

Elections '89: CARRBORO

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Present and former mayors compete for office

By SHEILA LONG

Carrboro's election is just around the corner, and the two candidates for mayor have similar views on issues ranging from watershed protection to the location of the new post office, but their primary difference is in the establishment of a historic district.

Completing her first term as Carrboro mayor, incumbent Eleanor Kinnaird is facing James Porto Jr. in her first re-election campaign. Porto, who served as mayor from 1983 to 1987, is trying to

reclaim the seat.

Mayors serve two-year terms, while aldermen serve four-year terms.

Kinnaird supports implementing a historic district because of Carrboro's unique history as a mill town.

"Such a district would give the town flavor, and the value of the houses would go up," Kinnaird said.

The Board of Aldermen tabled a motion to implement such a district after strong opposition by residents at a heated public hearing in early October. Residents expressed concern that such

a district would impose too many restrictions against home improvements.

Porto said he did not support such a district because of the strict guidelines it entailed. He proposes a historic register to be kept at town hall.

"I think a much better idea would be a system that doesn't impose so much red tape," he said. "I would rather see a system of voluntary registration, where homeowners could register their homes as a historic site. Such a system would be 100 percent voluntary."

Both candidates view watershed

protection as an important environmental issue. Kinnaird and Porto said they favored zoning ordinances to protect this area from dense development.

"It's very important that zoning gets through the Board of Aldermen to protect the watershed," Kinnaird said. In a position paper released Tuesday, she wrote that larger lots and septic tanks were needed in the area to protect the water supply from pollution.

Porto agrees with the need for better zoning in the area and proposes that the lots be zoned at a minimum of five

acres. He added that landowners with lots of less than five acres needed to be exempted from new ordinances.

He disagrees with Kinnaird on the use of septic tanks in the area. "We need to work on water and sewer systems to the homes out there, instead of septic tanks," Porto said. "In my opinion, septic tanks are not safe for the watershed area."

Kinnaird and Porto would rather see the location for the new post office closer to downtown and not at the Fidelity Street site.

In response to comments that she changed her vote on the post office site at the last minute, Kinnaird said that she never intended to vote for the site and that the cemetery commission would not listen to her.

Porto said he supported the Board's decision on the site, but said he would prefer the post office to be located downtown.

"I think the post office should really be part of a downtown commercial site, but the decision has been made," Porto said.

MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Eleanor Kinnaird

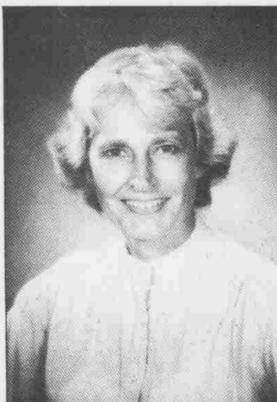
In her first mayoral re-election campaign, Eleanor Kinnaird sees alternate forms of transportation and downtown revitalization as the important issues of the election.

As mayor of Carrboro since 1987, Kinnaird established the Plantation Plaza Express and Highland Hills bus routes. She also worked for the past two years on the project of revitalizing downtown Carrboro.

Kinnaird said she considered traffic congestion a major problem in Carrboro and would like to make improvements by creating more bike paths and expanding the bus system. She said she would like to make improvements heavily geared toward University students but beneficial to everyone in Carrboro.

Proposed wider bike paths on three major roads in Carrboro would help University students and younger kids in Carrboro, she said. The new bike paths are to be built on each of the roads and will be about six feet wide.

With the recent community concern about the new post office, Kinnaird said she felt the chosen location on Fidelity Street near Westwood Cemetery was inappropriate because it would bring the wrong kind of traffic to the



area and would take more green space away from the town.

When Kinnaird ran for mayor in 1987 she held the issue of protecting the watershed as her principal concern. She said she continued to see preserving the watershed as an important issue, and one that separates her from her opponent.

"The Carrboro watershed is, I think,

the only pure water source in the state. The prime importance is to keep it as pure as possible."

Kinnaird said she was excited about the new student liaison position that the University recently established with Carrboro. She hopes this new student voice among the town leaders will make student concerns known.

While Kinnaird wants the large student population to make its voice louder in the community, she said most of the graduate students living in the community were registered to vote because they felt they were a more permanent part of the community.

"It's the undergraduate population that feels like it's not part of the community," Kinnaird said. "Many of the undergraduate students seem to think they will only be around here for four years. We need to pay as much attention to the undergraduates as to everyone else and to let them know they are an important part of the community."

Because students do contribute a great deal of tax money to the city by living in Carrboro, she said the students deserved to be recognized by the town and should make their voice known in the community by taking the initiative to register and vote.

James Porto

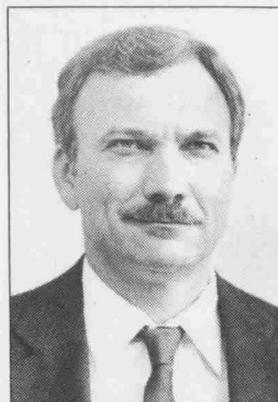
Carrboro mayoral candidate James Porto's first preference would be locating the new post office downtown, not on Fidelity Street. But he said he supported the action taken by the Board of Aldermen.

Porto said he was not completely convinced that there is a traffic problem in Carrboro, but he points out that a major concern is the lack of an orderly circulation pattern downtown. He proposes that the board set criteria for what it considers to be a problem, and according to those criteria, determine how much of a problem really exists.

"There are really no easy solutions. In the long run, we need to get the town to agree to a complete transportation plan. We either need to adopt a plan or publicly accept the amount of traffic in Carrboro."

If a problem is found to exist, Porto would support working with UNC to implement a better staggered workday for employees. He is also in favor of pushing for state funds to improve public transportation.

The primary issue that should be students' concern is Carrboro's tax base, he said. Ninety percent of the town's tax base comes from residential property owners; if taxes go up, higher



monthly rent results.

"It's a mistaken belief among many students that if you're not owning property within a town, you're not paying property tax," he said. "However, the taxes charged to property owners are passed on to the renters in the cost of rent."

Porto, who serves on the Bond Task Force Committee in Carrboro, said the

committee recommended to the board that they decrease the use of excess funds in the general fund to balance the operating budget, and instead reserve the money for capital improvements such as sidewalks and bikeways.

"With a combination of reductions and a modest tax increase, the operating budget can be restored to a sound financial setting," Porto said. "While I do not generally support tax increases and will work very hard to avoid one, we may have to increase taxes to balance the budget in the next two years."

Porto, who is on the faculty at the University's School of Public Health, served Carrboro as mayor from 1983 to 1987. During his tenure, he worked to implement a bond issue that provided \$780,000 for the revitalization of Lloyd Street.

He was also involved in joint planning with Orange County and instrumental in getting the Town Commons area started. Along with serving as mayor, Porto has been on Carrboro's Appearance Commission for six years.

"I see my role, as mayor, as being one to judge (conflicting) claims and to support those actions that I believe contribute to the public good."

BOARD OF ALDERMEN CANDIDATES

Hilliard Caldwell

Alderman Hilliard Caldwell, who seeks his third term to serve the residents of Carrboro, said he was relying on his past experience to win the election.

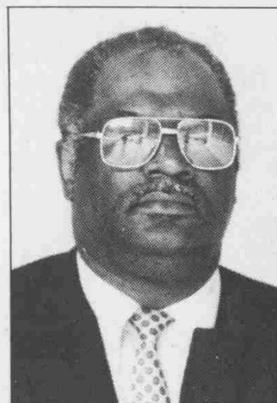
Caldwell, who said he loved politics, has served on the Board of Aldermen for eight years.

"I enjoy it," he said. "It's beyond a hobby, because you can see results. The people have elected me and given me the power to enact local laws that say what they can and can't do. It's all about helping people."

Caldwell said he supported the Fidelity Street location for the new post office and said the vote on the site was unanimous up until the last minute, when Mayor Eleanor Kinnaird changed her vote.

"The site was recommended to the board by our cemetery commission who advised us to submit it to the postal service," Caldwell said. "Mayor Kinnaird decided to go against it at the last vote when she realized she could use it as a political ploy in this election."

Caldwell said the town went through the right channels of notifying residents about the public hearing on the post office site by putting out notices. He added that the residents came to voice their objections after the decision had been made.



Carrboro does not have a traffic problem of its own, Caldwell said. The problem occurs only for about 45 minutes in the morning and in the afternoon when people are driving to and from work.

"I think the University should assist us in this and encourage its employees to use the (U.S.15-501/N.C.54) bypass and our park-and-ride lots," Caldwell said. "I'm willing to look at traffic, and I'm working on some proposals that I

don't want to release until after the election."

Caldwell points to the vote to appoint a student liaison as a significant step toward improving Carrboro's relationship with students. He said that students were a vital part of the community because so many of them lived in and contributed to the town.

The tax base in Carrboro has remained fairly steady over the past years, he said, and he would prefer an increase in the tax base to an increase in taxes. This affects students because they would have to share the burden of a tax hike by paying higher rent on apartments.

"I would rather see an increase in the tax base than an increase in taxes," Caldwell said. "If we allow for more development and more businesses, they can then share in the tax burden."

Caldwell, who also serves as mayor pro tem of Carrboro, just completed a 2-year term on the board of directors for the North Carolina House Financing Agency. He is also a member of N.C. Black Elected Officials and chairman of the South Orange Caucus.

Caldwell, the home-school coordinator for the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City schools, said that his accessibility to residents was very important to his position as alderman.

Tom Gurganus

Tom Gurganus, an incumbent on the Board of Aldermen seeking a second term, said he was campaigning for many of the same reasons that caused him to run for election to the board in 1985.

He said time he spent volunteering in the community before the election in 1985, and his service on several community advisory boards made him want to become even more involved in the community.

Gurganus said he was different from his opponents, excluding incumbent Hilliard Caldwell, because he had much more experience as a member on the board. He said it is important for the board to retain some continuity from election to election.

"I do my homework, I go out into the community and I make an effort to speak out and to speak up for Carrboro."

After his graduation from UNC, Gurganus stayed in Carrboro, where he has lived for 18 years. During those 18 years, he has gotten to know Carrboro and its people, he said. "I want to give the town the benefit of what I've learned and continue to help to improve Carrboro."

As a member of the Board of Aldermen, Gurganus served on the both the joint planning task force and the solid waste task force. The joint planning task force works to conduct a joint



review of Orange County, Chapel Hill and Carrboro. One of the plans Gurganus said he was working with involved providing an annexation limit to the towns involved in the task force.

As a member of the solid waste task force, Gurganus is involved with the search for a new landfill. He said he thought the issue of a new landfill would become more important to Carrboro residents in the coming months.

Recycling is an issue of the election that Gurganus said is important in this election. He said he thought University students should really try to get involved with recycling efforts. With the expanding recycling services in Carrboro, recycling will grow to affect everyone.

With the amount of traffic flowing between Carrboro and Chapel Hill, Gurganus thinks the Board of Aldermen is doing as much as possible to control traffic congestion through alternate means of transportation, such as building bike paths.

Another issue in the election is the proposed construction of the new post office for Carrboro. For 10 years, Carrboro has been trying to get a new post office built because the present post office is too small.

Much of the problem in getting the post office built came from the postal service, he said. The location was chosen through bids submitted to sell land, many of which were too highly priced. The final decision to locate the post office on Fidelity Street has caused some concern among nearby residents.

"I suspect wherever the post office will eventually be, there would be a degree of controversy. We can't have the post office downtown without controversy."

Jacquelyn Gist

Jacquelyn Gist, a candidate for the Board of Aldermen, said the town took a great deal of time in choosing the Fidelity Street site for the new post office but that she was not sure it was the only available site.

Gist said it might be possible to find an alternative site, and the possibility needs to be checked into.

"We definitely need a bigger post office site," Gist said. "If indeed this is the only place available, I feel we need to protect the surrounding neighborhood."

To alleviate traffic problems, Gist said she supports the synchronization of downtown stop lights. She proposes checking into the feasibility of buses running more often during the day other than in the morning and evening. She also said the town needed to get busy improving the bike paths.

The possibility of a staggered workday at the University is high on her agenda as another way to solve traffic problems.

"I'd like to see us work with the University and North Carolina Memorial Hospital to stagger workdays," Gist said. "It has worked well in larger cities, and I think it will work for Carrboro, too. This prevents everyone from hitting the roads at the same time."

Gist cited the watershed protection



of drinking water as an important issue affecting students, because students usually do not have the extra money to buy bottled water. She also mentioned the transportation and parking problems as being important to students.

Another issue that Gist said she was concerned about is community safety. She supports a total community watch for Carrboro.

"I think we have a wonderful police force, but they cannot watch us all,"

Gist said. "I am a strong believer in community, and I think we could all get together and look at lighting and the height of hedges."

"Shrubbery looks good in the daytime, but it can be pretty scary at night. We currently watch each other in our neighborhoods — why not watch each other in the entire community?"

Gist has a bachelor's degree in philosophy and a master's degree in social work with an emphasis in community; she received both from UNC. She is the program director for the Association of Retarded Citizens.

Gist has served as vice chairwoman of Carrboro's Board of Adjustment, and she has also served on the Steering Committee for the Orange County Housing Corporation.

Living in Carrboro for 13 years has given Gist the opportunity to meet many people in the community. Gist also said her background in social work gave her an advantage in working with all types of people.

"As a social worker, I think I have an understanding of all kinds of people," she said. "We just need to come together with some good solutions. With my career I do a lot of group facilitating, and I'm used to helping people see that they want the same goals."

Michael Nelson

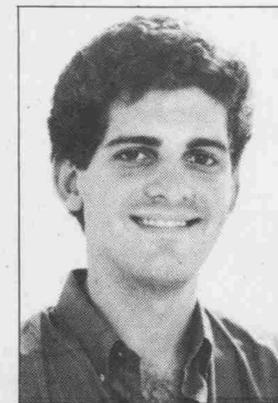
Michael Nelson, a newcomer to the Carrboro Board of Aldermen election, said he was vying for a seat on the board because he wanted to offer the town of Carrboro what it needs for the 1990s.

Nelson, a UNC political science graduate, is running for office to address the issues important to Carrboro. His past political accomplishments include being third vice chairman for the Orange County Democratic Party, co-chairman of N.C. Senator Wanda Hunt's re-election campaign, Democratic precinct chairman for the East Franklin Precinct and for the Dogwood Acres Precinct.

"As I have talked with voters, almost all say the importance in the election should be placed on the environment," he said. "I would like to see town-owned buildings heated in more energy-efficient ways, such as solar energy."

Disagreements with the actions of the present Board of Aldermen contributed to Nelson's decision to run for office. Nelson said the board failed Carrboro on the issue of traffic congestion when it tabled the Traffic Advisory Board's traffic plan to alleviate traffic congestion.

"They threw out an entire traffic circulation plan, where parts of the plan could have been salvaged."



Nelson supports increased bus service, park-and-ride lots, and improved and increased numbers of bike paths. He said encouraging people to car pool and van pool would do a great deal to help the traffic congestion in Carrboro.

Traffic congestion near Westwood Cemetery is one of the reasons Nelson said the site for the new post office was inappropriate. He said the post office needed to be replaced because of the inadequate parking and traffic prob-

lems.

If the new post office is constructed near Westwood Cemetery, the increased traffic problems would be detrimental to the area, Nelson said.

In his campaign Nelson sees traffic congestion and the environment as the two major issues affecting the community. Both of these issues as well as others are important to students, Nelson said.

His stand on the issues and his willingness to be specific about his plans if elected are what Nelson thinks makes him more appealing than his opponents to his voters. He thinks that if elected he can offer new ideas to the board, because he is younger than other board members, more aggressive and more progressive.

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