

# Town continues storm cleanup

BY SHANNAN BOWEN  
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

Several Orange County services are cancelled or delayed today because of consistent temperatures at or below the freezing point that keep Sunday's combination of ice, freezing rain and snow masking roadways, officials said.

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools have cancelled classes today, with staff reporting at 10 a.m., and Orange County government offices are operating on a one-hour delay, opening at 9 a.m.

Chapel Hill town staff are clearing roads on a priority system, said Bill Terry, acting director for the Chapel Hill Public Works Department.

Bridges and major thoroughfares are cleared in the first phase,

he said, followed by neighborhood roads and parking lots in the second phase.

As of Tuesday afternoon, Terry said, primary roads are mostly clear, but work on secondary roads would not begin until early this morning.

Terry said the department began the snow-removal process by spreading salt and sand on major roadways and steep hills Sunday morning in preparation for icy weather.

But that didn't prevent the snow from covering streets completely. Terry said the department typically begins using its eight snow plows after 2 to 3 inches have fallen, which occurred late Sunday night.

"It's always frustrating. ...

Mother Nature is a fierce opponent sometimes," he said.

Chris Peterson, Carrboro Public Works director, said the town's staff follows the same type of procedure, but he said staff did not salt roadways before the wintry mix began.

Peterson said the town hired a private contractor, Mellott Contractors & Supply, to assist its three snow-blade trucks, three motor graders and three back-hoes that have been working since Sunday afternoon.

He said most of the town's major roadways are clear and the department expects secondary roads cleared by midday Thursday. "When you have this kind of ice, it takes this long," he said.

Nick Waters, director for Orange County Emergency Management, said there were 150 wrecks reported in Orange County on Sunday, 26 Monday and 15 Tuesday afternoon, not including three reported to the Highway Patrol.

In addition to wrecks, Waters said there were eight sledding accidents in Orange County and very few health incidents, mostly related to breathing problems.

"Most weather-related accidents are the result of driving too fast or stopping too fast," he said. "Sledders need to watch for cars, and cars need to watch for sledders, because that's not a pleasant mix."

Contact the City Editor at [citydesk@unc.edu](mailto:citydesk@unc.edu).

# Petitions disclose merger opposition

More than 1,500 against school plan

BY ERIN GIBSON  
STAFF WRITER

A recent petition to gauge opinions about the possible school merger shows an overwhelming opposition among town residents.

The petition gathered 1,520 signatures against the merger of Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and Orange County Schools, with only 50 in favor of it.

Two versions of the petition were available online at <http://www.4schools.us>. Residents were encouraged to print out both copies and ask people to sign one.

Susan Payne and Pang Yao, steering committee members of <http://NoMerger.org>, developed the petition.

county schools.

"My personal view is to address the issue directly," said Yao. "If funding is the issue, we need to address funding, and we don't think a merger is the solution."

Residents also had the option of signing another petition online. Jay Brenman, steering committee member, created the Web site <http://www.petitiononline.com/27599> when talk of a merger first surfaced to get a feel for residents' opinions.

"I didn't know how unpopular the merger was when I started the petition," Brenman said. "Everything just seemed to be moving too fast, and the commissioners weren't listening."

His petition also showed a majority of people were opposed to the merger. The number of signatures is constantly changing but more than 1,100 people have signed.

"It became crystal clear that 75 (percent) to 80 percent do not want the schools merged," Brenman said.

But Fair Funding In County Schools, a pro-merger group in Orange County, has been working for many years to get better funding in county schools in the best possible way. "No one was jumping for merger, but we did want more money," said Jack Nestor, FFICS member. "Merger looked like the only way to get it. But we'll fight for it either way."

Nestor said FFICS is meeting with people in the community and regrouping now, but will come out with their position soon. "We will consider the merger and fair funding to find a pragmatic way of how to achieve that (funding)," Nestor said.

Only three commissioners need to vote in favor of the merger for it to pass, although no vote is scheduled anytime soon.

# Pell Grant freeze exacerbates tuition burden

BY NIRAV VORA  
STAFF WRITER

U.S. Congress' decision not to increase the maximum Pell Grant award now shifts the burden of soaring tuition costs to state funding.

The omnibus spending bill that passed the Senate last Thursday did not increase the maximum Pell Grant allocation from its current \$4,050 per grant. Federal Pell Grants provide need-based funding for undergraduates that does not have to be paid back.

Clara Lovett, president of the American Association of Higher Education, said the frozen Pell Grant maximum will hurt college diversity and accessibility.

"The Pell Grants are so important for middle- and low-income students," Lovett said. "They should have at least been increased for inflation."

Inflation is low this year, but the cost of higher education is rising rapidly. "It will probably hurt students who go to community colleges and regional schools," she said.

Gretchen Bataille, UNC-system senior vice president for academic affairs, said students who rely on Pell Grants and other forms of student aid for college will not be affected negatively. "Students in North Carolina have been able to continue to afford higher education," she said.

Bataille said there is a percep-

tion that tuition increases will make college less affordable and that there are students who do not attempt to apply because of their income bracket.

She added that the state is trying to counter that perception with billboards and advertisements for the College Foundation of North Carolina, a nonprofit, state-run consortium of organizations that helps state residents find ways to pay for college.

The amount of state funding for financial aid has to increase, since schools consider it a priority. But that means that other things, such as faculty salary increases, will have to suffer, Bataille said.

Vince Amoroso, deputy director

of scholarships and student aid at UNC-Chapel Hill, said Pell Grants are important to financial aid. "We'd like to see that amount increase whenever possible, since the cost of college tuition rises each year," he said.

But students relying on financial aid to attend UNC-CH will not be affected by rising tuition costs, Amoroso said, because 35 percent of the funds gained from UNC-CH's proposed tuition hikes are set to fund more financial aid.

Money for Pell Grants is not determined by costs but by available funding in federal budgets.

During the 2002-03 school year, the number of students at UNC-CH with Pell Grants was 2,199. The average award was \$2,572.

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CORRECTION

A page 3 article in Tuesday's paper incorrectly stated that University officials had approved a smoking ban proposed by the Residence Hall Association. The ban has not yet been approved.

To report an error contact Managing Editor Daniel Thigpen at [dthigpen@email.unc.edu](mailto:dthigpen@email.unc.edu).

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(Assistance with calculation of taxes and preparation of tax forms)

Note: Volunteers are trained to assist those with Gross Household incomes of \$50,000 or less, who do NOT itemize deductions and who are not self-employed. In addition, we are sorry that we do not have appropriate training to assist those holding international visas.

Two locations on campus: for appointment, call 1-888-265-1721. Appointments are encouraged, but not required.

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|            |                     |                |
|------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Mondays:   | February 2, 16, 23  | (5:00-7:00 PM) |
|            | March 1, 15, 22, 29 | (1:00-4:00)    |
| Saturdays: | February 7, 14, 28  | (1:00-4:00)    |
|            | March 20            | (1:00-4:00)    |
|            | April 3             | (1:00-4:00)    |

**GILES-HORNEY BUILDING - 103 Airport Drive (off Airport Road)**

|             |                    |              |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------|
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|             | March 15, 29       | (5:30-8:30)  |
|             | April 5            | (5:30-8:30)  |
| Tuesdays:   | February 3, 10, 17 | (5:30-8:30)  |
|             | March 16, 23, 30   | (5:30-8:30)  |
| Wednesdays: | February 4, 18     | (5:30-8:30)  |
| Thursdays:  | February 12, 19    | (5:30-8:30)  |
|             | March 18, 25       | (5:30-8:30)  |
| Saturdays:  | February 7         | (5:30-8:30)  |
|             | April 3            | (10:00-1:00) |

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 UNC-CH Parents Fund: Student Opportunities Fund Award

## HATS OFF

THE TIME HAS COME for the Renovation & Expansion of the Frank Porter, Graham Student Union to be complete

THE ENTIRE UNION OPENS ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

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