

Lax OWASA Enforcement Not Enough

Take two-minute showers. Turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth. Water your lawn only on specified days. Yeah, yeah, the water restrictions are annoying. But while these Orange Water and Sewer Authority restrictions have been imposed and encouraged, they have not been enforced by the Chapel Hill Police Department. Basically, following those restrictions is up to you.



CAROLYN PEARCE
CITY COLUMNIST

But meanwhile, the drought keeps getting worse. The water supply is estimated to be 127 days. If we don't get any rain for the next 127 days, we could be coming home from Winter Break, turning on our faucets and watching a whole lot of nothing come out.

Sounds pretty extreme, huh? Well, obviously not extreme enough for Chapel Hill and OWASA officials to start enforcing water use restrictions.

OWASA can impose regulations, upgrade to Stage 3 restrictions, insist that reservoirs are drying up, and chances are people still won't take it seriously — unless it starts punishing overusers. For every person who is conscientiously taking those two-minute showers, there is someone washing his car in the driveway.

If he knew he would be getting a ticket in his mailbox for water overuse, he might think twice about running the hose in his yard. But chances are, he isn't going to get one. Because the Chapel Hill police have not issued a single water overuse citation this year.

According to police spokeswoman Jane Cousins, the Chapel Hill Police Department coordinates its activities with OWASA and reports any violations it receives directly to OWASA.

But OWASA Executive Director Ed Kervin said the Chapel Hill Police Department has the exclusive authority to enforce the violations. Cousins said the police will usually respond to overuse calls by going out to the sites and informing the parties of their violations. "Most of the violations are from people who don't know the (water restriction) rules," Cousins said.

Wow. You'd have to be living in a pretty deep, dark hole not to realize that we are in a serious drought — and it might not be a good idea to water your lawn for hours in the middle of the day. And even this slap on the wrist probably won't force these water-wasters to suddenly follow the rules.

It needs to be OWASA's responsibility to monitor and deal with the overuse and encourage Chapel Hill police to readily make citations if necessary. If there is blatant misuse by a customer, they need to deal with it more thoroughly than issuing a warning to the violators.

Soak up these facts — this weekend's 3 to 4 inches of rain hardly contributed to the supply in the area's reservoirs. University Lake is still 5 feet below full, and Cane Creek is 15 feet below full.

The time to start enforcing is now because uninformed people will assume the recent rains have alleviated the drought problems. Some will relax their water use and go back to not conserving.

OWASA officials will meet Thursday night to consider upgrading to Stage 3 restrictions. But if they continuously fail to enforce the restrictions, moving to Stage 3 does little good. The people who have been conserving will continue to conserve, and those who are wasteful will continue to be wasteful.

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Group Opposes Restaurant Growth

By JOHN FRANK
Assistant University Editor

Property rights of a popular restaurant and a campus ministry were the underlying question at the heart of a debate Tuesday night at the Chapel Hill Planning Board meeting over the possible expansion of Lucy's Restaurant.

Officials at the adjacent Presbyterian Campus Ministries told board members that the restaurant's loud, festive crowd had "immediately and substantially" disrupted members' efforts to hold prayer services earlier this year.

Lucy's co-owner Norman Bullard said his restaurant, located on the corner of Henderson and East Rosemary streets, has the right to expand its business within the limits of its property and zoning permit.

The debate came after Lucy's submitted an application asking the planning board to approve the addition of a second bar to an upstairs balcony area.

Church officials say the upstairs bar would be at eye level with the second-floor multipurpose room that UNC students commonly use as a place of quiet study and personal reflection.

Chapel Hill planning staff recommended the application's approval, but after the hour and 15 minute debate uncovered a variety of unresolved issues, the board members voted unanimously to table the issue until its Oct. 1 meeting.

Under Lucy's plan, the restaurant will eliminate two upstairs residences, converting the area and balcony into additional seating and bar space.

Lucy's used the balcony space until last fall when church officials filed an

inquiry with the town concerning the legal use of the space.

Bullard said the use of the upstairs space centers on Thursday night, when the restaurant hosts the John Bunting Radio Show.

The crowd drawn by the show, in addition to the steady stream of students who patronize Franklin Street area bars Thursday nights, conflicts with programs hosted the same night by the Presbyterian Campus Ministries.

The church group holds a dinner for about 40 to 80 members from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. that is followed by various prayer

services.

But senior Lauren Rothwell said the noise from the restaurant is disruptive more than just Thursday nights. "We cannot hear one another and cannot concentrate on God and our worship," said Rothwell, a member of the Presbyterian Campus Ministries.

Nearly 50 people joined Rothwell at the planning board meeting to show their displeasure with the restaurant's expansion plans.

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"We are not trying to be a bad neighbor. Our attempt is to protect our program."

REV. ROBERT DUNHAM
Presbyterian Campus Ministries

ACT Discusses Public Transportation

Night parking might be in future

By MEREDITH NICHOLSON
Assistant University Editor

Members of the newly formed Advisory Committee on Transportation met Tuesday to discuss potential improvements to public transportation.

Although discussion at Tuesday's meeting was only preliminary, committee members stressed the need to craft workable options.

Todd Peterson, chief operating officer of UNC Hospitals, said members need to strive to make recommendations that are practical and will be effective. "I don't think we can dabble in public transit."

Committee members debated solutions to problems like overcrowded buses and bus schedules that do not run early or late enough for some riders.

Tommy Griffin, president of the Employee Forum, said buses to park-and-ride lots do not run late enough for some employees who arrive during business hours but work late into the night.

"It's hard to use park-and-ride if you don't have a way to get back to your car at 10, 11, 12 o'clock at night," he said.

Griffin said employees also have problems with bus schedules during the summer because the buses run on a shortened schedule.

Other members said students and employees have a hard time riding buses during peak hours of the morning when buses often run late or are full, leaving would-be riders at the bus stop as they drive by at full capacity.

Peterson said employees are reluctant to take this chance because they know that they could



Advisory Committee on Transportation member Tammy McHale (right) poses a question at the meeting Tuesday.

lose their job for repeated tardiness. "Unless it's really reliable, you eliminate a large segment of the target audience."

Student Body President Jen Daum said many students are reluctant to ride the buses because they often fill up at the first stop — many times a large apartment complex or park-and-ride lot — leaving the students relying on these buses standing on the side of the road watching the overcrowded bus drive away.

Committee members also discussed the possibility of revisiting discussions about night parking permit systems.

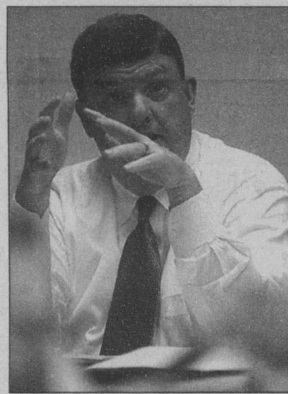
University Police Chief Derek Poarch said ACT has a responsibility to discuss all options, includ-

ing such a system.

But Poarch said committee members will not be creating a detailed night parking permit system.

Poarch said members will continue to discuss the issue philosophically. They are not planning to institute anything short term, but it would be irresponsible to plan for the next five years without discussing the option, he said.

Colin Christian, a graduate student representative to ACT, said many graduate students think their contributions as both students and instructors are being undervalued by attempts to institute a night parking permit system, he said.



DPS Director Derek Poarch speaks during the ACT meeting Tuesday.

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Greek Affairs Stresses Fire Code Compliance in Frats

Efforts are under way to fix the problems

By JEFF SILVER
Assistant University Editor

Two UNC fraternities were cited for a number of fire code violations that greatly exceeded that of other houses during the spring 2002 semester.

Though officials call the numbers troubling, they say efforts are under way to fix the problems.

Sigma Alpha Epsilon was cited for 49 fire code violations, and Zeta Psi was cited for 27, according to a report from UNC's Office of Greek Affairs. The average for all houses was 5.7 violations.

Jay Anhorn, Greek affairs director, said he is troubled by last semester's violations. "I'm definitely concerned about the groups that have large numbers."

Anhorn said the problems were cited by the Chapel Hill Fire Department on a scheduled first visit in the spring. If any violations are noted during routine vis-

its, the department returns within a couple of weeks. "They have to clarify and fix all the problems," Anhorn said.

Officials from the Chapel Hill Fire Department and Zeta Psi fraternity could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Charlie Farris, president of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, said most of his chapter's 49 violations are from holes in the walls of the house, each of which counts as a violation. But he said the sheer amount of violations requires the fraternity to take actions. "Forty-nine violations is ridiculous," he said.

Anhorn said his department is taking steps to improve fire code compliance at

UNC's fraternities and sororities.

This year, each house's president must attend mandatory fire training with the group's fire marshal, who was required to attend in the past.

Fire code violations have been a topic of much discussion since a fire at the Phi Gamma Delta house killed five students in 1996. Following the fire, the Chapel Hill Town Council ordered that all Greek houses install fire sprinklers by November of last year.

Council member Dorothy Verkerk said she is disappointed that the fraternities still record high numbers of violations. "It's disheartening that, despite

our vigilance, people aren't taking this seriously," she said.

Alcohol violations also were listed in the Greek report. Both Sigma Alpha Epsilon and Zeta Psi were two of the three fraternities cited for alcohol violations in the spring semester; Kappa Alpha was the other fraternity cited.

When asked if there is any possible connection between the alcohol citations and the fire code violations, Anhorn said, "You can draw your own conclusions about that."

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