

Elections '89: CHAPEL HILL

4/The Daily Tar Heel/Monday, November 6, 1989

Environment, noise level issues in council election

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Staff Writer

Students and residents voting Tuesday for Chapel Hill mayor and four town council candidates will find few differences among candidates, and a Chapel Hill Town Council member said he attributed this to the little controversy within town issues.

"This has been clearly the quietest election in the decade, primarily because many of the details which annoyed or delighted people have been settled within the last 10 years," said Joe Herzenberg. "There haven't been any violent arguments."

The town council consists of the mayor and eight council members. The mayor serves a two-year term, while council members serve for four years, with half the council seats up for re-election every two years.

In this election, the seven candidates running for the four open seats include three incumbents and four challengers. The candidate running for mayor is running unopposed.

Council member David Godschalk agreed with Herzenberg and said no real issues have come forward in this election. "There isn't much disagreement among the candidates."

Godschalk said he felt there would not be a large voter turnout this election. "It hasn't been given that much attention. In addition, it is a midterm election. There aren't any state or national elections taking place. Plus, there hasn't been that much discussion of the issues."

This election is different from those in the past, Godschalk said, because large concerns such as the impact of

growth in Chapel Hill have died down.

Godschalk and Herzenberg agreed the election turnouts would reflect the fact that this has been a quiet election. "In a quiet election, incumbents usually have an advantage," Herzenberg said.

Godschalk said a voter's familiarity with candidates has usually caused the incumbents to win in quiet elections. "Unless there are strong disagreements between the candidates, people will vote for someone they know."

Herzenberg said he felt this election had not only been quiet in terms of campaign rhetoric, but also in terms of activity. "I personally have only received one piece of political propaganda in the mail."

The election issues deal mainly with protecting the quality of life for residents, and protecting the natural environment, Herzenberg said. Other election issues include the following:

- The new council will have to consider possible changes to the noise ordinance. After a UNC student party early in the semester, the Pritchard and Church Street Residents Group recommended that the town council change the noise tolerance level from 75 decibels (dB) to 50 dB, ban the issuing of noise permits and require bands to stop playing by 9 p.m. In a report to the council, Town Manager David Taylor recommended to change the maximum permitted sound level in areas outside the campus noise zone to 70 dB.

- Bill Hildebolt, town council student liaison, said all the candidates proposed communication as the answer to the noise problem, and at the conclusion of the election, he said the council would have to follow through on this idea.

"The noise ordinance has come up too late to be a major issue."

- The town council will also have to face parking and traffic problems downtown. After the rejection of the Rosemary Square project, the controversial office/condominium/parking complex that folded last year because of insufficient building funds, members of a parking committee proposed to build a parking deck to occupy the available lot at Rosemary and Henderson streets.

The controversy revolves around whether this land would best serve as a parking deck. Alternatives include building more park-and-ride lots — parking lots on the outskirts of town where commuters can park for free and ride a bus into downtown — and increasing the bus system.

- In another report Taylor said the Orange County Regional Landfill was expected to be full by 1987. In response to this, the Landfill Owner's Group (LOG) which consists of Carrboro, Chapel Hill and Orange County governments, is working on recycling and waste reduction projects. A new council will have to make decisions about the location of the new landfill and how to build it.

- A new council will also be faced with the homeless issue and affordable housing. The lease on the old municipal building for the Inter-Fraternity Council's Homeless Shelter and Community Kitchen will expire in three years upon the completion of the building's \$1 million renovations. The council will have to decide to extend the lease or find a new location.

MAYORAL CANDIDATE

Jonathan Howes

Chapel Hill Mayor Jonathan Howes, who is running unopposed for his second term, said he supported the proposal to lower the decibel requirement of the noise ordinance.

This contrasts a Daily Tar Heel interview before his election in 1987, when Howes said he was in favor of increasing the decibel level allowed by the noise ordinance and creating a campus zone permitting higher noise levels.

The proposed ordinance would cut the requirement from 75 to 70 decibels (dB). The town manager made the proposal in late October, but the council decided to postpone a vote until students returned from break and could voice their opinions.

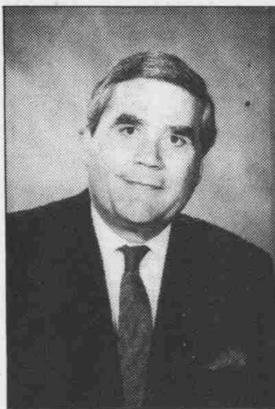
"I think a lot of the problems with the fraternities have been cleared up, but there are a lot of complaints from neighborhoods," Howes said. "I don't think it's all students either."

Howes said many complaints had been coming from areas other than those near the University.

"I realize we may be swearing out warrants on neighbors because of noise. Although I'd rather see such conflicts settled by the dispute center."

The issue has caused conflict, he said, but students should also become more involved with other issues that concern them.

"There's been a lot of discussion among the student body about the noise ordinance. Noise is an abrasive subject for students, but I think they have broader interests other than noise. I think they're now more concerned with what the University and the town do within the state, and how the community performs its function."



In other issues, Howes said he thought planning was in better shape than it had ever been. The town, he said, has worked to improve watershed protection and to increase good quality development. He added that the town was working with the University to create a historic district in the McCauley Street area.

Howes said he supported the work done by the Downtown Commission to revitalize downtown. The trolley system, an idea originated by the commission that was put into effect in September, was the first step toward improvement.

Public transportation is important to Chapel Hill because of the limited amount of parking available, Howes said. The University has a limited amount of space, which prevents stu-

dents from having cars on campus, and further increases the need for buses.

"The University is looking at more parking decks. Additional on-campus parking is important, but there's only so much room. Bus service needs to be made into an attractive mode of transportation."

The town council is looking for a place to build a 350-space parking deck. Howes said the town now has an architect under contract for the deck.

"I'm hopeful that we're going to choose a site soon. The purpose of the deck will be to serve transients and shoppers who come to do business downtown for a few hours. If students use the space it will defeat the purpose."

Howes said the relationship between the town and the University was better than it was two years ago. He said he attributed this to cooperation among himself, Chancellor Paul Hardin, last year's student body president and Student Body President Brian Lewis.

"We've all worked together to improve campus-town relations," Howes said. "Brian appointed Bill Hildebolt as a student liaison to the council. I think the liaison is a very effective medium for communication between us and the University."

Howes, who is director and research professor of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies at the University, served 12 years on town council before running for mayor in 1987. He has a masters in planning from UNC and a masters in public administration from Harvard.

Howes said he attributed his interest in town politics to his education and his teaching in government.

TOWN COUNCIL CANDIDATES

Julie Andresen

Julie Andresen, an incumbent on the Chapel Hill Town Council seeking her second term, said any amendments to the noise ordinance needed to consider aspects of noise other than decibels.

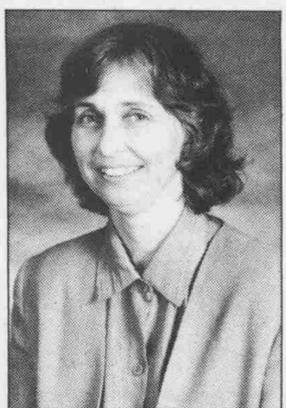
"I think we do need some sort of ordinance, but I'm not sure that this one is the best possible one because it measures decibels," Andresen said. "I do think, however, that it's been effective in monitoring the time and day of outdoor events. It's definitely not fair for residents to be exposed to noise at all times."

An alternative to measuring decibels is establishing different zones for various functions and events, she said. A committee with students on it worked two years ago to create an effective noise ordinance, but it no longer exists. Andresen added she would like to see the committee become active again.

Andresen serves on the town's planning committee to provide downtown parking and a future pedestrian plaza on town-owned property. She said the town and the University needed to coordinate plans such as parking decks because such action also affects downtown.

"The town is looking into building a parking deck somewhere downtown. It really hasn't been decided, though, if it will be for student use or for the merchants, as I think it should be."

Park-and-ride lots are another issue



Andresen said the town should address

"We've got to decide whether or not to invest in park-and-ride lots. Before we spend the money, it needs to be known that people are willing to ride the buses. The buses will also have to leave the lots every 10 minutes or so to provide adequate, dependable transportation."

While she advocates quality development downtown, Andresen said fast growth actually costs Chapel Hill money, and development should be

paced. The council is dealing with such pace and timing of development, and Andresen said the council was working on a proposal to change zoning on some town property on the outskirts of Chapel Hill.

"I think our rural buffer should remain somewhat rural, and Chapel Hill is committed to that. There are 330,000 acres of land surrounding Chapel Hill and Carrboro that I'm not interested in urbanizing."

Andresen said she saw students' interests moving toward environmental issues such as landfills and recycling and toward the homeless problem.

"Students are becoming more sensitive to things in the community. I've had a lot of questions about the homeless and the Inter-Faith Council's (homeless) shelter."

Andresen, who has a degree in political science from the University of Pennsylvania, is working toward a master's degree in public administration from UNC.

During her term on the council, Andresen served on the Design Task Force, which is responsible for engineering and design manuals for the town. She also worked with other governing bodies in the area to protect the watershed.

Joyce Brown

Joyce Brown, a newcomer to the race for a Chapel Hill Town Council seat, said she did not see the noise ordinance as a student vs. non-student issue.

"I live in an older neighborhood near campus, and I'm familiar with noise problems. There are students that I know in the neighborhood who also value peace and quiet."

She said that she did not think the ordinance should be based on the measurement of decibels, but that something did need to be done to control the noise.

"I'd like to see it (the ordinance) taken out of the high-tech, scientific context of decibels and see it put in a sort of social context. I think if someone is disturbing the peace, they should be stopped."

Brown said she opposed building additional parking lots and roads downtown and instead supported public transportation, bicycling and walking as means for transportation. She added that the increased use of automobiles would cause further environmental problems.

"We have to increase bus ridership. If we put money into roads it will increase the automobile traffic and leave less money for mass transit. We have to do something to make bus riding easier and more convenient."

Brown said she looked at growth in



the context of how much more the town and the environment can take, and she added that all possible considerations needed to be looked at closely.

"I'm not pro-growth, but neither am I anti-growth. I simply choose to look at all the possible consequences of any specific action. We cannot continue to pour into our streams any more pollution. I'd like to see the town work on a long-range plan to match our growth on our capabilities."

Brown said she saw a trend among the student population toward greater

concern for environmental issues. The recycling that many student groups are doing on campus is a good issue, and Brown said she hoped to see participation continue.

"The number of students at last weekend's SEAC (Student Environmental Action Coalition) conference was impressive. I've been really impressed by the amount of student activism in the area of environmental issues."

Brown actively opposed the proposal to extend Pittsboro Street through Little Fraternity Court two years ago. She said she worked hard with neighbors to prevent such an extension, and she said she received strong support from students.

She has also supported the use of solar energy and lighting in the new town library.

Brown said she was running for town council because of her community oriented family and because she likes to be involved in community affairs.

"I'm interested in a lot of issues that are important to the town. I'd also like to see greater public participation in town politics."

To improve student participation in town affairs, Brown said she encouraged residents to form strong groups to offer support for neighborhoods.

David Pasquini

In his second re-election campaign, town council incumbent David Pasquini said he thought his professional experience working in industry and his past town council experience set him apart from his opponents.

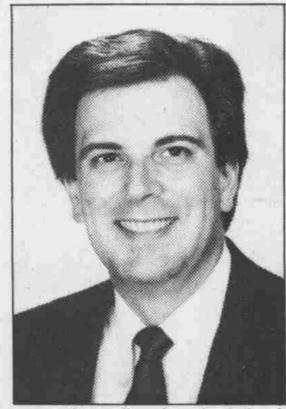
Unlike most of the other council candidates, Pasquini works for industry, which he said gave him a different perspective and background in dealing with issues facing council members.

Pasquini has lived in Chapel Hill for 15 years, eight of which he has served on the town council. Serving on the council for such a long time has allowed him to learn the history of the council and the positions of the council members, he said.

When he first ran for office in 1981, Pasquini just wanted to serve the community. "I wanted to give something back to the community. While I was a student at the University, Chapel Hill gave a lot to me. I am running for town council to provide my knowledge of industry and council experience to the town."

He has served on the library committee, which made the decision to build a new library, and he has served as mayor pro tem. This year Pasquini also completed a term on the Orange Water and Sewer Authority's (OWASA) Board of Directors.

While the absence of any major is-



sue can be attributed to the lack of controversy about the issues in the town council, Pasquini said he anticipated that the issues focused on by the candidates would become more important in the coming months.

One of these issues is parking. The construction of a new parking lot near downtown will alleviate any parking problems that there are in Chapel Hill, but Pasquini said parking at the University was a greater problem than parking downtown. He noted that the addition of parking spaces near downtown would

bring more people to Chapel Hill for shopping.

Traffic circulation is a problem in Chapel Hill that Pasquini said was not caused by the number of cars on the streets, but more directly caused by the overuse of the transportation system.

The antiquated traffic signal system is not equipped to handle the volume of traffic on the roads, Pasquini said. This system could be remedied with money from a bond issue that should be discussed before 1992, and could result in a rise in tax rates in Chapel Hill affecting everyone in the area.

Pasquini said he supported other actions that would help traffic congestion in town, other than modernizing the transportation system to handle a large traffic capacity. He said he suggested more park-and-ride lots and more people traveling by buses or bicycles.

The noise ordinance proposal to lower the decibel restriction from 75 decibels (dB) to 70 dB is a good compromise that would provide good protection to the residents of the town, Pasquini said.

"The present ordinance works well to provide quiet zones in residential areas while allowing students to do what they want on campus, within reason. The noise ordinance just needs to be fine tuned."

Alan Rimer

Alan Rimer, a new candidate for Chapel Hill Town Council, said that he believed the proposed reduction on the noise ordinance decibel level was reasonable and that he had what it took to be a town council member.

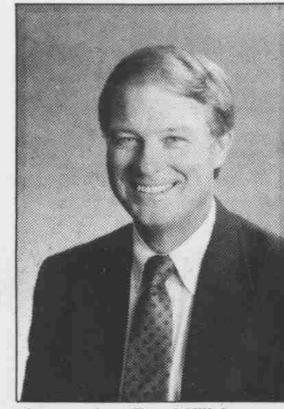
The proposed change in the ordinance calls for a lowering of the allotted decibels by five, and Rimer said he agrees with this amendment. "It seems to me that the noise ordinance has worked reasonably well the way it is. This change also seems reasonable."

Neighbors should be tolerant of this noise but respect each other's rights, he said. "(Students) are not visitors in this town. There is a certain amount of noise that goes on with living on both parts."

Rimer stressed the importance of student involvement in local affairs. "There are a lot of other issues (students) should be involved with. Students must realize they are a major voting block. They should use their voting power."

The town would not exist without the University and its students, and students should exercise their freedom to influence town issues, Rimer said. "Students control this town."

Rimer said he favored more parking downtown and more peripheral park-and-ride lots outside town. He proposed an incentive to get people to use these lots, which affects the people



who come into Chapel Hill from outside the city to work at North Carolina Memorial Hospital.

"People could punch in on their time clocks when they arrive at the lots and start working for the University at that moment." In that instance, using the park-and-ride lots would be a convenience rather than a waste of people's time.

Rimer said he felt environmental issues should be a concern to students. These issues include solid waste disposal, traffic, air pollution and the drain-

age ordinance.

"Each has an impact on students. The University is not bound by any of the city ordinances such as the drainage ordinance, but students could ask the administration to get more involved in working with the town on such issues."

Rimer said the University lacked a strong recycling effort, and he suggested that student government begin a recycling project.

"Recycling on campus would have a strong effect on solid waste reduction. I bet (students) could even get the town to cooperate on the picking up of recyclable materials if you separated them."

Rimer's political accomplishments include his two-and-a-half-year service on the Town Planning Board, which he still chairs. He also chaired the Design Task Force that set up guidelines for and has helped to speed up town development.

Rimer is the principal engineer at Alliance Technologies Corporation, a national environmental consulting firm that deals with hazardous waste and air pollution problems. He said he felt his business experience would help a political career.

He chose to run to make an impact on many of the planning board's projects, he said. "I want to see it carried through. I want to be part of seeing the plan being implemented."