



**PLANNING FOR A NEW LOOK**—Frances Minnich and Ben Towson, owners of Ben's Bargain Barn, say they'll change the entrance to their antique store once the newly realigned

Morrisville-Carpenter Road is completed. The road section will pass behind what is now the back of their store.

## Shop owners rearranging front

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Towson, owner of Ben's Bargain Barn, says the new route will necessitate a lot of changes, but should also increase his business.

"The roadway we now face will be closed, and barricaded, and the new alignment will cross in back of the store," he said, "adding that he plans to convert the back of his building into the front and use the area outside what is now the front for parking."

"I have no idea what it will cost, maybe \$10,000 or so," he said, "but we'll probably have to put in a new entryway, and vinyl side the building. The state is going to provide curbs and access for a driveway that will lead to parking in the front as well as extra parking in the rear. All in all, though, the new road will bring more traffic since it will be a straight run from the airport with no more turns to cope with. The increase in traffic should mean an increase in customers."

Towson has been operating the barn for the past three years, and said the building was an empty bicycle shop when he came to town. "This was known as downtown Morrisville earlier in the century when the building held a Red and White food store. It attracted shoppers from Raleigh and Cary and was known throughout the area," he said.

While the roadway may benefit Towson, it will probably mean the end of business and closing of Gerald and Barbara Perry's Morrisville Beverage, a country store on the northeast corner of N.C. 54 and Aviation Parkway, a place that has been there since at least the turn of the century, they say.

"The state is going to raise N.C. 54 about four feet at the intersection to level it with the railroad tracks and crossing, then gradually level it out to meet the existing roadway in both directions," says Mrs. Perry. Her grandfather operated the place about 1900. "He had it as a boarding house with a little store in the corner," she explains. Her father took over in 1967.

"N.C. 54 will be at least two feet higher in front of the store, and our house. That quick dropoff to our parking area will put us out of business. The state is going to allow for a 15-foot-wide driveway entry, but it will be just too difficult for customers to maneuver."

"And the driveway to our house will have that same two-foot difference. Can you imagine that Corvette (pointing to her car) making that hump?"

"And with the 45-mile-per-hour speed, can you imagine a car or one of those big trucks trying to beat the light slipping off a road that's raised two or four feet above the rest of the ground?," her husband cut in. "It'll land on the front porch."

## Clam dip, Gingrich served at event

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"This together," Pegram said. "We first thought he would arrive right in the middle of our pairings party, so we held off until we were certain he would be here early enough to avoid that conflict."

Gingrich's plane landed at Raleigh-Durham International Airport about 5:45 p.m., an hour later than scheduled because of weather conditions. He arrived at the home of Terry and Joanne Pegram shortly before 6, met with media for about

Perry says he's planning to spruce up the place with a new roof and paint, but "that doesn't pay now," he adds. "I've talked with the state, told them the way the job was being done would put me out of business, but..." He stops and shakes his head.

"People have been coming here for years, they come to sit around and just bat the breeze. Some places you just grow up in. This is one of them," he said.

Betty and Billy Harness didn't grow up in the white colonial home with the front porch on the other corner across Aviation Parkway from Perry, but they have lived there for 18 years. The 1 1/2-acre property has a second building in the rear which Harness uses as a body shop since he retired. Their house dates to about 1850 and was once a stagecoach stop with a stable house, and later a post office. While digging in the yard, Harness once uncovered an old ink well used in the post office.

He says he keeps in touch with the engineer on the realignment project and has been urging the state to install a guard rail across a portion of the front of his property as protection due to the raised roadway planned. He has not been able to get approval. "It's going to be dangerous, we feel, since the raised portion will cover at least 300 feet and will be four feet above the present roadbed level in front of our place," he said. "It's only 30 feet from the house to the roadway and the state plans to make the roadway four lanes on Aviation Parkway and three on N.C. 54. A car slipping off that height could end up on inside the house."

His wife said she fell in love with the house when she saw it, but may have had second thoughts if she knew what she is now going to face. She uses a driveway that opens to Aviation Parkway where it will be four lanes and a raised level. "I dread how it will be," she says. Her husband uses a second drive from the body shop that enters N.C. 54 but also faces a height change in the roadway."

The realigned portion of Morrisville-Carpenter comes even closer to Gene and Sandy Czeck's house. It will leave only a few feet from the road to the house itself which is located just west of fire headquarters on what is now Oak Street.

"We're going to put up a fence to make sure our 4-year-old granddaughter Ashley who lives with us doesn't wander into the street," said Mrs. Czeck. "We'll be getting heavy traffic, especially during the morning and evening rush hours."

The Czeck's household also includes their son and daughter, Pat and Kathy, but Mrs. Czeck says it's something they'll live with. They bought the house and moved here

20 minutes and spent another 20 minutes with donor before leaving.

When he met with the 22 contributors, Gingrich compared efforts of the Jimmy V Foundation to other worthy causes, including recent Olympics competition for people who are paralyzed.

"Like I told some of the folks after he left, he came across as being much warmer in person than he does on TV," Pegram said. "I'm a big Gingrich fan and I was excited about his visit."

## Residents grill board on new post

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missioners Sauls (Billy) and Newnam (Phyllis) both wanted it to be on the agenda?" Broadwell questioned. Commissioner Leavy Barbee leaned forward and said he had also made a similar request. "So did I," added Commissioner C.T. Moore.

"Are you telling me now you are in favor of this position?" Broadwell asked Hodgkins. This was not the same story you told me in my office earlier this week. You said you very much objected to it," Hodgkins said he had not been pressured.

Turning to the public, Mayor Broadwell said: "I feel we do have the makings of a good town manager and that he is under great pressure."

In answer to a question by Commissioner Moore about being threatened, Hodgkins said no one has ever threatened his job.

Barbee said he feels the town has grown to a point where such a position is needed. "And you will see, nowhere have we ever mentioned the name of anyone who is favored. This position requires applications and a process to select the best person for the job." He asked the mayor to read the 10 points on the job list and Broadwell did, citing the names of those now employed by the town who are currently doing those duties with the exception of two or three points. Hodgkins, Community Development Director Mike Allway, and the zoning staff were mentioned.

When Hodgkins was asked about the proposed salary, he cited the town salary guide which showed it to be between \$39,600 and \$58,507.

"I deem this a misuse of public funds," she said, calling it the most critical issue the town has ever faced.

Silver-Smith said it was a job being created for former mayor Lumley. "I was not aware of this job and didn't want to go along," he said.

Lumley, who stepped down as mayor in May of 1995 after moving to Nash County, is a purchasing agent for the state Department of Transportation. His wife, Evelyn, who has been town clerk since June of 1977, sat quietly as she recorded notes for the minutes. She said later she had no comments about what took place, and would have none at any time.

One of the residents who commented was Phillip Adams of Marcom Drive, pastor of the Mount Herman Baptist Church on Leesville Road. "I'm very disappointed and I'm very ashamed," he said in addressing the board members. "This is the first meeting I've attended and you are not an example

of what is expected, not by your actions here tonight."

Ralph Watkins of Airport Boulevard, a member of the Town's Planning and Zoning Board, went even further. He called it the town's biggest corruption. "It's wrong. Something has to be done. It's bad leadership, and a sad day for Morrisville."

Dolores Scott of Church Street told the board she was ashamed of their actions and the manner in which they handled the situation.

The back and forth questions among the commissioners brought Commissioner Newnam to tell Mayor Broadwell she had no authority to act as she had, and later asked for an early adjournment. All items on the agenda were addressed, however.

The audience milled about in the boardroom for about 15 minutes

after adjournment. "A year from now they'll say to Hodgkins that he's fired and Lumley will be the town manager," said R.B. Buchanan. "That \$5,000 raise they just gave Hodgkins will be here for Lumley when he moves in. Then when Sauls fails in his bid for reelection, he'll assist Lumley." He said he applauded Broadwell and Silver-Smith, saying they are the only two people on the board doing their job.

Another resident, Jim Watkins, said he was enraged by the actions, feeling the job was created for one person, and called it corrupt. But when he cursed in referring to the commissioners, the police officer on duty asked him to leave the room. "He could say anything he wants," officer Ira Jones said, "but I had to ask him to leave when he began using curse words."



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- b. "Now, this won't Hurt A Bit."
- c. "But, I did not Inhale."

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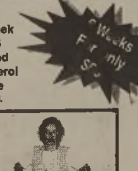
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