

Schools change forum policy

Plan to allow some info distribution

BY SARA LEWKOWICZ
STAFF WRITER

After more than a month of discussion, the Orange County School Board voted Monday to allow a limited nonpublic forum policy in county public schools.

The policy will limit the distribution of information in county schools to materials directly related to the system, such as fliers for school organizations and clubs.

Board Chairwoman Libbie Hough was one of the two dissenters.

She said she is concerned that there are a number of groups that benefit students that might not fit the distribution criteria.

"I feel like we're throwing out the baby with the bath water," Hough said.

"It looks like we could tailor things to be a little more open."

Board member Dennis Whittington, who also disagreed with the approved policy, suggested that schools make time for groups to distribute information to parents.

"I would like to see us ... basically have two forums, one a very limited public forum ... that gives parents access to information, and the other going back to a non-public forum the rest of the year," Whittington said.

"My feeling is basically, 'Go back to where we were, adopt one policy for distribution and a second for orientation.'"

Though many school board members expressed interest in this idea, Superintendent Shirley Carraway warned that logistics might not permit such information fairs.

"Some of our buildings are set up and are able to handle this. For

some of our schools, it may end up being a nightmare," Carraway said.

The majority of board members, however, said strictly limiting materials was the best option.

Board member Al Hartkopf said opening schools to a public forum would detract from their educational mission.

"Our key responsibility is toward the education of our students ... not to allow our schools, our school system or our children to become political pawns or political footballs to any group," Hartkopf said.

The risk of legal repercussion was another concern expressed by board members, and another reason given for having a nonpublic forum.

"I still think that if we open it up at any point, some group is going to come back and say, 'You didn't notify us,' and that's what courts will look at," said board member Randy Copeland.

"For some of our schools, (public information fairs) may end up being a nightmare."

SHIRLEY CARRAWAY, SUPERINTENDENT

"If you open the door one time, the foot's in the door, and you're not going to get it out."

The school board had originally intended on settling the issue at its Oct. 18 meeting but postponed the vote after member Delores Simpson requested a motion to reconsider.

Simpson had originally voted with the majority of the board to allow a limited public forum.

The board first began revising the policy at its Oct. 4 meeting.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Area residents express worries on annexation

Services, taxes among concerns cited

BY JAKE POTTER
STAFF WRITER

A crowd of nearly 100 citizens voiced concerns about — and general disapproval of — the town of Carrboro's proposal to annex two new areas during a public forum Monday night at the Carrboro Century Center.

Carrboro Planning Director Roy Williford presented an outline of the town's plans for annexing the two areas along Rogers Road. Various town staff members also took questions from residents living in the areas proposed to be annexed.

The Board of Aldermen adopted a resolution to consider annexation of two zones, labeled Northeast Annexation Areas A and B, at its Sept. 14 meeting.

Area A includes the Camden, Highlands, Highland Meadows and Highlands North neighborhoods. The northern portion of Rogers Road, as well as the Fox Meadow and Meadow Run subdivisions, make up Area B.

An overwhelming majority of citizens who spoke at the meeting disapproved of the annexations.

"What kind of percentage of dissent would you be looking at to avoid annexing?" asked Fox Meadow resident Sarah King.

Town Attorney Mike Brough told the crowd that the Aldermen will make the final decision.

Aldermen members were not present at Monday night's meeting.

"We're being taxed to support somebody else's way of life," said area resident Jim Rabinowitz. "Carrboro has a particular lifestyle. We can't take part in that. We're not close to town."

If the town decides to annex, it would provide police, fire, and other municipal services to the

neighborhoods.

Alena Callimannis of Camden claimed that Chapel Hill's fire department is a more suitable first responder for her neighborhood.

Carrboro Fire Chief Rodney Murray said three different stations respond to incidents in the area, based on a mutual aid agreement.

Randolph Ryan of Highlands said he still felt the proposed fire coverage was inadequate. "The reality is that the New Hope Volunteer Fire Department can't provide during the day. Chapel Hill can," he said.

Tim Forbes, a resident in Area B, was concerned with tax hikes.

According to the town's slide show, Carrboro's tax rate, about 71.5 cents per \$100, is considerably higher than New Hope's current rate of 6.5 cents per \$100. Homeowners would pay about \$300 more yearly if annexed into Carrboro, according to data in the slide show.

But a current garbage fee of \$240 would be dropped.

Fox Meadow resident Suzanne Allen asked why education proposals weren't included in the annexation plans.

The annexations would bring about 852 new residents to Carrboro, as well as 321 acres of land and 288 residential units, and would go into effect Jan. 31, 2006.

Residents of Highlands and Highland Meadows have submitted separate petitions to the Chapel Hill Town Council in response to the annexations, asking instead to be annexed into Chapel Hill.

The town will hold a public hearing on the proposals for annexation at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 16 at the Century Center.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Humor unites improv troupe

CHiPs members bond with laughs

BY EMILY FISHER
STAFF WRITER

Every Monday and Thursday night, a dozen boisterous students gather in the Student Union to practice converting truth into humor.

At last Thursday's practice, members of UNC improv comedy group the Chapel Hill Players formed an energized huddle, warming up their bodies and wits before creating two hours of short-form and long-form scenes, all composed and performed simultaneously.

"We do something that is completely ours — that's the only time it exists and no one gets it like we do," said Justin Drogos, a senior exercise and sport science major.

But twice a semester, an audience that often spills into the aisles of 100 Hamilton Hall gets it, too.

During the hour-and-a-half shows, the players rely on audience participation for the basic idea of each skit, similar to the format of the television show "Whose Line Is It Anyway?"

The interplay between the audience and players is what many consider one of the keys to the success of a show.

Senior Malinda Faber, a political science major, said an Oct. 21 show was the best show she's ever done with CHiPs.

"I thought, 'We just had improv sex,'" Faber said.

The intercourse between the improvisers on stage is vital, too. All the players agreed that commitment to a character — whether it's a whiny 5-year-old or a cantankerous robot — and unconditional support of fellow players both are fundamentals to improvisation.

"(Improv's) about being comfortable, knowing that whatever you do will be supported," said senior dramatic art major Thomas Whittington.

When a scene begins to lag, an improviser on the sidelines will "edit" it by running across the stage — but knowing when to edit is the hard part.



DTH/PAT LAPADULA

Paul North, Thomas Whittington, Kyle Chorpene and David Siegel of the improv comedy group Chapel Hill Players participate in an exercise Monday night. The group meets twice a week holds two performances a year.

"It's a group mind we develop," said Dave Segal, a senior political science major.

Segal is the director of CHiPs, a role that rotates each semester, and during practices, he gives the improvisers cues and games to build skits from — as a real audience would — and busily writes feedback as he watches each scene.

CHiPs began in 1996 as the brainchild of then-UNC student Zach Ward and since has developed a reputation up and down the East Coast. Every Fall Break, the group travels to Chicago — considered by many to be the center of improv comedy in the United States — to laugh and learn from the professionals.

Ward is now the producer of Dirty South Improv, a local group that holds an annual — and typically sold-out — improv festival each year in Hamilton Hall. The festival, which is set for late February, features both professional improv

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BILLY SMITH, JUNIOR, CHIPS MEMBER

groups and college troupes.

A few former UNC students have taken their experience beyond CHiPs, including alumnus Jeff Richards, who played the character "drunk girl" on Saturday Night Live during the 1997 and 1998 seasons.

Although some players have prior experience, the majority started doing improv when they got to UNC, and there is no background required to audition.

After the initial audition, each new member must go through an "incubator" program in which they learn the ropes of improv before practicing with the players who actually perform in the

shows.

If their practice is any indication, competition is far from the main goal of CHiPs.

Billy Smith, a junior American studies major, expressed the collective ambition after practice.

"There's a saying in improv: 'If you're having fun on stage, then the audience is, too,'" he said.

Drogos added that as the group becomes better friends, the comedy improves accordingly.

"We all hang out together," he said. "It's pretty incestuous at this point."

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

Push for 1 precinct gets put off

Tight election has switched priorities

BY STEPHANIE NEWTON
STAFF WRITER

Amid zealous partisan gatherings, passionate political debate and mounting evidence of the thriving election season both on and off campus, one consensus is clear — making it through Tuesday in one piece will be a blessing.

That's why, campus leaders say, the thought of creating one voting precinct for the UNC campus is not on the to-do list right now.

The Orange County Board of Elections has divided the campus into six different voting precincts, making it difficult for students to determine where they must cast their ballot.

After student government's voter registration drive last year registered about 2,500 student voters, only 329 18- to 22-year-olds turned out at the polls.

That's when the idea of creating a more convenient and student-friendly polling place, long a goal of student leaders, again entered the spotlight.

Matt Tepper, student body president in the 2003-04 school year, said complications can surface when uninformed students have no idea where their voting precinct is.

"It's a shame," Tepper said.

"They're registered, and they want to vote. It's just frustrating on Election Day."

Every time students move, they have to reregister, often in a new precinct. In many instances, the long walk can deter voters from the polls.

Many students also do not realize that Morehead Planetarium is not a polling place on Election Day. Every year, students show up at Morehead thinking they can vote — but they can't.

"This is only for early voting," said Steve Allred, executive associate provost. "We've really tried to publicize this."

Early voting at the Morehead ended Saturday at 5 p.m.

One of the premier goals for the single-voting precinct initiative is ending this confusion.

"It would solve an issue that we see come up every year," Allred said, adding that one voting precinct for all campuses would be expedient.

The student support behind the initiative has been strong for several years and has even led state politicians to advocate for the idea.

"I introduced a very similar bill in my first term eight years ago at the behest of the student

government," said N.C. Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, D-Orange. Kinnaird introduced a bill during the long session of 1997 that would have made it legal for on-campus students to vote at any precinct in their district.

But a compromise led to the early voting bill, and the University ended up with its current voting arrangement.

Kinnaird said that with four other study committees — one dealing with the dangers of electronic voting — taking up her time, there hasn't been an opportunity to reawaken the issue.

"We haven't taken it up," she said.

But she added that she hopes pushing through a bill on the issue will prove more manageable when the legislature reconvenes in January.

After election preoccupation has subsided, student leaders plan on reopening negotiations between the elections board and student government in hopes of getting officials to redraw the campus' half-dozen districts.

But Board of Elections workers say it's not so simple.

"You don't just change a polling place — you don't just draw a line around a university," said Carolyn Thomas, chairwoman of the Orange County Board of Elections.

"We have to follow census lines — that map has to be studied," she said.

According to state law, the elections board creates voting precincts, though it can establish, alter or discontinue them as is "expedient." At the same time, though, any changes also must be approved by the General Assembly.

In a different statute, a freeze has been placed on the one-precinct initiative until after Dec. 31. If the legislature does not extend the freeze, the Board of Elections can proceed with any changes.

Kinnaird said she plans on pursuing one precinct for UNC soon.

"We just need to sit down and find out the mechanics of how it works."

Contact the University Editor at uodesk@unc.edu.

Legislature prepares to lure Dell to state

BY NATALIE HAMMEL
STAFF WRITER

The Texas-based Dell USA soon might branch off into the Triad region if the lures of the N.C. General Assembly are successful.

Gov. Mike Easley notified members of the General Assembly on Wednesday that they will be returning to Raleigh on Thursday for a special legislative session that likely will consider a package of economic incentives to help bring Dell to the area.

In a letter regarding the extra session, Easley states, "These incentives are limited to those projects that would provide the state with significant jobs and investments in computer manufacturing."

The details of the proposal are still not set, but the number of jobs it could create might be in the thousands. Dell was unable to disclose any details.

But The (Raleigh) News & Observer reported that the company could provide as many as 2,000 jobs directly and cause the creation of another 8,400. Workers in the positions would make between \$22,000 and \$26,000 per year.

Easley's office did not return phone calls by press time.

"These jobs are not the highest paying in the world, but they are jobs with benefits, and I think it just makes North Carolina's image look better," said N.C. Sen. John Carrington, R-Wake.

Carrington added that employment is a growing concern for many college graduates, and that Dell's new location would be a huge gain for them as well as North Carolina's overall job market.

But some legislators question the tax incentives it might take to bring Dell to the state.

"My first desire is that we would create good public tax policies for everyone, large and small companies, that would mitigate the need

for many of these corporate incentives," said Sen. Robert Pittenger, R-Mecklenburg.

Carrington also expressed his dislike for special tax incentives. But he said they are necessary in Dell's case to keep jobs for North Carolinians.

"I think that, unfortunately, these incentives are bad, but there's nothing we can do about it," he said. "We have to compete; it's like athletics."

Legislators said they still have not seen Easley's proposal, but they expect to have details later this week.

Some legislators questioned the timing of the session. With elections today and the session on Thursday, Sen. Tony Moore, D-Pitt, said the scheduling was odd.

"It's a poor plan two days after the election, two days after a hard campaign," Moore said.

Still others said the cause is important enough to warrant a session.

Amy Fulk, spokeswoman for N.C. Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight, D-Dare, said, "Senator Basnight is ready to come into session any time you can create jobs for the benefit of our state."

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