

# Town Looks for New Ways To Distribute Tax Revenue

Local merchants say they are pleased with the way the town is spending money on downtown services.

By SARAH BRIER  
Staff Writer

The Downtown Commission opened its ears to the public Tuesday evening for input on tax revenue distribution.

Local business owners and the commission met in an informal setting to discuss proposals for change in the Downtown Service District tax spending.

The tax revenue, a 6.2-cent additional tax per 100 dollars on all business real-estate, is used in services for the downtown area, said Downtown Commission Executive Director Robert Humphreys.

"The money usually goes to promotional projects for the district," Humphreys said.

Promotional events include the winter holiday parade, seasonal decora-

tions, summer events and last year's Special Olympics activities.

Other services funded with the revenue target the merchants. Marketing, recycling programs and other services are ways the commission maintains a dialogue with downtown, Humphreys said.

Town Manager Cal Horton said the downtown area needed to work with the commission on an agreement to provide services including a proposed welcome center for local businesses.

"My biggest concern is for the location of the Welcome Center," he said. "Somewhere in the old post office (137 E. Franklin St.) is an ideal location and worth looking at."

Local business owners said they were pleased with the manner in which the Downtown Commission was handling the revenue from the tax.

Chris Belcher, owner of CO Copies located at 169 E. Franklin St., said he was content with the programs on which the commission spent the money.

"What we've done for the past couple of years, we should continue," he said. "The list is rather extensive and with

such a tight budget, (the Downtown Commission) needs all the money it can get."

Chris Rice, co-owner of Carolina Brewery at 460 W. Franklin St., said he was thankful for the efforts of the Downtown Commission made possible by the tax revenue.

"I think downtown Chapel Hill continues to flourish, and the Downtown Commission does an excellent job of promoting events," he said.

The only change Rice said he would propose would be to provide additional public access parking.

"I hope the town could focus on more parking for West Franklin Street," he said. "(The Carolina Brewery) has been here for five years, and more businesses have bloomed."

Humphreys said the commission had had plans in the works for the next few months. "We are planning an event, 'Art Springs to Life in Chapel Hill', to pull together all of the April Arts events in the area."

The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.

# N.C. State Officials Say Camp-Outs Not the Ticket for Distribution

By WORTH CIVILS  
Staff Writer

A student-faculty task force at N.C. State University could meet as early as next week to discuss alternatives to the camp-out method of basketball ticket distribution.

The task force has until May 1 to submit its plan to the chancellor for approval. Some possible alternatives are a random distribution, an online system and spending the night in Reynolds Coliseum instead of outside.

Tom Stafford, vice chancellor for student affairs at N.C. State, formed the task force in February after a record number of students turned out for the ticket distribution for the game against UNC-Chapel Hill, causing problems with fires, trash and drinking.

"It looked like Sherman had just marched through Atlanta," Stafford said. "We're not going to have any more camp-outs."

UNC-CH switched its distribution policy to a random selection in 1998 after similar crowd-control problems occurred during camp-outs. The new wristband system is still in effect but might have to be tweaked, because some students have been able to remove

their wristbands and obtain more.

But many N.C. State students said they wanted to keep the camp-out because it was a fun tradition.

N.C. State Student Body President Raj Mirchandani is part of the newly established task force. "I'm definitely going to push for (the camp-out method)," he said. "It's a great tradition, and I'd like to keep it."

Mirchandani said he and other students realized the camp-out method had some problems, but they would rather try to work out the problems than do away with camp-outs altogether.

Ten students, including Mirchandani, are on the task force. He said one of the students was his chief of operations, two of them were on his athletics committee and four were student senators.

The other two student members were at the distribution for tickets to the game against UNC-CH but did not receive tickets. One of these students, Stephen Apple, said he also planned to encourage the task force to keep the camp-outs, and he hoped other students in the group would do the same.

Stafford said he would like to get input from more students via an online forum or a "town meeting."

He has already enacted one alternate

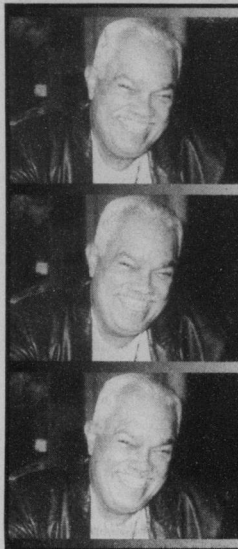
method this year - for the Duke game distribution, the only one remaining after he canceled camp-outs. Stafford said students lined up at 10 a.m. on a Saturday and randomly received tickets. The only problem was that about 50 students did not receive any, he said.

This method is one alternative the task force will consider, but an online system is another option, Stafford said. Students would indicate on a Web site that they wanted tickets. "If there are more students than available tickets, then there will be a random selection."

Stafford also said students could spend the night in Reynolds Coliseum. As students entered Reynolds, they would drop their IDs in a box. The IDs would then be randomly drawn, and the students could come up and get their tickets.

Regardless of what alternative the task force chooses, students said they would miss the camp-outs if the tradition was discontinued. "Other (methods) would work, but they would be a break in tradition," Apple said. "Camp-outs are like a big rally, having fun for a good cause - supporting the basketball team."

The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.



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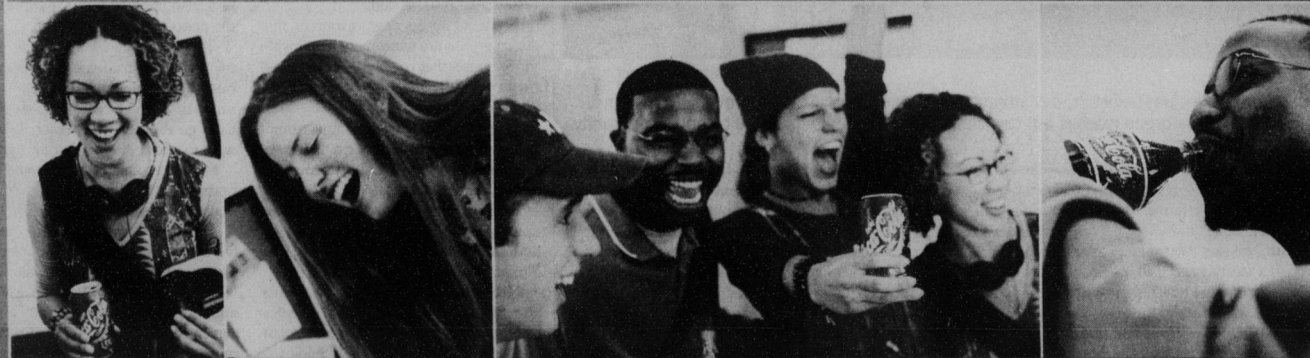


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