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Cobey reflects on hardball Richard Petty campaign; he's still a fan

By Bill Kirkland

His bruising assignment as campaign manager for Richard Petty complete, former Morrisville Town Manager Bill Cobey is exploring job options in both the public and private sector.

Cobey, a former Congressman,

resigned the Morrisville post in March to head up Petty's unsuccessful bid for Secretary of State.

"I didn't have any plans after the campaign, win or lose," Cobey said. "I was just going to use this time to check out what was avail-

able.

"Something related to government is the most likely possibility for me," said the 57-year-old Chapel Hill resident, whose highly visible career has found him in such roles as the director of athletics at UNC-Chapel Hill and

as a key administrator for six years under Governor Jim Martin.

He took the Morrisville assignment in late 1993 and was regarded as the right man at the right time as the town positioned itself for future growth.

Despite his leanings toward a

government position, he does not rule out the private sector. "I would have a preference even then that I have some interaction with state or local government. That's the type of thing I've been doing for the last 16 years."

Whatever direction Cobey's

career takes, the assignment is likely to be cushier than his role in the Petty campaign. "It's a hardball game," he said of politics. "It's not badminton."

With Petty, it more closely resembled roller derby. The NAS-
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Who's got the plan?

Town board's animosities cloud Shiloh sewer issue

By Debbie Burdick

A plan that either does or does not exist, but cannot be revealed, and general lack of communication between the Mayor and some members of the Board of Commissioners, are so far the unsatisfying response to complaints about the lack of comprehensive sewer services to the Shiloh Community.

Morrisville Mayor Margaret Broadwell said an informational meeting held for the town Oct. 29 was attended by the Town Board and between 60 and 70 residents. Broadwell said she pledged at that meeting to bring forth a plan by April of 1997 to serve the needs of the entire community. "It may not be a completed plan," she said, "but it will be a plan."

Broadwell said the town lacks both a technical plan for how to serve the Shiloh community, as well as a financial plan of how it will be paid for.

Commissioner Billy Sauls said however, that "we do have a plan and it is moving forward. I think it could be put in place within the next year."

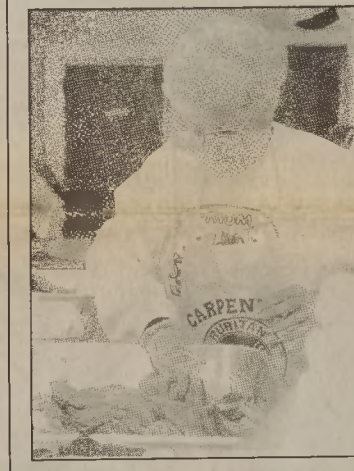
Sauls said that Mayor Broadwell "saw fit not to let us speak about our plans. We were not, as commissioners, allowed to properly present our case to the Shiloh community." Sauls referred to work he had done on the proposed project with Commissioner C.T. Moore.

Sauls declined to say what those plans were.

Commissioner Moore said he didn't know of a plan that is ready to be presented, but added that there may be one in the process. "I'm not at liberty to discuss it," he said.

For her part, Mayor Broadwell said that if anyone has a plan, she would like to know what it is. She said that she had heard rumors to the effect that Moore had approached Shiloh residents with a plan to bring sewer service to the area, but when she approached him about it, he told her that he was "not an engineer."

Mayor Broadwell said the exchange led her to conclude that there really isn't any plan at all. The Mayor said that communica-
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KEEPING IT HOT—The Carpenter Ruritan Club pulled out its pots and pans earlier this month to put on its annual fish fry. Earl Hill, chairman of the fund-raiser, is shrouded in steam as he heats up a pot of potatoes. Ina Rhew prepares for the lunchtime rush and Joe Harris gets busy dropping batter for hushpuppies.

Town's first-ever parade already drawing crowd

Phyllis Newnam has been the driving force behind starting a Christmas parade in Morrisville, and she'll get her wish Dec. 7 when marching bands, horses and Shriners riding mini-trucks make the holidays all that more exciting for the town's youngsters.

She began pushing for a parade over a year ago, but found little support until last December, when members of the Morrisville Board of Commissioners heard parades

being praised at the annual Christmas party sponsored by the Association of Mayors.

When the parade came before the board earlier this year, the vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Newnam then turned to Lisa Day-Cobb, the Morrisville Police Department's administrative assistant. It has been Ms. Cobb who has handled all the details that go into organizing a parade.

"We'll have floats, fire trucks, police cars, ambulances, horse-drawn carriages, old-timey cars, the Mayberry police car replica, Brownie troops, bands and Santa Claus," she said.

More than 40 groups have signed up so far, including high school bands from Apex, Cary and Athens Drive.

Mayor Margaret Broadwell will be riding in a convertible, and Ms.
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Toy stories

School librarian uses collection to teach children about fairy tales

By David Leone

Ever since her childhood, Nancy McNitt has been fascinated by stack dolls, painted wooden figures of increasingly smaller sizes that fit inside each other.

What the librarian at Morrisville Year Round Elementary didn't know is that her love of the dolls would lead to a hobby, a collection and a whole new way of teaching.

"I always start the beginning of the year with our new kindergartners with a lot of storytelling and I use the stack dolls for the children," she said.

McNitt keeps the stack dolls inside a glass case which is up against one wall of the media center.

She said she began the collection long before she started working at the school.

"My husband and I were in New York City in 1981 and bought a
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MORE THAN A HOBBY—Morrisville Year-Round Elementary librarian Nancy McNitt has been collecting story telling nick-knacks for 15 years. The Bremen Town Musicians (left) make

up one menagerie on display, but most of McNitt's collection is kept in a seven-level showcase in the media center. Here, she shows her favorite stack doll, the three little pigs.

Town protests state's plan to nix crossing

Rail official says concerns carry 'significant weight' in decision

By Suzette Rodriguez

A notebook full of comments about a state Department of Transportation plan to close the Barbee Road railroad crossing awaits the state's review.

And Patrick B. Simmons, whose task will be to weigh the objections voiced by residents of the Shiloh Community and the Town of Morrisville during an Oct. 29 meeting, says a final decision won't be easy.

Simmons, who heads the state's Rail Division, says the last thing he wants is for folks to get frustrated and angry over the issue.

But residents speaking up at the meeting, held at the Luther Green Community Center, were adamant that the crossing stay open.

The state wants to close at least half of the 190 public crossings in the state to prepare for high speed passenger rail service between Raleigh, Charlotte and Richmond, Va.

Simmons said the crossing at Barbee Road is a good candidate because of the relatively low volume of traffic using it each day, about 275 vehicles, and the proximity of another crossing a half-mile away at McCrimmon Parkway.

"We're not trying to railroad or run over people," Simmons said. "But in the grand scheme of things, this crossing is relatively small."

But along with town officials, Shiloh residents countered that closing the crossing would inconvenience motorists, delay police, fire and rescue vehicles responding to emergencies and thwart economic development.

The crossing is located next to Shiloh Baptist Church just off N.C. 54 near the Durham County line.

Town Manager David Hodgkins said Morrisville was already divided by the railroad. He said closing the Barbee Road crossing would further isolate one jurisdiction from another and would split a historically unified Shiloh Community.

He said local residents also used the crossing as a cut through to avoid early morning and evening commuter traffic.

Hodgkins said the railroad crossing was scheduled to get signals in state's Transportation Improvement Plan although funding had not yet been aside for the project.

"We've contacted our Board of Transportation representative, other highway officials in our division and the Governor's office," he said.

Hodgkins said last August, as part of a plan to realign Morrisville-Carpenter Road, the town agreed to close a crossing on Ashe Street which didn't have any signals.

"We gave up something there, now we're being asked to give up something else," he said.

A new crossing with signals and gates will replace an existing crossing on Morrisville-Carpenter Road once the realignment is complete.

Simmons said he believed a general perception was that railroads were in a period of decline. "But they've grown tremendously. Freight shipment and passenger trains are busier than ever."

"More people are driving, there's more frequent rail service, and everyone wants to go faster...that's a formula for disaster," he said.

Simmons said, contrary to what people believe, trains don't slow down at crossings. They follow track speeds as low as 35 mph and as high as 79 mph.

"Railroads are private property. The public has an easement to cross them and it's the burden of the motoring public not to pull out in front of trains," he said.

Simmons said Salisbury was another town that objected to the state's proposal for closing crossings. He said the town had 17 crossings in a 3 1/2 mile stretch.

But when a fatal accident occurred recently at one of those crossings, the town then endorsed a plan to close 14 of them.

However, the 70 or so residents attending the Shiloh meeting said there had been no accidents at the Barbee Road crossing as far back as anyone could remember. And they were skeptical of the state's using safety as its reason for closing the crossing.

(The meeting had been planned as a one-on-one informal meeting. But citizens asked that the state give a formal presentation and that they be allowed to publicly voice their concerns in a forum setting.)

Simmons thinks people are skeptical about the long-term prospects of high speed rail. And that lets him know the public needs more information about the state's plans.

During the next two to three weeks, Simmons will review the public's comments and consider a host of factors, like the impact the closing of the crossing might have on school buses, before he makes his recommendation.

"They carry substantial weight," he said about the comments.

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