

Council's Action Not Due Process

To build or not to build – that was the question before the Chapel Hill Town Council on Monday night.

Development has been a hot-button issue in the town for years because the manner in which Chapel Hill grows piques the interest of politicians, business owners and residents alike.

And a huge question was laid at the Town Council's doorstep: Does Chapel Hill halt all new building until a comprehensive development ordinance can be drawn up and enacted?

The Town Council answered "yes." The matter came up last year when three petitions between May and June were submitted to the Town Council by local residents and officials. They specifically requested a moratorium on development in northeast Chapel Hill. (For those like me, who can't orient yourself with a compass, northeast Chapel Hill would be around the vicinity of U.S. 15-501 and Erwin Road.)

The net result of all proposed building is more than 88,000 square feet of new office space and 359 new homes – all around an area that is traffic hell for commuters.

Hence, residents worried about all this influx pleaded with the Town Council to put a stop to it – at least until the new development rules are set by the town, which would not be until late summer or early fall at the earliest.

But because halting any new development in a town is a move with such an immediate and wide impact, the process to put a moratorium in place is obviously a little cumbersome.

Town attorney Ralph Karpinos advised the council that public hearings would have to be held so residents and business leaders could give their input. And the town would have to put forth a strong, valid and specific reason for putting a stop to development before the moratorium could be adopted.

But the real kicker to Monday's decision by the Town Council is that for all intents and purposes, they have put a moratorium in place.

Instead of a formal moratorium, the Town Council unanimously voted to pass a resolution that keeps developers from petitioning the council until a new development ordinance is approved. Only four projects will be allowed to go forward because they already have been approved by the planning board.

Business leaders were surprised by the move. Though Mayor Kevin Foy said the resolution was not the same thing as a moratorium, Aaron Nelson, president of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce, disagreed.

"Essentially, you have achieved the effects of a moratorium without adopting it. That feels a little inappropriate." He's absolutely right.

The town has indeed effectively stopped growth until it passes the new regulations late this year. Only it did it with alarming and careless speed. The Town Council has put off approving the new development ordinance for months so they can further study the effects of the changes it will lead to in Chapel Hill.

That's prudent planning and is probably the best thing for the town in the long run. But for the council to spring a surprise on everyone by passing this resolution – instead of going through a more thorough process of implementing a moratorium – seems contradictory.

What about the effects of delaying these projects to the town?

Stopping growth has just as many impacts as growth itself. This decision was taken much too hastily. If you want to put a moratorium on development in Chapel Hill, go through the correct process. Don't use smoke and mirrors to get your way quickly and unfairly.

JONATHAN CHANEY
CITY COLUMNIST

Columnist Jonathan Chaney can be reached at jhchaney@email.unc.edu.

Town Officials Request Halt on Road Work

By BEN BROOKS
Staff Writer

The Chapel Hill Town Council voted Monday to have Mayor Kevin Foy submit a formal request that the N.C. Department of Transportation suspend its work to expand Weaver Dairy Road.

Foy, who made it part of his 2001 mayoral platform to challenge the Town Council's January 2001 decision to expand the road to three lanes, is expected to submit the request soon. The town's decision clashed with the NCDOT's wish to make the road four lanes wide.

The council's Monday night decision came in response to a report the council

received from the 25-member Citizens Committee to Study Traffic Safety Issues on Weaver Dairy Road, which was created in August 2001. The group studied the short- and long-term traffic safety issues on Weaver Dairy Road.

The committee also was charged with the task of developing traffic-calming measures. The suggestions were divided between short-term improvements that could be implemented before the current NCDOT roadwork is completed and ideas that could be incorporated into the NCDOT's long-term vision for Weaver Dairy Road.

The report, presented by committee Chairman Paul Caldwell, was divided into

four major sections: pedestrian safety, speeding, traffic flow and problems regarding traffic turning left off of the road.

Caldwell, a UNC senior, then listed the top five priority items that the committee felt the Town Council should approve immediately, including traffic light installation at various intersections and sidewalk construction along the road.

The council also heard comments from a few members of the committee. All the speakers requested that the council take action to prevent the NCDOT's planned project to widen Weaver Dairy Road, which they fear will encourage motorists to treat the road like an interstate.

After hearing the committee mem-

bers' concerns, the council amended an original resolution – requiring the committee to send its findings to the NCDOT – to include a request that the NCDOT stop its efforts on expansion of the road.

In addition, the council is going to request that the NCDOT not reallocate the funds earmarked for the expansion to other possible projects. In doing so, the council hopes to hold the money for future projects.

The committee's report will be reviewed by Town Manager Cal Horton and the town's engineering department before again being brought up before the council. The council must approve the altered report before it is sent to the

NCDOT. The transportation board, the planning board and the bicycle-pedestrian board also will review the committee's report.

The resolution passed 6-2 with council members Pat Evans and Edith Wiggins voting in opposition.

Evans said she opposed the resolution because "the amendment regarding the DOT to cease and desist their current work was sprung on us out of the blue."

Bill Stockard, assistant town manager, said it could take several months for the town staff to revise the committee's report.

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



Junior Christopher Salazar (left), freshman Leah McRae and sophomore Kirk Mason take a moment to laugh with sophomore director Michael Gagnon during a rehearsal of Company Carolina's production of "All My Sons." The play opens Friday.

'All My Sons' Showing Timely

By KRISTEN WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

Spring is typically a lighthearted time, but Company Carolina's first play of the spring semester, Arthur Miller's "All My Sons," might take audiences on a heavier emotional ride.

The play tells the story of a typical American family struggling with the loss of a son in World War II, leaving the remaining son, Chris, to adjust his idealistic views to the reality at hand. Awaiting the return of her fallen son, his mother finds herself in a country eager to forget the atrocities of war. "All My Sons" opens Friday.

In the wake of Sept. 11, the show takes on a new meaning as the country is once again dealing with loss and war.

"This is the reason why I proposed the show; it parallels the experience of World War II and September 11," said Michael Gagnon, sophomore and first-time director.

Assistant director Jenny Walker, a junior, said she believes audiences can relate to the production given America's current situation because the tragedy of war hasn't changed and also because the time period is more modern than Miller's other works.

"It's a timeless work, and I think people can

relate to it more because it's our grandparents' generation and not the Puritans," said Walker, referring to Miller's "The Crucible."

Gagnon said he has had a positive experience with the production but that it was difficult at times. His father served in the military for 22 years, so at times the play became personal.

"It's been hard sometimes because it hits too close to home, but it's provided me with a better understanding," Gagnon said.

"It's amazing because (the play) explored a lot of issues that our nation is going through

At Tuesday's meeting, architects from Clark Nexsen, the company hired to work on the renovations, presented tentative plans for the three halls. About 20 of the meeting's attendees made suggestions for changes.

The final plans will not be presented for at least several more months, said John Shurley, a Clark Nexsen designer.

Payne said a few residents' rooms might be lost in the renovations as a result of making room for the new elevators, although he said the impact on available student housing will not be significant.

He said the housing department also would like to create a two-bedroom apartment for the area director, who has a

Researchers Analyze N.C. Legislators' Votes

By DANIEL BLANK
Staff Writer

A state research group released a score card last week that graded N.C. legislators on their voting record, but some are questioning the study's validity.

Nine state representatives and 12 state senators received perfect scores from the N.C. Public Interest Research Group, an interest group that focuses on environmental issues. The grade was issued based on the legislators' votes on environmental, consumer and "good government" legislation from the 2001 session.

Eleven of the lawmakers who received perfect scores represent parts of the Triangle.

On average, representatives scored 56 percent, and senators scored 76 percent.

Nine bills on which the N.C. House voted and six bills on which the N.C. Senate voted provided the basis for the scores. The bills included reducing coal-fired power plant pollution by 70 percent, a bill allowing citizens to sue their HMOs and a bill raising fees on small, short-term loans.

Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, D-Orange, received a perfect score of 100. She attributed her score to strong personal opinions about specific issues. "The bills and issues scored are the ones that

I'm interested in, so we coincided," she said.

Kinnaird added that her score reflects her effort to serve her constituency.

But NCPiRG spokeswoman Elizabeth Ouzts said that while legislators passed several significant bills, the N.C. General Assembly does not have a perfect record in the areas deemed important by her group.

"There is certainly room for improvement in both houses," she said. "The General Assembly passed one of the strongest patients' rights bills in the country, but the House didn't take up the clean smokestacks bill."

Kinnaird said that although her work was rewarded by a high score this year, she will not rest on her laurels. "These are issues that we need to keep working on," she said. "We need to stay vigilant so that we get good environmental bills through and stop very bad environmental bills."

But legislators who received low scores questioned the importance of such a scorecard.



N.C. Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, D-Orange, attributed her perfect mark to strong opinions on the issues scored.

Both Rep. Sam Ellis, R-Wake, and Sen. David Hoyle, D-Gaston, expressed disappointment for being judged on less than 10 votes when they make more than 1,000 votes a year.

Ellis scored 22 percent, and Hoyle scored 40 percent.

Hoyle said he received a low score because he voted against the clean smokestacks bill, but he said he is an environmental advocate who has pushed similar legislation in previous years.

"I've sponsored bills to protect and preserve our environment in the past," Hoyle said. "And what did that get me (on the score card)? A zero percent probably."

Ellis said the relevance of a study with such a narrow scope is limited. "I could have a group that could come out and say, 'Sam Ellis is the most wonderful thing ever' and get a grade of 100."

But Ouzts said the score card is important because it shows people how their representatives are voting on key measures.

"Folks have to be able to find out how their representatives are voting on important issues," she said. "Obviously, they can't haul over to Raleigh every time there's an important vote."

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

Officials Discuss Plans for North Campus Halls

Construction will be designed to keep the original architectural features of Kenan, Alderman and McIver residence halls intact.

By RACHEL CLARKE
Staff Writer

Department of Housing and Residential Education officials said Tuesday that three North Campus residence halls are in the first stages of becoming more accommodating and accessible to students.

Students and staff discussed the possible future of Kenan, Alderman and McIver residence halls at a presentation Tuesday by the architects in charge of renovating those halls.

"This is a concept discussion," said Christopher Payne, director of housing and residential education, at the meeting, which was held in Kenan.

"The purpose of this session is to get ideas out there."

Housing department officials and students discussed the placement of kitchens, study lounges, offices and the area director's apartments in the three residence halls, which will be closed in spring 2003 and reopen in fall 2004.

The halls will close when Connor, Winston and Alexander residence halls are ready to reopen after they undergo similar renovations during the 2002-03 school year.

Payne said the primary purposes of the renovations are to improve the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, to install sprinklers and to make access to the buildings easier for students with disabilities.

He said an elevator will be installed in each residence hall to create access to the upper floors for students with disabilities.

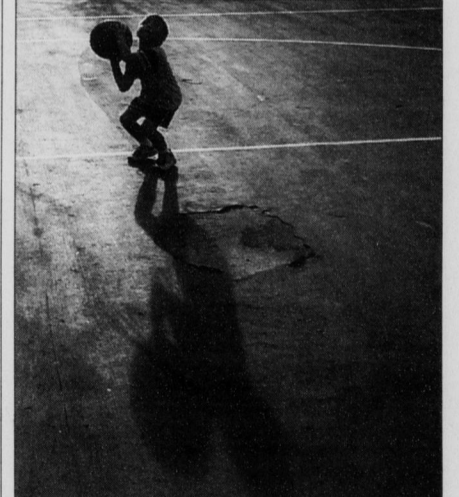
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THE WIND-UP ...



Zachary Dulabon, 5, plays basketball at Homestead Park on Tuesday, practicing his shot on a 10-foot goal. Dulabon has been playing for six months.

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