

Carrboro weighs myriad options for its new park

Residents offer input on usage

BY SHANNAN BOWEN
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

Recreation, education and preservation are a few of the uses Carrboro residents proposed for the town's Hillsborough Road Neighborhood Park on Saturday morning at a community input session.

Representatives from Site Solutions, the design firm constructing the park, heard suggestions from more than 50 residents and allowed those attending to vote on both their most unwanted and preferred structures and amenities.

The most popular suggestion was the construction of a neighborhood swimming pool in Carrboro.

"It gets pretty hot here," said resident Koreen Billman. "With three kids, we've looked for a pool. It would be wonderful to have a pool nearby, even if we have to pay."

But many residents were quick

to say that Hillsborough Road might not be the best location for a swimming pool.

Carrboro Mayor Mike Nelson said that although a swimming pool has been a top priority for Carrboro, funds and an available location has kept one from being built. "They're very expensive to do."

Two years ago, the town estimated a cost of \$2 million for a standard neighborhood swimming pool, Nelson said.

"We are determined on getting a swimming pool, but a swimming pool might or might not be the best thing for this park," he said.

On the list of choices, an outdoor pool received 11 favorable votes and 11 unfavorable votes, but an indoor pool was unanimously voted down.

Other ideas for recreation included outdoor pingpong and tennis tables, multipurpose playing fields and picnic shelters. Only three residents voted for a playground as a desired option, and one resident listed it as an unwanted feature.

Some residents leaned toward using the Hillsborough Road park

as an educational center where families could learn about species in the area, such as deer and birds, and study natural resources and plant life.

Carrboro Alderman Jacquelyn Gist suggested building a bird identification center at the edge of the park, along with nature information stations.

There were 17 votes for low-impact use of the park, which some say will preserve the area and provide use for residents of all ages.

Resident Giles Blunden said a less-structured park would provide a quieter, more pacifying type of recreation.

"We have a lot of constructed parks," he said. "An open field serves a lot of options."

Anita Jones-McNair, Carrboro director of parks and recreation, said that there is no timetable for the completion of the park but that the votes will be tallied this week at a meeting with Site Solutions, who then will develop several conceptual plans to be released in March.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Shiite protest sends message

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Tens of thousands of Shiite Muslims marched in Baghdad on Monday to demand early elections, the biggest public display of Shiite political power here since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's Sunni-dominated regime.

The protest aimed to send a message to the United Nations and the White House that Shiites will not accept a U.S. formula for transferring power by July 1 to a legislature selected in regional caucuses instead of by a direct vote as the Shiite clergy demand.

Hours after the march, U.S. and Iraqi officials asked the United Nations to send a team to study the possibility of holding elections in Iraq. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he wanted more details but acknowledged the issue was urgent. He said he hoped to make a speedy decision.

The protesters, estimated by reporters at as many as 100,000, carried posters of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani, Iraq's most influential Shiite cleric, whose opposition to the U.S. plan threatens to delay the July 1 deadline for the end of the U.S.-led occupation.

Al-Sistani also wants an elected assembly to ratify security accords governing the presence of coalition troops after July 1 as well as an interim constitution to take effect until a

final charter can be drafted and ratified in 2005. Shiites are believed to comprise about 60 percent of Iraq's 25 million people. U.S. authorities cannot afford to alienate a community that generally has avoided attacks on coalition forces so far.

Of the protests, Bremer said in New York, "There are demonstrations all the time, some of them not always very friendly to the coalition, I might add, but they're

peaceful and we welcome it."

U.S. officials insist early elections are not feasible because of Iraq's precarious security situation, the absence of an election law and the lack of voter rolls. An election also could hand power to well-organized groups such as remnants of Hussein's now-banned Baath party and religious extremists rather than Iraqis willing to cooperate with the coalition.

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Questions? Contact Lora Wical at wical@unc.edu.



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President speech set for today

Will ask Congress for spending cuts

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — President Bush put the finishing touches Monday on a State of the Union speech that calls for modest expansions of voter-friendly programs while telling Congress to curb spending in the face of record-breaking budget deficits.

Between rehearsals for the Tuesday evening address, he told reporters, "I'm almost finished, in case you're interested."

Bush will open his address with remarks on national security, then move into domestic priorities, contrary to past practice, aides say. He will urge Americans to back him on the war on terrorism, arguing that the path he has chosen, including invading Iraq, is the right one.

In a CBS-New York Times poll earlier this month, people were about equally divided over his handling of foreign policy. But less than half said the U.S. death toll in Iraq, which has climbed past 500 amid continuing violence, was worth it.

The second half of Bush's speech focuses on domestic priorities, with an emphasis on the economy. He will seek to convince Americans that his series of tax cuts has turned the economy around and that he is now turning his attention to job creation, aides said.

Education sources have said he'll call for new job-training grants channeled through community colleges to help prepare workers for a changing economy.

Protests mark MLK events

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — U.S. citizens observed Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Monday with some activists claiming that the war in Iraq and other Bush administration policies run counter to what the civil rights leader stood for.

"We have to be concerned not just about us. We have to be concerned about all our brothers and sisters throughout our nation and world," King's son Martin Luther King III said in a service at Ebenezer Baptist Church, where his father preached until he was assassinated in 1968.

"How many Iraqi children have been killed? When will the war end? We all have to be concerned about terrorism, but you will never end terrorism by terrorizing others."

Activities included an affirmative action rally in Michigan, volunteering campaigns in Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia and a Florida protest against a speech by the president's brother.

Criticisms of President Bush popped up in several places.

In Boston, the first woman bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Rev. Vashti Murphy McKenzie, said the nation should adjust its priorities. "We can find billions of dollars to rebuild Iraq and Afghanistan and we cannot find the money to rebuild the infrastructure of the United States," she said.

Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin brought forth a standing ovation when she referred to a visit Bush made last week to King's tomb. The visit was picketed by almost 800 people who said the president should not have come because his policies are inconsistent with King's principles of nonviolence.

Referring to the president, Franklin said, "Perhaps some prefer to honor the dreamer while ignoring or fighting the dream."

But amid the criticisms was a tone of hope. Martin Luther King III told congregants that his father would have wanted people to work together for peace and justice even when they seem impossible to achieve. "He had a policy of zero tol-

erance for despair and cynicism."

At the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, hundreds marched in support of the school's affirmative action policy, which is under fire from a group that wants voters to decide in a Nov. 2 referendum.

In Tallahassee, Fla., a group of college students protested the holiday speech by Gov. Jeb Bush, the president's brother. Gov. Bush was invited to speak at historically black Florida A&M University, but students unhappy with his policies walked out before his speech. They criticized his views on affirmative action, among other things.

The governor said the students have every right to express their views. He also said Florida A&M's success "could not have occurred without the struggles that Dr. King and many others a generation ago undertook."

In Washington volunteers helped the homeless, delivered meals to homebound people and took part in other projects, saying the best way to honor King's legacy was to give back to the community.

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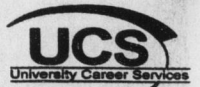
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