

BOARD EDITORIALS

WORK IN PROGRESS

Chapel Hill leaders must show whether red light cameras recently installed are an effective tool for improving safety around the town.

Civil liberties are of great importance, but they shouldn't preempt safety as the town considers the fate of a potentially lifesaving traffic program.

The SafeLight program, a camera system that monitors red lights and issues citations when drivers run them, has received considerable criticism of late — particularly from self-appointed crusader Will Raymond.

The local resident planned to petition the Chapel Hill Town Council on Monday night to stop further installation of the cameras, which he says violate drivers' privacy and other civil liberties.

The cameras already are in place at two intersections within the town, and a third is scheduled to start operating Dec. 1.

While the council should monitor the use and effectiveness of the cameras, it should not stop their installation without a thorough review.

Unfortunately, last week's local elections indicate that the council might not give the cameras a fair shake.

Three of the four council members elected Nov. 4 — incumbent Bill Strom and newcomers Sally Greene and Cam Hill — opposed the cameras. Mayor Kevin Foy, who was re-elected last week, also opposes the cameras.

The results of the election could put the future of the cameras in jeopardy since a majority of the incoming council opposes the program.

Council member Mark Kleinschmidt said he will petition the body to get rid of the cameras once the new members get to work in January.

Raymond and Kleinschmidt certainly have raised some important concerns about the SafeLight camera program, not the least of which is the potential increase of rear-end accidents at intersections with cameras.

Raymond said drivers might be more inclined to

brake suddenly to avoid getting a citation, causing drivers without enough time to react to hit them.

While his assertion seems logical, more hard evidence is required to establish a relationship between red light cameras and an increasing number of rear-end collisions.

Several other municipalities, including some in California, Hawaii and Maryland, have conducted studies indicating a slight increase in the number of rear-end collisions after cameras were installed.

But Chapel Hill leaders should be allowed to continue examining the program as it works in the town.

The SafeLight program only has been running since early September, and officials should wait to pass judgment on it until better data is available before taking any action.

Kleinschmidt said in an interview Monday that he will ask town leaders to conduct research in order to determine the effectiveness of red light cameras in improving safety at the intersections where they are installed.

It is important to analyze the success of the SafeLight program, although it is premature to call for the removal of the cameras.

The council certainly should revisit the issue if citations are being abused or if the program is shown to be ineffective.

Still, the potential benefits of the cameras are already clear. In Charlotte, which has had cameras in place since August 1998, officials have credited the cameras with the reducing the number and severity of crashes at intersections.

Chapel Hill potentially could see similar benefits, but officials will never know if the program is stopped in its tracks.

Throwing out a promising initiative before adequate research is performed is not only a bad idea — it could compromise safety.

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"Even when laws have been written down they ought not always to remain unaltered."

ARISTOTLE, GREEK PHILOSOPHER

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Dana Summers, Tribune Media Services



COMMENTARY

Franklin Street's spectacles, charm missing nowadays

I remember when Franklin Street used to be a circus. I remember when that street was the wildest thing I had ever seen.

There were longhaired Gypsies on the sidewalk with violins and accordions.

Another man with a formula for painting with pots and pans. A woman with a basket of flowers and a long face.

One Charles Manson look-alike who cackled in the alleyways and harassed pizza store owners for access to their bathrooms.

An overly honest homeless man who admitted that he just wanted some money to buy booze and drugs.

Three guys banged on bongo drums while another played a song on his guitar that didn't really have a melody or a chorus.

All of it came together like ragged rock 'n' roll by a band of players with wild senses of humor and no real ear for harmony. But their voices seemed to fit together exactly like they were supposed to.

Sloppy country harmony. That's what I've come to call it. Franklin Street was full of sloppy country harmony.

It was the cultural and community festival that made Chapel Hill a magical place for kids who didn't know anything but run-down warehouses and cheap strip malls and kaput theaters with dusty ticket booths from back home.

I dove into the big, smoldering cauldron that was Franklin Street early and often, spending my idle afternoons on its cluttered streets. It smelled like cooking food and brewing coffee and pretzels and funnel cakes.

Sometimes I felt like I was walking through Busch Gardens, and I expected a couple of German



BILLY BALL
FOR KIDS WHO CAN'T READ GOOD

girls to dance up to me and offer me a piping hot plate of kielbasa.

Perhaps Ninth Street in Durham is closest to the opposite of Franklin Street. It's dark, it smells like urine and it shuts down at about 9 p.m.

My only experience eating on Ninth Street immediately was followed by the surfacing of my cook's lewd treatment of pizza dough during his spare time.

That's all I have to say about that. The point is that Ninth Street made me appreciate the enchanting power of Chapel Hill. But something's different on Franklin Street now.

All the mediocre musicians are gone, and they took their slightly off-key voices and meandering hippie melodies with them. The last I saw of the painter, he was being asked by Chapel Hill police to clean his things off the sidewalk. Charles Manson must have found easier bathrooms to prey upon, because I haven't seen him in any dank alleys — it's hard to get your fix of pure evil these days.

The only consistent faces on Franklin Street are the honest homeless man, the Flower Lady and huge Gap models with pants that hang off them just right. I can't stand their ironed hair and chalky smiles. There's nothing sloppy about their harmony.

Halloween is the only time when the real freaks come out to Franklin Street, and they're just

"I remember when (Franklin Street) was the wildest thing I had ever seen."

mean, drunk freaks.

I want beaming freaks who think the accordion sounds good with bongo drums. I want freaks who've gloriously overestimated. I want some dirty old man who calls himself Batman to cackle at me from the alley and creep me out just enough to appreciate the warmth of my bed.

Recently, my friend did the street and me a great service. He's the type of guy to go by a last name alone and the type of guy to enjoy a wrestling match in the fountain in front of Bynum Hall.

He came up to my room one day wearing a swimming cap, blue jeans and a T-shirt spray-painted entirely red. His jeans were crusted and stiff from the paint.

He had with him a wad of bills he earned miming on Franklin Street — not as the type of mime that dances all over the place, but the type of mime that doesn't move at all.

In that moment, he looked like a spray-painted ray of hope for my favorite Gypsy street.

He gave the money he had made to the homeless shelter and made a vow to do it again whenever he gets a chance.

He wasn't doing it for money. He was doing it for the love of a spectacle, and a spectacle is just what that street needs.

Contact Billy Ball at wball@email.unc.edu.

MORE SPACE FOR ALL

A proposal to limit how many times student organizations can reserve large meeting rooms would make the process more fair for all groups.

For many student organizations, reserving one of the University's large meeting rooms can be as hard as finding a "Doherty's Disciples" T-shirt lying around.

Under the current room reservation policy, there are absolutely no restrictions on the amount of spaces any organization can book per semester.

Consequently, large and influential student groups have mastered the art of booking large spaces at the beginning of the semester, leaving no room for many of the more than 550 officially recognized organizations on campus.

In an appropriate and long overdue step, the Events Planning Office and the Carolina Union board of directors have crafted a policy that should alleviate this problem.

The new policy, which could be enacted during the board of directors' meeting this week, would limit groups wanting to schedule an event in either 100 Hamilton Hall and 209 Manning Hall to use the rooms only once per week.

Groups also would be allowed to reserve 111 Carroll Hall, the Hanes Art Center auditorium, Gerrard Hall and the Union Auditorium only 10 times per semester.

The change in policy comes at a good time. Large meeting spaces on campus are at a premium, especially with the closing of Memorial Hall and a large portion of the Student Union.

While we wait for such projects to be completed, student groups must cooperate to ensure that every organization has an equal opportunity to use large spaces for meetings or group events.

Under the current rules, this all too often is not the case.

Many large campus groups have used their organizational ability to book these rooms early and often.

If the new rules are adopted, these groups will have to be more creative in finding locations for their members to meet.

Although having to rotate meeting places during the semester could be annoying, it should by no means cripple campus organizations.

However, like any campus policy, leaders must be prepared to review the effectiveness of the rules.

One sure test will come once the renovation of the Union is complete and the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History opens. Both the facilities will increase the number of meeting spaces available to campus groups and will alleviate pressure for space.

And it is important to make sure that in limiting how many times groups can reserve large meeting rooms, spots on campus aren't left empty.

Thankfully, it seems that officials already seem to understand this important concept.

The new rules would allow any group to claim a room if it has not been reserved 30 days prior.

However, officials should keep a close eye on how often spaces are used, making sure that the large rooms at the University are being used to their fullest capacity.

The policy changes will not eliminate the first-come, first-serve policy of room reservations — and that might not be such a bad thing.

Maintaining competition for campus space almost guarantees that groups will fight for the rooms and keep campus active even after class time is over.

No one will complain when the space problem on campus lets up.

For now, though, Events Planning and the Union board of directors should approve the proposed policy changes and put them in place for next semester. They might be burdensome, but it is only fair.

EDITORS' NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions of solely The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board, which were reached after open debate. The board consists of eight board members, the assistant editorial page editor, the editorial page editor and the DTH editor. The 2003-04 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

READERS' FORUM

Town residents want UNC to live up to its agreements

TO THE EDITOR:

Your post-election editorial, "Looking Forward," misses the point concerning town-gown relations.

None of the candidates, nor current officials for that matter, holds any "strong dislike of UNC." Rather, I suspect just the opposite is true.

What town officials, candidates and residents (including many University employees and staff) have grown frustrated with is the UNC administration's record of renegeing on agreements during the past several years.

These were arrangements designed to make UNC and the town better places to live, work and study. But UNC went back on its agreement to support a non-widening upgrade of South Columbia Street, derailing the Department of Transportation's work on the project designed to make the street safer and more accessible for walkers and bikers.

UNC did not honor its promise of providing "a bed for every new head," forcing more students off-campus and placing more pressure on local affordable housing.

And UNC's insistence on building new parking decks on campus — in contradiction with their agreed upon development plan — puts in question their commitment

to a low-traffic, walkable campus.

Most Chapel Hillians have great affection for the University and are proud to have it as the center of our town.

What we do expect from UNC's administration is to make good on its agreements with and commitments to the town. And what we hope for is that our University realizes the opportunity it has and will lead by splendid, unimpeachable example.

It would be wonderful if editorials in The Daily Tar Heel would nudge UNC in that direction.

DTH coverage of blacks needs some improvement

TO THE EDITOR:

As a freshman here at UNC, I find The Daily Tar Heel's coverage of the African-American community appalling.

It seems me that when you do cover any "newsworthy" stories that have anything to do with the African-American community, the articles seem to have a negative connotation.

Besides the fact that your story on Nov. 6 on the falling SAT scores at several state historically black colleges and universities is not newsworthy to the UNC community, the subheadline does not present a positive connotation of the

black community.

Nowhere in the article do you mention the relevance of this story to the UNC community or the Chapel Hill community at large. So why is it on the front-page?

And when you do cover stories in a positive light of blacks it ends up in a brief, as just an afterthought.

Also, I have never seen any coverage of events sponsored by the Black Cultural Center.

I don't believe your paper is prejudiced; it just might be an unintentional oversight.

The negative portrayal of blacks is a common trend in contemporary media, however, this doesn't justify your doing so.

I think the DTH needs to re-evaluate their portrayal of the black community.

Claire Stackhouse
Freshman
Journalism and Mass
Communication

Recent ban on partial-birth abortions a smart move

TO THE EDITOR:

The partial-birth abortion letter to the editor from Friday shows the exact one-way thinking that has made liberals lose so much support nationwide.

Not only do the authors disregard the rights of the whole, but she (like most other liberals) can-

not stand a country that is becoming more conservative every day.

The banning of these abortions does not take the United States back to the "intolerable era of illegal abortion" as she states, but rather is our country taking a step in the right direction by taking away this cruel and inhumane procedure.

Furthermore, the statistics show that this is not just a personal belief of the president, but of most of the U.S. Congress.

This bill passed in the House by an astonishing vote of 281-142 and in the Senate 64-34. Not only does this show a strong acceptance of the bill in both houses of Congress, but it also means that both Republicans AND Democrats are voting to ban this horrific procedure.

This ban does not show a return to an "intolerable era," but rather a step in the right direction in which the rights of unborn children, not just their mothers, are looked upon and recognized.

As for those on campus who are offended that this passed: Get over it, you should realize that this is a very moral and just law. As for me, I'm going to bed happy that Congress is finally passing meaningful laws under a conservative majority.

Billy Constanagy
Sophomore
Political Science

Attention:

Are you interested in occupying your very own soapbox once a week in the form of a weekly column? In influencing the stances of The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board? In drawing editorial cartoons?

If so, your time has come. The DTH editorial page now is hiring all positions for the spring semester.

We will be hiring three news analysis columnists and two at-large columnists. Positions as cartoonists and on the DTH Editorial Board also are open.

Applications are available at the front desk of the DTH office in Suite 104 of the Student Union.

Applications are due in the DTH office by 5 p.m. Monday, Nov. 24. Decisions will be announced on this page Monday, Dec. 1.

If you have any questions, please e-mail Nathan Denny at ndenny@email.unc.edu.

TO SUBMIT A LETTER: The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments.

Letters to the editor should be no longer than 300 words and must be typed, double-spaced, dated and signed by no more than two people. Students should include their year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff should include their title, department and phone number. The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Publication is not guaranteed. Bring letters to the DTH office at Suite 104, Carolina Union, mail them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515 or e-mail them to editdesk@unc.edu.

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