

# The Carolina Journal

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## Candidates Speak To Small Crowd, Mainly Reporters

# Few Show Up For Mayoral Forum

By Brad Rich

"Your story might be the apathy about the election right now," said mayoral candidate Ken Harris, talking informally to reporters before UNCC's Mayoral Forum held Tuesday, October 25 at 12:30 p.m. in McKnight Lecture Hall.

Harris, the Republican candidate, was commenting on the small number of students, faculty and staff members who turned out to see him and Democratic candidate Jim Whittington address the issues.

In the forum, a panel of students and professors asked the two candidates questions on issues involved in the mayoral race. Included on the panel were: Dr. Robert Mundt and Dr. Dennis Dorin of the political science department, Carolina Journal reporter Nancy Davis, and students Doug Hill and Anne Harper.

The first question, posed by Mundt, dealt with the importance of party labels in the mayoral race. Whittington said, "I am proud to be a Democrat...I have been one all of my adult life." He went on to say he has received letters of support from North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt and Senator Robert Morgan, and that he thinks a Democratic mayor would have a better position with our Democratically controlled governor's office and state legislature.

Republican Harris, on the other hand, took a lowkey position, emphasizing the fact he has not stressed his party affiliation, saying, "If I had a vote today to do away with partisan connotations in local elections, I would do it."

The next question, asked by Anne Harper, concerned whether or not the two candidates viewed the mayor's post as a figurehead position. Whittington spoke first, "The mayor must be a...leader and must gain control of the council." He said the reason he announced his candidacy right after Mayor John Belk announced he would not seek reelection was that he felt he had the leadership qualities, and I "...thought I had a unique opportunity to help Charlotte."

Harris, on the other hand, said, "The mayor's role is to give vision, to keep things in perspective...pulling forces together so that you have action taken before it's too late."

"When I was on council, I knew that I wanted to be mayor sometime," he said. Harris went on to say that the reason he announced his candidacy at this particular time was that when he looked around at the field in the election he didn't see evidence of the proper leadership. He said, "I would disagree



Republican Ken Harris



Democrat Jim Whittington

that he (Whittington) has the leadership qualities...I did not see evidence of leadership in my two years of serving on council with him."

One interesting point was made by Whittington in response to Doug Hill's question about transportation planning. Whittington spoke of the need for developing a mass transit system in Charlotte that meets the area's needs, one well integrated with the other realities of the city. He mentioned that he has been talking with local railroad officials about the possibility of establishing commuter train routes between Charlotte and other cities in the area. He said the routes would take the commuters into downtown Charlotte, where city buses would take them quickly to their destinations.

Nancy Davis asked the candidates about two proposals they have made during the campaign; Whittington's idea of building a new bus terminal on West Trade Street, and Harris' proposed new federal office building in the same area. Whittington said he felt a new bus terminal is vital for the redevelopment of the West Trade Street area. He mentioned

the success the city has had in redeveloping other parts of the downtown area, and said the work must now continue on West Trade and North Tryon because "Fourth Ward is between there." He said he feels that the bus station would fit in well with other projects as well.

Harris, though, disagreed. "How does that (the proposed terminal) change the character of West Trade?" He went on to mention that there are already two bus stations in the area, and that "they (the people of the city) need to get on a bus and travel somewhere in the city, not stay around the terminal. That's the purpose of city transit."

The forum ended with the candidates addressing the issue of liquor by the drink. Whittington said, "I have supported liquor by the drink in the past, but now it is a decision for the General Assembly...if they give us the authority to hold a local referendum, I will support it again...it would benefit the economy of the city."

Harris, however, declined to comment, saying that liquor by the drink is not an issue in the campaign.



The lack of attendance at the forum may be indicative of the lack of interest in the mayoral election.

(Mayoral Forum photos by Frank Alexander)

## Summerlin Rumored Considering Resigning

By Brad Rich

Student Legislature Chairperson Jack Summerlin may be resigning, according to Attorney General Jeff Hall and ex-legislator Richard Spain.

Hall, who has been approved for the attorney general's post by the legislature but has not yet been sworn in, said last Thursday, "Jack has been under a great deal of stress and pressure lately. There was some form of speculation about a week ago (that Summerlin was considering resigning), but he first gave his intentions at the legislature meeting Tuesday."

Hall said Summerlin did not give his chairman's report at the beginning of the meeting as he usually does, but instead gave it at the end. "That's when he made his intentions known," Hall said. He said

Summerlin mentioned that he was considering resigning, and that he was looking for a replacement.

Hall, who had left minutes before Summerlin's report, said he got his information from legislator Jimmy Twining, who was there.

Spain, an ex-legislator, was at the meeting as a proxy for Angela Threatt. Spain said Summerlin made his intentions known. "Jack felt he was running the whole show," Spain said, "and that he wasn't getting any help. He also said that he felt Chase (Idol) was not keeping his campaign promises and that he had committed some impeachable offenses."

Summerlin, contacted at his office in the student government offices, declined to comment on the situation.



At the mayoral forum, a panel of students and professors asked the candidates questions about the issues in the upcoming elections.

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