

BOARD EDITORIALS

NEW REVENUE NEEDS

Local leaders should get the town's finances in order, even if it means considering a tax hike and hiring a consultant to look at the budget.

The town of Chapel Hill has seen many tenants get priced out of their homes, but recent events have made the town government itself the victim of a landlord with other plans.

It's a good thing that the town is taking positive steps to ensure its financial future.

The Town Council should be commended for taking important steps to deal with uncertainty — and for having the foresight to take a proactive stance in hammering out potential bumps in the road before they become major issues.

The two main features of the town's examination of its budget reflect both professional and democratic concerns — equally important and vital perspectives:

1. The council formed a citizens' advisory committee to sort out the town's budget issues.

2. The town authorized Town Manager Cal Horton to negotiate a contract not to exceed \$80,000 for services from MAXIMUS, a Raleigh management consulting firm.

The measure should help to ensure that the town's money is being spent optimally.

The \$80,000 figure might sound somewhat high, especially because the town is coming off a deal with OpenSource Leadership Strategies Inc. — a Durham consulting firm hired to find agreement on the issue of renaming Airport Road after Martin Luther King Jr.

But the town is facing several major changes, most notably a new operations center that requires a major boost in the budget.

Not that it's all the town's fault. Chapel Hill's public works, public housing and transportation divisions have been operating on University-owned land on the Horace Williams tract for about 20 years at a rate of \$1 a year in rent, but the lease on the property is set to expire. The University does not plan to renew it, mostly because it wants to move forward with plans to build a satellite campus, Carolina North,

on the Williams tract.

The relocation of these departments, along with several others to be consolidated in the new operations center, will add an additional \$2 million to the town budget annually.

Those new expenditures will challenge council members — and they're not only ones the town faces. It will have to deal with a host of other challenges, including payments on general obligation bonds that were voted on in 2003, as well as projected increases in employee medical costs, a slow economy and the revaluation of county property.

That's why hiring a consulting firm isn't a bad idea — a lot of money is at stake, and the town can use all the help it can get in reducing expenditures as much as possible.

Horton has proposed tax increases of almost 10 percent to help deal with these needs, and it seems only reasonable that he should also work carefully to ensure that the town's resources are used effectively.

Also notable is the fact that the measures the town has taken aren't coming during crisis mode — the discussion took place during a planning retreat Thursday.

It's good that at this early stage, planners are looking to take in the best ways to proceed. Although there is no emergency on hand, town officials have good reason to be concerned during a time in which they face a great deal of change.

It's certainly better than forging ahead without thinking twice and finding inefficiencies later that might cost the town valuable time and money.

The council will hold a public hearing Jan. 26 to receive citizen comments and set budget goals. That extra set of eyes guiding the budget process should help ensure accountability of those in charge of managing town resources.

It's a good step in putting the financial house back in order.

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"Precaution is better than cure."

CICERO, ROMAN ORATOR AND STATESMAN

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Letycia Nunez-Argote, letycia@email.unc.edu



COMMENTARY

The art of telling stories is a gift we all give ourselves

January seems like a strange time to begin a story. Sure, there's the new year and the whole cartfull of resolutions that come with it, but January doesn't feel like a good beginning.

It's too muddled, somewhere between the fall leaves and the first faint blooms of spring — as good a time as any, I suppose, to tell a story.

I applied to graduate this week. For years, graduation had been that far-off land, somewhere between college and the real world.

I couldn't tell you what color graduation was, how it felt, how it was going to smell. It was coming, I knew, but it was never going to come.

So it was with some apprehension that I climbed the sticky steps of Steele Building and picked my way through class-less, major-less people to ask to apply to graduate.

One of the women who worked in advising pointed me toward a pink sheet, telling me to fill it out. It took about three minutes. I left it on her desk.

Suddenly, my graduation is not some distant land — it's a slip of paper being run through a database. That far-off land is pink, with space to write in my permanent address.

I'm not going to moan about how much I love Carolina or to gush about what a special place that this university is or even to meditate on how beautiful the campus looks with a thin dusting of snow, because that has all been said before.

Instead, I'd like to think about stories — or, more properly, the way in which we create stories out of our lives. Everyone has them — those narratives that have defined who you are.



TIMUR HAMMOND
HOLDING UP THE MIRROR

They might have been freshman year hijinks, or a missed final junior year. Or it might have been something that was even more fantastic: the time you and your friends stole a car and drove, well, somewhere.

But how true are our stories? My neighbors have been asking me to write a column about our lives down on Edwards Street: "You should write about us," they say, as if we were a story.

It's not only a desire to see their name in print. On a deeper level, to write a story — any story — about our experience is to give it form, and by doing that, validate it.

Where life is shapeless, a story has beginning, middle and end. Our stories don't even have to be true, as long as they are compelling.

So January has come, class has begun, and I've applied for graduation. The challenge now is to look back and to craft something out of my time here.

But at first glance, this experience — this college life — is not something that lends itself to stories. There are too many vacant days of tests, libraries and quick dinners on Franklin Street.

Sure, I've done things, but when I look at my time here, my moments of excitement seem few and far between.

Even applying to graduate isn't exciting — it's just a thing that happens.

But these moments — these dull, pedestrian events that fill the day — can be important. They can be important if I choose to make them so.

In one respect, this seems self-evident: A winter afternoon is important because it is. But that isn't quite right.

Instead, say this: Winter afternoons are important because I am aware of them. And in becoming aware of them, I make them matter.

I am crafting a story. We all are, in our own separate ways.

Of course, this isn't to say that each thing that happens — snow flurries, evenings spent alone, the library — is only valuable as part of a story.

Rather, it is to suggest that by creating stories, we can create meaning where it might not previously exist.

I would hate to graduate and look back on this January as some bland succession of days. Sure, it is winter and the bricks are slick with slush, but there are scenes to wonder at, too.

Whether it is the smear of the sunset or the empty upper quad dusted with snow, there are moments that can echo if we set them right.

I don't want a story that is just the sum of what I've done — I want to write a story of these past four years that makes me remember.

That act of creation is always new and valuable. And when my neighbors pester me to write about our life down on Edwards Street, I just smile. It's not that we want to be famous.

We just want a story that we can call our own.

Contact Timur Hammond
at thammond@email.unc.edu.

THE GREATER GOOD

Higher education officials must work to stem the effect of big money in college sports and to emphasize the "student" in "student-athlete."

The NCAA's annual convention, which began Jan. 7, brought about much-needed academic reform to college athletics. It also led to a change in how schools are placed in the NCAA's various divisions, the most lucrative of which is Division I.

The changes are likely to prove beneficial to both universities themselves and the competition in the NCAA's sports.

The organization's first move was to initiate a crackdown on the astronomical costs that universities incur to run their sports programs. Athletic budgets, whether wholly or partly independent of a school's general operating budget, should be a distant second to the importance of maintaining top-notch academics. This is a point NCAA President Myles Brand made clear to The Chronicle of Higher Education.

"When the public — both local and en masse — begin to believe that the value of the institution is measured by the success of its athletics teams, the core mission of the university is threatened," he said.

That might be a problem that doesn't seem very relevant at UNC, which recently signed a \$28.34 million Nike sponsorship package and takes in more merchandising revenue than any other college in America. It's hard to see a Carolina without the athletic tradition it has carried for many years.

Part of UNC's reputation as a leading academic institution is supplemented by the fact that we are ranked 12th overall in athletics by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics.

But not all colleges will be able to sustain the cost of top-class competition without dipping into academic money. While an athletics program can complement a university's prestige, it should in no way detract from its scholastic foundations.

Brand's plans to create a task force of college presidents to consider solutions to this pressing issue is

one step in the right direction.

The second decision the NCAA agreed on at the conference was to impose penalties on teams whose players aren't succeeding in school. A team would lose one scholarship if 7.5 percent or more of its players either drop out of school without passing a certain number of classes or come back to school with grades too low to be eligible for sports.

According to the Chronicle, 30 percent of Division I football teams and 20 percent of men's basketball teams would have lost scholarships if these regulations been imposed on the 2003-2004 school year.

The 7.5 percent formula is aimed at making half of a team's athletes graduating within six years. That's not too much to ask for.

From 1997 to 2003, UNC as a whole graduated 82.8 percent of its entering class. While it is understandable that athletes might have more obligations than students who don't participate in varsity sports, the extreme discrepancy between the two groups is simply unacceptable.

The third proposal put forth at the conference would reduce or eliminate average attendance requirements for playing Division I-A football. In past years, small schools have had to jump hurdles in order to average 15,000 spectators and not get bumped down to Division I-AA. A few scheduled games at different venues in order to avoid lowering their home attendance.

Attendance shouldn't be the determining factor as to whether or not a school gets Division I-A status.

Not drawing many fans could be the result of a team being located in a sparsely populated area, or the result of a small student body. But that doesn't mean a team shouldn't play against apt competition.

The Division I Board of Directors should work to eliminate the attendance requirement when it meets in April.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions of solely The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board, and were reached after open debate. The board consists of six board members, the editorial page associate editor, the editorial page editor and the DTH editor. The 2004-05 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

QUOTABLES

"We're not a porn shop. Everybody has sex, and nobody would be here without it."

NOLAN WILLIAMS,
ADAM & EVE GENERAL MANAGER, ON THE MISREPRESENTATION OF HIS COMPANY IN THE NEWS REGARDING A NEW LOCATION.

"Why invest in a loser?"

GEORGE RABINOWITZ,
UNC POLITICAL SCIENCE PROFESSOR, EXPLAINING WHY FORMER N.C. SENATOR PATRICK BALLANTINE (R-WILMINGTON) HAD A DIFFICULT TIME RAISING MONEY FOR HIS GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN.

"After that game, I feel like I need a wheelchair. But I'll be all right ... just gotta keep going."

IVORY LATTA,
UNC POINT GUARD, ON FRIDAY'S PHYSICAL CONTEST WITH N.C. STATE. THE TAR HEELS PREVAILED 77-75.

READERS' FORUM

Beliefs shouldn't undermine historical accomplishment

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing in response to the letter published in Tuesday's newspaper by Natalia Deeb-Sossa.

I think that the Campaign for Justice and the Bell Award have completely lost sight of the historical importance of Cornelia Spencer, a woman who was extremely influential in saving the entire history of our prestigious institution.

As a woman of her time, she subscribed to an ideology currently frowned upon by our society, but this does nothing to diminish her contribution to the legacy of the school.

The University should use scrutiny in deciding whether to remember the historical significance of an individual in light of their character, as it might offend people of every ethnicity.

Take, for example, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was recently honored both nationally through the holiday and locally through the renaming of Airport Road. He was renowned as a civil rights advocate, preacher and nonviolent protester.

Should we then also remember that he was an adulterer who constantly cheated on his wife, as well as a plagiarist who stole certain parts of his famous speeches from other writers?

Should we create a plaque to remember that William L. Saunders was a member of the Ku Klux Klan or that he was a great

benefactor to the "University of the People," which currently grants opportunities for future leaders of every ethnicity? Or maybe we can forgive Cornelia Spencer for her personal beliefs and appreciate all she has done for the University.

Matthew Pulley
Senior
Biology

Columnist was flawed in his analysis of stadium funding

TO THE EDITOR:

In response to Brian MacPherson's column on public financing for a new baseball stadium in Washington, D.C., I was surprised that someone down in North Carolina would take an interest in an issue regarding the area that I come from.

Not surprisingly, he handled it exactly as someone 300 miles away from the situation would.

It seems like such an outrage that poor D.C. residents would be over-taxed to pay for a \$584 million baseball stadium, while the city's hospitals and schools continue to rank among the worst in the nation.

But with a little bit of research, maybe MacPherson would have realized that the city's residents aren't footing the bill for the stadium. Investors (notice: not residents) can buy \$10,000 bonds to support the construction of the stadium.

The rest of the money would come from three sources: a fee on the team

owners, a tax on food and merchandise sales and a tax on the city's largest businesses. Additionally, a plan has been suggested to implement a tax on curb-side parking near the stadium for all home games.

Simply put, the money necessary to build the stadium would come from the stadium itself. Maybe next time MacPherson can try focusing on an issue a little closer to home.

Brian Allen
Sophomore
Journalism

Local Democratic groups played large role in efforts

TO THE EDITOR:

I want to thank you for reporting on student voting in last November's election, and I want to thank the students for exercising their civic duty. I also want to commend VoteCarolina for helping in an amazing effort to get students to turn out at the polls. But the article makes it seem that VoteCarolina single-handedly registered 10,000 students and got them to the polls.

The fact is, the UNC Young Democrats — with the help of the Democratic Coordinated Campaign and the Orange County Democratic Party — registered, educated and mobilized the vast majority of those students.

Our membership unleashed an unprecedented campuswide voting drive.

We spent more than seven hours

every weekday registering students of all parties, all over campus and on Franklin Street.

We then spent eight hours in front of Morehead Planetarium each day during the early voting period, informing students of their choices on the ballot.

During this time and through Nov. 2, we continued to spend at least four hours a day in the Pit, encouraging students to vote early.

We also conducted a massive effort involving e-mails, phone calls and room visits to make sure that every registered Democratic and unaffiliated voter (i.e., most students at UNC) knew how to vote and had voted by Election Day; as a part of this, we publicized the shuttles that VoteCarolina secured to take students to their precincts.

Dustin Ingalls
Publicity director
Young Democrats

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 2409, 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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