

Downtown group continues search New town clerk greets challenges

BY JAKE POTTER
STAFF WRITER

As members of the Downtown Economic Development Corporation shuffled through agenda items at its meeting Wednesday, there was no evidence that the group was slowing down after the loss of former Chairman Bob Epting in November.

Instead, his successor, Chairwoman Andrea Rohrbacher, and the corporation are ready to move on, starting with the search for a permanent executive director. The corporation appointed Chapel Hill personnel firm Smither & Associates to assist the search committee seeking a new director. "We've got to get this thing structured and focused and running," said corporation member Roger Perry. "I don't think we'll have a very good act in March."

Interim Executive Director Nick Didow has overseen the corporation since September.

Corporation members decided the new director would receive a salary of more than \$70,000, but not exceeding \$95,000.

In a proposal forwarded to Didow, Smither & Associates Vice President Anita Badrock set the group's consultation fee at \$5,000.

"I personally like the proposal Anita put together," said corporation member Nancy Sutenfield. "It demonstrates very good understanding of areas we as a search committee felt we needed help with."

Sutenfield also said the firm could better address local needs than the Raleigh-based Conway & Greenwood Inc., which also expressed interest in the job.

According to Badrock's proposal, the firm will provide services such as acknowledgment of application receipts, consultation to create an "ideal candidate profile" and several background checks.

The corporation determined that the search committee should narrow its list to about three finalists before bringing them before the full board for a vote.

While the search carries on — members have said they likely won't select a director until late March — Didow will continue in the post. "The intent was that Nick would assist us whenever necessary,"

Sutenfield said.

Also at the meeting, corporation members reviewed and amended a draft of priority duties for the rest of Didow's term.

Some of the duties include compiling an action plan in response to recommendations made in the last few years, developing a grant or loan program for local businesses and locating more funding for the corporation.

The corporation is funded through the special tax on the downtown service district, which generates about \$70,000 per year, and matching contributions from the town and University.

Members indicated that they want to defer parts of what Rohrbacher calls an "ambitious and robust" list of tasks for the corporation.

"Nick can't be working on all of these things," Rohrbacher said. "He does need his sleep."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

BY KATHRYN REED
STAFF WRITER

There's a new face around Town Hall in Chapel Hill.

Sabrina Oliver has only been town clerk for three weeks, but she said she already has experienced the numerous demands of the job.

When one resident found out she was the new clerk, she said he told her, "Good luck. You're going to need it."

"It's been overwhelming," Oliver said. "It's been a tremendous learning experience."

As town clerk, Oliver's responsibilities include putting together packets for Town Council meetings, distributing materials for the council and serving as a records keeper. "It's a tremendous amount of responsibility," she said.

Despite her workload, Oliver said she is looking forward to the almost weekly council meetings and public forums. "I'm ready," she said. "I'm anxious to get a feel for it."

Oliver replaced Joyce Smith, who served in the town clerk's office for more than 20 years and as town clerk since 1998.

"Those are big shoes to fill," she

said. "I don't know if I can completely fill those. It'll be no time soon."

Deputy Town Clerk Sandy Cook said Oliver brings energy, stamina and new ideas to the position.

"I think she's done extremely well," Cook said. "She's seen the volume of work and requests the clerk's office handles in a short period of time."

Oliver was Elon's town clerk and zoning and subdivision coordinator for more than 10 years.

Oliver said the biggest difference between Elon and Chapel Hill is size. "Chapel Hill is a larger community," she said. "It's a community noted for its citizens being extremely interested in what's going on."

"University towns are different communities than typical municipalities," she said. "It's something of a different world. It's just something about the buzz of a university town. Maybe it's all that youth out there."

A graduate of Elon University, Oliver worked with local government long before she became a town clerk. She worked as a newspaper editor for 10 years, covering the local government beat, but she decided to change careers in the early '90s.

"I realized I had been trained by

a crusty old editor who thought the government was up to no good," she said.

Oliver's interest in public service led her to a job in the planning department of Alamance County, and she became the town clerk of Elon about a year later.

She said the hardest part of her new job is going from knowing everyone to knowing no one.

"There's nowhere better to train than a small town," Oliver said. "I got to wear many hats. But I got tired of wearing all those hats."

She accepted the job in Chapel

Hill because she wanted to take on a solely management position.

"I had reached a place in my career where there wasn't anywhere for me to advance," Oliver said. "It gets to the point where I'm doing a whole lot of things not very well. You spend a lot of time putting fires out."

She said she is looking forward to serving the town of Chapel Hill. "I consider it an honor, and I'm going to try my damndest to do my best."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

THE Daily Crossword

By Jeff Armstrong

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ACROSS

- 1 Singer McEntire
- 5 Perform
- 10 Part of a door frame
- 14 WWII powers
- 15 Turn signal
- 16 Hydrox rival
- 17 Start of Samuel Johnson quote
- 19 Close tightly
- 20 Loves
- 21 Captivate
- 23 Madrid mister
- 24 Dance in triple time
- 26 Part 2 of quote
- 32 Lettered sandwiches
- 36 Purulent skin eruptions
- 37 Tonsorial tool
- 38 Island do
- 39 Pseudonym
- 42 Verve
- 43 Actress Woodard
- 45 Center opening?
- 46 Table staple
- 47 Part 3 of quote
- 51 Dad of Beau Bridges
- 52 Battery terminal
- 57 Discussions
- 61 Weds on the wing
- 62 Lipinski jump
- 63 End of quote
- 66 Bone-dry
- 67 Zaps

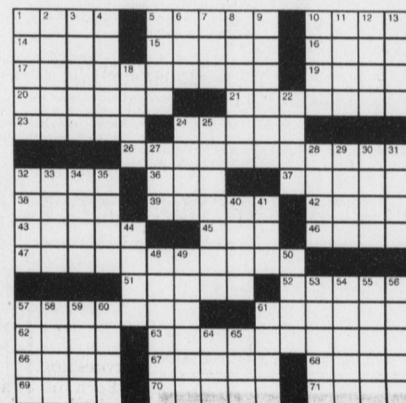
- 68 Cleveland's lake
- 69 Kentucky fort
- 70 Dizzying designs
- 71 Lord's lady

DOWN

- 1 Indian princes
- 2 Ooze
- 3 American buffalo
- 4 "The Jetsons" dog
- 5 Corn units
- 6 FDR's Blue Eagle
- 7 "Exodus" hero
- 8 Sportscaster Howard
- 9 Jackson's note
- 10 Kid
- 11 Vicinity
- 12 Signify
- 13 Take off
- 18 Gilpin of "Frasier"
- 22 Russian ruler, once
- 24 Knitting yarn

- 25 Apprehension
- 27 Hot spring
- 28 Blots
- 29 Poet Pound
- 30 Seethe
- 31 Jogging pace
- 32 Spill the beans
- 33 Lollapalooza
- 34 Wilson's predecessor
- 35 Browse the web
- 40 Copied
- 41 Knightly address
- 44 Fitzgerald of jazz
- 48 Unpigmented
- 49 Even chance
- 50 New Haven campus
- 53 Nuzzled
- 54 Musical drama
- 55 Jeans material
- 56 First name in cosmetics
- 57 Vintner's barrel
- 58 Yoked pair
- 59 Fictional sleuth Wolfe
- 60 Bend
- 61 Leader for a while?
- 64 Alias acronym
- 65 For each

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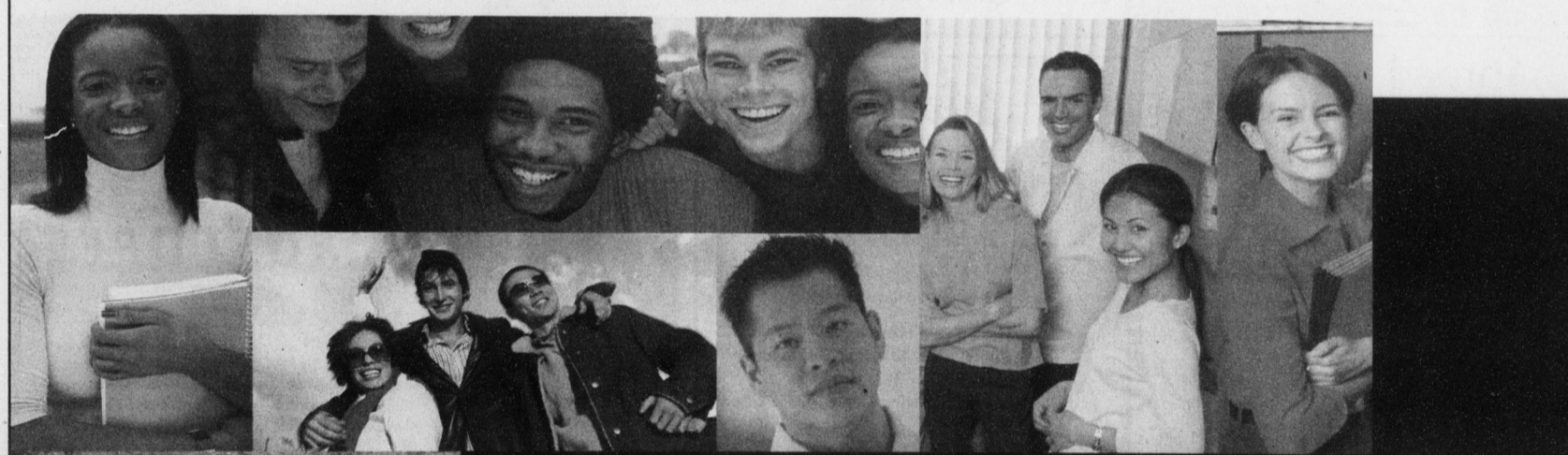
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