

New county buildings slowly come to table U.S. suppresses insurgency

Commissioners to discuss tonight

BY SPENCER GIPPLE STAFF WRITER
Tonight's Orange County Board of Commissioners meeting could get the ball rolling on bringing a handful of long talked-about facilities to the area.

At their 7:30 p.m. meeting in Hillsborough, commissioners will figure out the next steps to bring a new senior center and an animal shelter to the county and hear an update on the progress of the county's acquisition of the Triangle SportsPlex property.

The Southern Orange Senior Center will be built on the site of the Southern Human Services Center facility at 2501 Homestead Road in Chapel Hill.

But before construction begins, the commissioners must award the contract to Resolute Construction Company of Chapel Hill — the contracting company that submitted the lowest estimate at \$5,110,773.

Commissioners Vice Chairman Barry Jacobs said the board is likely to award the company the bid tonight.

"The old center is cramped and outdated," he said. "At the new center, there will be more opportunities for programs, more space and better kinds of facilities as well."

Reubin Gillis, Resolute Construction project manager, said the company has built several structures in Orange County, including the Chapel Hill Senior

Center at 400 S. Elliot Road.

He said the company would be happy to undertake the project. "Senior centers give senior citizens a lot of life," he said. "And they actually extend their lives by keeping them mentally and physically active."

Gillis said the company plans to start construction on the center in about three weeks, and the project should take 10 to 12 months.

Once the county acquires the SportsPlex in Hillsborough, a second senior center — the Central Orange Senior Center — will be on the way.

Jacobs said that under the 10-year-old deal, the county has given \$400,000 every year for the SportsPlex to be managed as a public facility.

Now, Commissioner Stephen Halkiotis said, the county wants to purchase the property and open the second senior center in conjunction with the southern center.

He said the acquisition is logical. "It's taking advantage of an opportunity that will lower the cost to use the SportsPlex."

The county now expects to pay around \$5 million for the complex.

Halkiotis said he hopes the process will be done by the end of the year. "It's just a matter of getting all the little ducks lined up in a row."

But it will probably be much longer before Orange County has a new animal shelter, Halkiotis said.

He said the commissioners

tonight will discuss approving a contract to purchase a 5.5-acre tract on Eubanks Road to be used as the future site of the shelter.

Halkiotis added that the new shelter must be constructed because the University will reclaim the shelter's current site at 1081 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd within three years.

"We can't just relocate overnight," he said. "So obviously that's something we have to start planning now."

Jacobs said he and the other commissioners understand the importance of having such a shelter.

"I don't know if having one in every city is mandated by law," he said. "But it's certainly something mandated by decency and care for other living beings."

Jacobs added that last year the U.S. Humane Society determined that the current shelter is outdated. "These will certainly be state-of-the-art facilities," Halkiotis said.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
BAGHDAD, Iraq — U.S. Marine jets Tuesday attacked two bridges across the Euphrates River near the Syrian border to prevent insurgents from moving foreign fighters and munitions toward Baghdad and other cities, the U.S. command said.

A Marine statement also said U.S. and Iraqi forces destroyed a "foreign fighter safe house," killed two foreigners and arrested three others during a Tuesday raid in the same area as the bridge attack.

Elsewhere, Iraqi civilians said they could see smoke rising Tuesday from the northern city of Tal Afar, where fighting has been raging for days between U.S.-Iraqi forces and insurgents said to include foreign fighters.

The U.S. command said two American soldiers were killed by separate bombs Monday and two were killed and two others wounded Tuesday by a roadside bomb. At least 1,893 members of the U.S. military have died since the war began in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count.

Witnesses saw ambulances evacuating at least 10 injured civilians

from the city Tuesday. The fighting occurred after U.N. chief Kofi Annan said Iraq had become an even greater terrorist center than Afghanistan under the Taliban. Attacks attributed to al-Qaida in Iraq have stepped up in the Baghdad area and western Iraq.

A Marine statement said F/A-18 jets dropped bombs shortly after midnight on two light bridges near Karabilah, about 185 miles west of Baghdad.

"The purpose of the strike was to prevent al-Qaida in Iraq terrorists from using the structures for vehicular traffic to conduct attacks," the U.S. statement said. "The munitions used in the strike were designed to crater the bridges, rendering them inoperable but not destroying them."

The clash at the safe house occurred when U.S. and Iraqi troops came under fire "by foreign fighters occupying" the building, the Marines said.

"Multinational forces personnel returned fire and assaulted the building, suffering one friendly casualty when a Multinational Force soldier was wounded," the statement said without citing the

soldier's nationality. Troops called in aircraft to destroy the building, "which was being used as an operational headquarters," the statement added.

Karabilah is one of a cluster of towns near the Syrian border, a major infiltration route for foreign fighters heading for Baghdad and other major cities. Iraqi officials say al-Qaida in Iraq, led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, has taken over parts of the area after residents fled fighting between tribes supporting and opposing the insurgents.

Annan told the British Broadcasting Corp. on Monday that many young Muslims are angry, and the situation has been exacerbated by what is happening in Iraq.

"They feel victimized in their own society; they feel victimized in the West. And they feel there's profiling against them," he said. "And the Iraqi situation has not helped matters."

"One used to be worried about Afghanistan being the center of terrorist activities. My sense is that Iraq has become a major problem and in fact is worse than Afghanistan."

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Volunteering

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