

The Banner

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Campus left in the dark, squirrel blamed

By Nicole Miller
Copy Editor
Erin King
Editor-in-Chief

UNCA experienced power failure on campus for approximately two hours Monday night after a squirrel shorted out a transformer. The power outage, which lasted from approximately 7:30-9:30 p.m., caused several night classes to be cancelled.

Stephen Baxley, UNCA director of facilities management and engineering, credited "an inquisitive squirrel" as the reason for the campus-wide power outage. "The electricity comes up to the campus from CP&L," Baxley said. "They provide all of the electricity for the campus, and all of it, with the exception of a few street lights, come up the service drive by South Ridge.

"The substation starts down at the bottom and goes up to the set of switching cabinets right outside the Physical Plant building. The squirrel stood up on the top of the switch gear, apparently touched the wire at the same time, and shorted it out," Baxley said. "He was crispy."

Senior management major Nilda Gavidia was at the Justice Center when the power went out.

"I was crossing the area over by the pool when the lights went out, and I thought, 'Well, maybe they're just closing down the pool.' Then I started walking towards Governors Village, and I saw one of my friends, and she said, 'We have no power.' Then we heard the fire trucks," Gavidia said.

All the dormitories except for Governors Village have back-up generators, allowing the emergency exit signs to still be lit while the power was out, but the generator at

Mills Hall failed to operate properly, according to Baxley. This was due to an automatic transfer switch that was not working.

"Mills Hall, without an effective generator, was running without electricity for a little while," Baxley said. The automatic transfer switch that is supposed to automatically transfer power to the generator didn't operate. The generator was repaired Monday night.

Governors Village was without any power because of the absence of an emergency generator. Pete Williams, UNCA director of housing and residence life, said that getting Governors Village a generator in the near future is not likely.

"The actual cost of putting in a back-up generator, a big generator, is quite substantial. And I think the decision was made to emergency exit lighting, but not necessarily an emergency generator, that would

last two to three days. I think there are other avenues," Williams said. "There is some discussion about major renovation and demolition of part of the Village."

If a major power outage was to occur during the winter for an extended period of time, Baxley said that those living in Governors Village would not have to worry about not having an emergency generator.

"We have the ability down at the health and fitness center to provide heat, lights, and hot showers as well. So, if we had to, we would grab mattresses and relocate students from Governors Village to the health and fitness center," Baxley said. "I wouldn't worry about them freezing to death."

The Dining Hall also has an emergency generator, so students would not have to miss meals due to a power outage, said Baxley.

Resident Assistants are equipped with flashlights for such emergencies, according to Williams.

"The R.A.s all have flashlights. It's primarily in Governors Village where the problem is," Williams said. "We don't have 206 flashlights, but the R.A.s, I believe, do have flashlights for themselves."

Williams also said that the housing office continues to recommend that all resident students have flashlights in their rooms for use, especially in emergency situations like Monday night.

Gavidia, who is an R.A. on 7th floor north of Founders Hall and sat duty in the Founders' lobby during the power outage, did not have a flashlight supplied by the housing office.

"I didn't have one (flashlight). Now, I think we're supposed to have one. I think they're going to put it in the 'Residential Times'

that not only R.A.s, but everybody should have one on hand just in case," Gavidia said.

CP&L and UNCA electricians were involved in resolving the power outage. "The first order of business was to get the power back on," Baxley said.

Electricians stayed later to check all fire alarm panels to make sure they reset properly, Baxley said. When the power goes out, fire systems go into a trouble alarm and are supposed to reset when power is restored. They also checked Weizenblatt Health Center due to the refrigerated medical goods, and a few pieces of scientific equipment in Robinson Hall.

The two hours without power passed without incident in the residence halls, according to Gavidia. "Around 7:30 p.m., it was still daylight. People were just outside, doing homework," she said.

Rolling out the greenway

By John Stanier
Staff Writer

Plans are underway for the extension of the greenway along W.T. Weaver Blvd. This phase of the project will continue from Barnard Ave. along the front of the UNCA campus and connect to Broadway near the University Botanical Gardens. The existing phase of the greenway, a trail in a park-like setting, opened officially last fall. It stretches along W.T. Weaver Blvd. from Merrimon Avenue to Barnard Ave. and provides a safe environment for walking, biking, and relaxing along a busy street.

Al Kopf, a landscape architect with Asheville's Parks and Recreation Department and one of the project's designers, said that initial work has begun. "We just commenced with the design phase last week. We're going to be meeting again shortly with UNCA and Botanical Garden staff to start talking about refined concepts and planning," he said.

The goal now is to have the plans ready by November and to put them out for bids to construction companies this winter. If all goes according to plan, physical construction of the second phase of the W.T. Weaver Blvd. greenway should begin early this coming spring and be finished during the summer.

UNCA and the city are working together on the W.T. Weaver Blvd. greenway project. UNCA is not providing any funding for the greenway, but it is actively participating in the planning and development stages. One major aspect of the cooperation between UNCA and the city is the right to use the land. "They (UNCA) are gracious enough to let us have an easement across the property, a permanent easement. It will enable us to do this, because we don't have enough right of way along the street edge as it is now," said Kopf.

The greenway extension will continue with the park-like setting established in the initial phase of the project. Designs for the greenway will take into consideration anticipated changes to the UNCA campus.

"We want to make it perfectly compatible for [UNCA] so it will only enhance what they are trying to do," Kopf said.

Mike Madison, an urban planner for the city of Asheville, said the greenway is an asset to UNCA. Its design provides for a multi-use trail for biking and walking.

"It is certainly a needed link," Madison said. "A lot of UNCA students go to Merrimon Ave. for Boston Pizza and other services, and until the greenway was developed, they either had to take their lives in their own hands walking



PHOTO BY TRAVIS BARKER

The greenway along W.T. Weaver Blvd. will soon be extended to connect with Broadway. The trail is meant to provide a safe place for cyclists and walkers

along the street, or drive."

When completed, the W.T. Weaver Blvd. greenway will tie into a greenway planned to run along the west side of Broadway all the way down to Chestnut Street. "Before too long you'll be able to walk or ride a bike all the way from Merrimon Avenue, by the university and the botanical gardens, to downtown," Madison said.

The W.T. Weaver Blvd. greenway project is part of a larger urban initiative in the city of Asheville. Madison is currently working on a master plan for a series of greenways, similar to the one along W.T. Weaver Blvd., throughout Asheville. "The city is really committed to the development of greenways," he said. "We see them having numerous benefits to the city in everything from recreation to economics."

Kopf said the concept for the W.T. Weaver Blvd. greenway began almost a decade ago.

Madison said research indicates that Asheville is now ready for greenways.

"Basically, there is not a long history of greenways in Asheville except, obviously, the Blue Ridge Parkway," said Madison. With growing concerns about pollution, traffic, and quality of life, people are now more open to the idea. "Studies have shown that a good percentage of the people in the Asheville community would use the greenway regularly," he said. The same studies indicate that "people are willing to walk up to a half a mile or ride their bikes two miles."

Greenways, a growing trend in city planning across the country, help to cut down on automobile usage, and therefore help to promote cleaner air. They also provide additional recreational space and safe alternatives to narrow sidewalks along busy streets.

Madison says greenways will provide benefits not only to UNCA, but to the city of Asheville as well.

See GREENWAY page 10

Funding for Highsmith Center still uncertain

By Susan Crockett
Staff Writer

Construction cannot start on the proposed \$12 million Highsmith University Center renovation until legislators in Raleigh can pass the state budget. "We still don't know what the outcome of the budget negotiations between the chambers will be," said Tom Byers, special assistant to the chancellor.

Earlier this year, the House and the Senate proposed to give UNCA \$1 million to start the project. "That is not unusual with capital projects," Byers said. A capital project is one in which funds are not budgeted year after year. Instead, a large sum of money is allocated once and is used over a period of several years.

The \$12.4 million price tag is calculated to reflect the amount of total square footage needed to complete the project. Plans call for the renovation of an existing 37,785 square feet and the addition of 46,229 square feet, according to a fact sheet provided by the university on the center.

After two years of planning for the new center, UNCA engaged in extensive efforts to inform elected officials of the financial needs for the renovation work, said Byers. The University of North Carolina Board of Governors approved the project, then sent the proposal to the legislature. Although the House and the Senate have allocated \$1 million to UNCA for the center, Byers noted that the university does not yet have the money.

The budget impasse in Raleigh is caused in part because the Republican-controlled House and the Democrat-controlled Senate cannot agree on key tax issues, Byers said.

Also, the state had to pay back \$1 billion in taxation benefits for retirees, causing further delay in resolving the budget. "This really damaged our prospects," said Byers.

Most of the capital projects sent to the legislature by the Board of Governors are viewed as multi-stage projects. "In our case, we really need to have all the money before we start because it's not really feasible to do the building in pieces," Byers said.

Sharyn McDonald-Groh, director of student affairs, said her offices have told the contractors that the center needs to be able to operate fully while construction is in progress.

"It would be a safety factor for us to stay in the building, and it costs more money to move us around," said McDonald-Groh. She added that student services may be temporarily housed in trailers during construction of the building.

"We're hearing the Senate and the House allocated \$1 million for planning and development," said Groh. Regarding the remaining needed funds, she added, "You would hope that they would follow it up pretty quickly with more monies, because the longer you wait, the more expensive the building becomes. Construction costs go up."

The proposed center will serve as a meeting place for the greater UNCA community which includes 630 Asheville Graduate Center students and 900 members of the College for Seniors. The center will house a post office, a child play area, and the student newspaper office. The plan also provides for additional office and retail spaces.

McDonald-Groh, who serves as chair of the Highsmith planning committee, said that the two-year planning process involved surveying students, meeting with architects, and comparing the student centers on other college campuses.

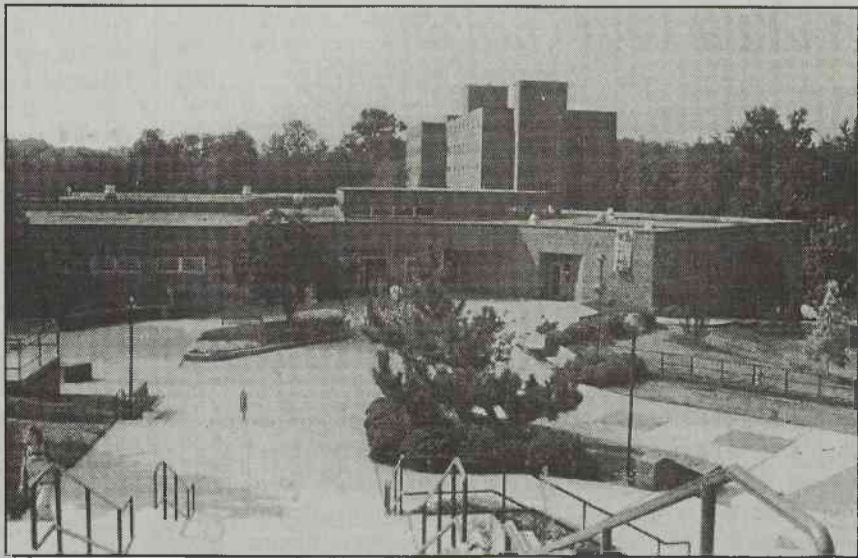


PHOTO BY CARRIE ENDERS

UNCA is seeking funding to more than double the size of Highsmith.