant City Editor

A meeting held Tuesday night to address concerns of Chapel Hill residents living near a proposed home for AIDS patients left many unanswered questions for the Orange County AIDS task force.

"Out of consideration for the neighbors, we've initiated this opportunity to let them know what's going on," said Dan Reiner, Orange County health director and chairman of the task force.

Susan Wilson, the chairwoman for the housing subcommittee on the task force, said Bebe Danziger, who owns a house at 110 Taylor St., has expressed interest in renting the house to AIDS patients. Wilson said no definite contracts or plans have been made.

No more than four patients "who were basically healthy, able to work and take care of themselves" would live in the house at one time, Wilson said. The people would be homeless patients who need to be near the hospital for research purposes.

At this time, the task force and local churches have no plans for supervising the house and patients, maintaining it or ensuring that supervision will continue.

As one resident said, "I am con-

cerned that there's no planning."

Several local churches have been credited with starting the project and raising funds to assist the residents, but they had few representatives at the meeting.

One representative from Aldersgate Methodist Church said funds have been raised on an individual basis at his church and there has been no formal meeting of church members concerning raising funds. The role of the churches would be to help out financially, spiritually and with manpower, he said.

The Newman Center organized the churches, he said, but had no representatives at the meeting.

Residents on the street were concerned with the safety of their families and children. Parents were worried about children finding hypodermic needles or playing in the yards of AIDS patients who might endanger their health.

Another resident was concerned about the safety and maintenance of the house's 20- to 30-year-old septic tank. A task force representative said once the virus left the bloodstream, it died almost instantly, and there would be no danger.

Suggested alternatives to renting the

house to AIDS patients were creating a house patterned after a Ronald McDonald House or locating the house elsewhere.

"We will not work with you to put that house on our block," one resident said.

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DTH/Steve Exum

A banner day

Mary Riner, left, and Mary Lou White display a peace banner in front of the Franklin Street Post

Office in protest of the Trident submarine, a first-strike nuclear weapons vessel.

Beware of the man who goes to cocktail parties not to drink but to listen. — Pierre Daninos