

Cary money may speed up NC 55 widening

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which is earmarked for other projects but because of House Bill 1211, the town cannot contribute more than 15 percent of the total cost of the project, and that money must be used for right of way acquisition.

"We're willing to participate," said Cary Mayor Koka Booth. A little more than half of the 13-mile stretch of NC 55 between US 64 and Cornwallis Road in Durham, is in the Cary town limits.

Gamer Mayor Don Rohrbaugh is chair of the transportation, communication and public safety policy committee for the NC League of Municipalities, comprised of some 21 members across the state. His committee is working on policy changes to be sent to the legislature, he hopes by the end of May. Four committee meetings are scheduled between now and then, he said. The league's board of directors will then sign off on the committee's proposal and get it to the legislature at least by June, he said.

The gist of the league's proposal is that "towns can help build roadways if they have the funding. If smaller towns do not, the portion that DOT would have put in would be used for them, or some portion of that," Rohrbaugh said, adding that the exact proposal is not cast in stone.

As the law reads now, Cary could put in up to 15 percent of the cost of the road, to be used to purchase rights of way. But some of the right of way is already dedicated within Cary's jurisdiction, and 15 percent would not make much of an impact on the larger situation.

Then there's another frustrating situation concerning NC 55. Last year, Senator David Price got \$23 million in federal money dedicated specifically for the widening of the road, but when the money arrived in North Carolina, another state law dictated that it must be divided between the state's 14 districts. The NC 55 project ended up getting about \$1.6 million, a drop in the bucket compared to the estimated

Carpenters caught in historical trap

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Joel Carpenter opened the Texaco in June 1994. During construction, he put in a piece of road, including curb and gutter and storm drains, that was required by the town of Cary and signed off on by DOT. It is now used as an acceleration/deceleration lane for Carpenter Fire Station Road, but eventually would be part of the widening.

If NC 55 is built to the alignment proposed on DOT's preliminary maps, all of that expensive work would have to be torn out. "DOT signed off on it. They have to honor it later on, it looks like to me," Carpenter said. "It cost us a lot of money. We had to do the requirement to be able to build the store. Under the plan he's talking about, it will plow that whole thing up, that turn lane that's already there with storm drains and everything already in place. It doesn't make sense."

Most of the preliminary plan calls for taking more on the east side of N.C. 55 than the west, Carpenter said. "That's just about the only section of the widening they do on the west side. And for all practical purposes, that's where there is some development."

There is approximately 250 feet between the boundary for the historic district, which stretches to the outside of the right of way for the railroad, and the right of way on the east side of N.C. 55. That seems to be plenty of room to put in an 80-

foot section of road, especially since about 48 feet of that is already existing. But even if the view from the historic district were changed, there could be problems, Bissett said. That includes cutting down even one tree.

Joel Carpenter has trouble understanding that thinking. "There are very few trees in that right of way to begin with," he said. "You're talking about scrub pine."

The initial meeting with the historic preservation officials seemed to indicate that the trees near NC 55 would not impact the historic district, Bissett said. "From looking at aerial photos, they felt the tree coverage would still be enough, that it would not affect the view shed. There would still be enough of the canopy."

A rental mobile home would be affected if the road was moved to the east, but Carpenter Texaco and Edwards Grocery and Hardware next door would not be.

Another factor is that the area between Green Hope School Road and T.W. Alexander Drive is the only section that will have four-lane, divided highways with a 20-foot raised median. That design takes about eight feet more than the five-lane curb and gutter section which is to be built along the rest of the widening (from Green Hope School Road south to US 64 and from T.W. Alexander Drive north to Cornwallis Road).

from Cary (or another source) right of way acquisition will take until 2002 and construction would not begin until 2003. With additional financial help, construction on the project could begin as early as February of 2000.

Carpenter doesn't object to the section with the median running in front of his store, as long as he doesn't have to lose his parking lot. "It will be nice, it will be maintained, but they don't need to put us out of business to have it."

Bissett said DOT likes to put in median whenever possible because it is safer. "With 12 feet of pavement separating the lanes, it's easier to drift over," he said. It also tends to reduce access requests, forcing drivers to go to one point to cross, which is also safer, he said.

Bissett said the eight feet of additional space will not make that much difference, even in an area crunched between a historic district and gas tanks. "There is enough room that we can get out of their parking lots and get out of their islands for their gas tanks," he said.

He was unsure exactly what the alignment would be. "Some issues are still fuzzy," he said, adding, "It could go 22 feet to each side. We will do everything we can to not impact that trailer either."

Carpenter pointed out that even though there is only 250 feet between the edge of the historic district and the new road, there is a great deal more distance to any of the historic buildings.

"It is going right down in front of the old store, that's a legitimate problem. But this is a separate thing all together," he said.

"We would like to do anything we can to expedite this project," said Jay Bissett, project planning engineer with DOT. "Our consultants are working overtime. They will have the final plans ready in February of 2000."

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

EASTER EGG HUNT

Morrisville First Baptist Church will hold an Easter Egg Hunt Saturday, March 27, from 2 to 4 p.m. on the church grounds at 203 Church Street, Morrisville. The egg hunt will feature prizes and be followed by a hot dog dinner. Bring your own basket.

Admission is free and open to all. It will be held rain or shine. For more information, call 467-8317.

MORRISVILLE ROTARY CLUB

The Morrisville Rotary Club now has a permanent location, including a plaque on the wall, at the new Morrisville Golden Corral. The club meets every Tuesday at noon.

The club still lacks about three members to become permanently chartered. If interested, contact Cleve Folger at 469-2473 or Rotary President Margaret Broadwell at 467-1623.

PARENT EDUCATION EVENT

Sterling Montessori Academy is hosting a parent education event in conjunction with its April parent-faculty association meeting. The meeting will be held April 20 at 6:30 p.m. in building B on the campus on Church Street at Treybrooke Road.

School officials will give a presentation about the new Montessori Middle School. The charter school will have students through eighth grade next year. There will be openings for about 26 students at the seventh and eighth grade age level. The event is open to the public.

REVIVAL AT FIRST BAPTIST

The Bone Rattlers from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary will lead a revival at Morrisville First Baptist Church on Sunday, March 28 through Wednesday, March 31 at 7 p.m. each night.

A nursery will be provided. For

more information, call 467-8317.

PARKS, RECREATION CAMPS

Morrisville will sponsor baseball, basketball and soccer camps this Spring, and sign ups are going on now.

Net-Works basketball camp will be held May 1 and 8 or May 15 and 22 from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. A full week camp is also available. Cost of the 2-day camp is \$30; cost of the week-long camp is \$120. For non-residents, the 2-day camp is \$45 and the week-long camp is \$150.

Diamond Star baseball camp will be held July 5 through 9 or July 12 through 16 for ages 7 through 14. Fees are \$120 for residents and \$150 for non-residents.

David Allred half-day soccer camp will be held June 14 through 18 from 7:30 a.m. to noon each day. Fees for residents are \$60 and for non-residents are \$75.

SPRING CARNIVAL

Weatherstone Elementary School's Spring Carnival will be held this Saturday, March 27, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. featuring face-painting, karaoke, a moon bounce, cake walk, and many games with prizes. The carnival is one of Weatherstone's largest fundraisers. The public is invited to attend.

SERVICE AT GOOD HOPE

The Good Hope Baptist Church adult choir will present a worship experience led by music entitled "God For Us" created by Don Moen, Jack Hayford, Tom Fetke, Camp Kirkland, Randy Vader and Jay Rouse.

The evening will include a time of testimony and praise for how good God is to us. This pre-Easter musical service will be presented Sunday, March 28 at 7 p.m. Good Hope Baptist Church is located just off Morrisville-Carpenter Road and NC 55 in Cary.

Fire station opens early

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other parts of town. The ladder truck will respond town wide, Chiotakis said.

Although the station will be called Station No. 2, it will be the third station serving the growing town. The second station is in the Carpenter community west of Morrisville.

The new station is equipped with drive-through bays, which eliminate potential accidents when backing up large fire trucks, Chiotakis said.

The front half of the station consists of offices, a radio communications room and a training room. The middle part is the apparatus bay area, and the back part of the station contains sleeping quarters, showers and a kitchen.

The station was built in a more central location than a half-acre property which was traded to the town years ago in Perimeter Park. The town still owns that half acre, but has taken down the sign that says future home of Morrisville Fire Station No. 3.

Chiotakis said he would not rule out using the land for a fire station in the future, but that it was not in the location that the town needed at this time.

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