

Legislators hurry work before deadline

Lawmakers pass more than 60 bills

BY ERIN FRANCE
STAFF WRITER

Crossover week sent legislators into high gear last week and resulted in a flurry of approved bills.

"Last week was a blur," said Sen. Daniel Clodfelter, D-Mecklenburg. "We had an awful lot to go over."

Many legislators said they were proud of the measures that passed their chamber, but others were not satisfied.

"There were several bills that were defeated that were important," said Rep. Maggie Jeffus, D-Guilford.

Jeffus said she supported the measures to raise the minimum wage and to ban smoking in some restaurant seating.

The bill to increase minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$6.15

per hour failed 52-66. The measure that would ensure at least 50 percent of seating in a restaurant is smoke-free was defeated 57-63.

Other legislators were pleased by hard-won measures passed during crossover week.

Rep. Bill Faison, D-Orange pushed for the contested vote for the student member on the UNC-System Board of Governors.

"I was quite shocked to hear the numbers of legislators opposing that vote," Faison said.

Earlier in the session, an amendment was attached to the bill effectively cancelling the student vote.

"The amendment would have gutted the bill," Faison said.

The amendment was dropped, and the bill passed the N.C. House 82-33.

Faison said he was disappointed in the treatment of some bills.

A bill providing in-state college tuition to immigrants who attended an N.C. high school was

not even brought to the floor for consideration, Faison said.

"You can't go wrong with education," he said.

Bills are considered "dead" if denied passage after the June 2 deadline of crossover week.

A dead bill is ineligible for consideration by either chamber for two years.

However, measures directly impacting the budget still might be passed.

"An awful lot of legislation isn't dead yet because they have some impact on the revenue or the budget," Clodfelter said.

One of those measures is the controversial death penalty moratorium because the bill includes a state-funded study of the death sentence.

There is still some hope for the bills that did not make the cut, said Sen. Doug Berger, D-Franklin.

Senate leaders could add a tax onto a bill to resurrect it, he said. The bill would then have an impact on revenue and might

come up for consideration on the floor again.

Berger said he was pleased that the Senate spent time considering important issues.

"We passed over 60-some pieces of legislation," Berger said.

Not all the legislators believed that the time spent in session during crossover week was fruitful.

"We wasted a lot of time," Rep. Dewey Hill, D-Columbus, said. "I'm looking at 26 pages of bills that made crossover."

Many of these he did not expect to become laws because they were "feel good bills."

These bills give individual constituents priority but are not expected to pass through the next chamber, Hill said.

House members are expecting more work and long nights as budget discussion heats up.

Said Jeffus: "We're gearing up for the budget."

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TRUSTEES

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erning body.

"The most significant skill, but one that's probably the most difficult for most people, is the ability to listen," he said. "The idea to really listen and to gauge the other board members is very important."

It is a common opinion that Williams has done just that.

"He's very put together and articulates well. He's just a real force for bringing consensus to the group," Kitchin said.

Schwab said Williams has effectively guided decision-making.

"It is an enjoyable process to go through because everybody's motives are toward the betterment of the University," he said. "I think Stick has done a good job in fostering that agenda."

It might have been hard to imagine that a young boy whose performance in sandlot baseball earned him the nickname "Stick" would lead the state's flagship institution.

But, nearing the conclusion of his sixth year on the board, it is clear that Stick Williams has taken his ballgame to another level.

Chancellor James Moeser said Williams' genuine dedication to excellence and accessibility can be traced back to his experience as a UNC student.

Williams was an athlete whose attention turned from the football field to the classroom after he suffered a career-changing knee injury.

"Stick is a great example of this University's accessibility and openness to someone who might not have had that opportunity somewhere else," Moeser said.

Williams said Schwab, his likely successor, has the characteristics to steer the board successfully into the future.

He mentioned Schwab's work as chairman of the finance committee as an example of his success.

"He has really gotten that committee really focused on where the University hurts with regards to funding," he said. "I think that approach will serve him well as chair of the Board of Trustees."

As a trustee, Williams hopes to delve into the issues of educational excellence and UNC's commitment to service, both of which, he said, can be improved upon.

"I'd just like us to develop more ways of being engaged around the state, and I think the Board of Trustees could help make that happen."

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BUSINESS

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But the bill addresses those concerns.

One of the amendments calls for a panel that would check and balance competition between businesses and universities and ensure the universities aren't taking away profits from local businesses or selling goods that they already provide.

The panel would be a nine-member commission.

The Board of Governors would appoint three members who are not university employees; the state governor would appoint two members; and the N.C. General Assembly would appoint four members.

Two of the assembly's appointments would be recommended by the Speaker of the House and the remaining two would be recommended by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

"When in doubt, (the panel) needs to err on the side of the business, not the university," said Rep. Ray Rapp, D-Haywood.

"That will ensure the Umstead Act is not violated."

But the panel would only hear cases if complaints or questions were brought to them. It would not provide oversight unless presented with such a request.

"What we're concerned about is it's set up as a complaint-driven and not a permission-driven process," Knapp said.

Proponents of the bill contend that it is primarily useful in areas where a university can provide services the community cannot.

Western Carolina University, for example, provides a movie theater on its campus, while the town of Cullowhee doesn't have one.

"We want to increase the economy of our state, especially in western North Carolina," said Duane Dunlap, professor and head of engineering technology at WCU. "It is the most economically deprived portion of our state."

Dunlap added that WCU's engineering department could provide services such as rapid prototyping to the community that businesses cannot.

The bill also provides some clear answers for an act that could often be confusing, said Rep. Joe Hackney, D-Orange.

"What this bill will do is clarify what the universities can and cannot sell."

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HOUSING

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Va., a judge sided with developers who argued that the county board had exceeded its authority by requiring all developers to earmark 10 percent of their units for affordable housing.

Tennyson said that while he could not predict whether a developer would choose to litigate, a mandatory affordable housing ordinance would certainly be "open to question."

"If it makes it impossible to develop, it is more likely to be challenged," Tennyson said.

But Kleinschmidt said North Carolina is not Virginia, and he thinks Chapel Hill has adequate authority to pass the ordinance.

"If you look at the laws governing municipal authority (Virginia laws) are much stricter," he said. "The powers of towns are much more prescribed."

Executive Director of Orange Community Housing and Land

Trust Robert Dowling said he thinks the town's current affordable housing efforts are paying off already.

"The results of the policy are already out there on the ground," Dowling said.

But Tennyson maintains that the town's policies often restrict the market, citing the low number of single family housing permits issued by the town last year. The result he says is "a lot of straining for not much outcome."

According to the 2004 Chapel Hill Data Book, an average new single family detached home in the town costs almost \$400,000. In 2003, homes valued under \$120,000 accounted for only 13 percent of all market sales.

The council will hear a committee report about affordable housing on June 27 and could at that time recommend town staff prepare a draft of an inclusionary zoning ordinance.

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CROSS BURNING

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about the incidents is now more than \$22,000, with the governor's office, Federal Bureau of Investigation, State Bureau of Investigation and other sources contributing.

Authorities are investigating the May 25 cross burnings as a hate crime.

Human relations leaders will also establish several committees to discuss issues of racism and prejudice in all areas of the community.

During Sunday's rally, tables were set up around the room providing information and sign-up sheets for committees such as diversity training.

Yvonne Pena, director of the Human Relations Department for the city of Durham, said Tuesday afternoon that about 62 people signed up during the event. "I think it was a tremendous success."

Sunday's rally also included songs, prayers and speeches from other state and local officials.

Attendees donned blue ribbons, which are meant to symbolize Durham unity.

Leaders said they were impressed with the reaction of residents during the past two weeks and urged the group to continue the dialogue.

"This unity has lasted for 12 days. But can we get 12 more, and 12 more after that?" asked Larry Holt, chairman of the Human Relations Commission.

"What is key is that we as a community should be focused on addressing issues and solving problems, which we should've been doing all along."

Mayor Bill Bell echoed that sentiment and encouraged the Durham residents to listen to one another. "This is a good start but we have a lot of work to do."

The cross burnings occurred last month at three locations in Durham. The first was reported after 9 p.m. outside St. Luke's Episcopal Church. Close to 10 p.m., another cross was reported near an apartment complex on top of a dirt pile. The third was reported around 10:30 p.m. in the downtown area.

Authorities found fliers near the location of the third cross with a message and drawing of a hooded Klansman.

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SAPIKOWSKI

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During the two weeks before he confessed, Adam Sapikowski checked in and out of a Durham Marriott hotel.

The investigation began after a relative contacted law enforcement when she had not been able to reach the family in more than a week.

Adam Sapikowski's girlfriend led officers to the hotel. He was brought back to the 29 Whitley Drive home.

The bodies were found wrapped in blankets inside the house. Shotgun shells were found on the floor nearby.

A second search warrant dated May 26 revealed new information

about the case.

Adam Sapikowski's sister, Lauren Sapikowski, came forward with information about a "secret hiding place" in his room that might be hard to come by if not familiar with the room.

The spot could contain relevant evidence such as a safe or lock box.

His girlfriend, Jennifer Lonnman, also said Adam Sapikowski gave her a key, but she did not know what its purpose was.

According to the warrant, Adam Sapikowski also knew how to operate a gun.

"It has also been discovered during the course of this investigation that Adam Sapikowski has an extensive knowledge of guns and was a member of a gun club," the

warrant states.

Adam Sapikowski's next court date is slated for July 7.

Woodall said Tuesday that he expects a grand jury to convene before that date.

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