

Board calls for time to examine lottery

Still undecided on flow of revenue

BY RACHEL ULLRICH
STAFF WRITER

After much debate, several loaded silences and even a few heated comments, a meeting between school officials and county leaders left much to be decided.

The Orange County Board of Commissioners met Monday with the boards of education of the two school districts in Orange County — Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and Orange County Schools — which it funds.

The three panels met to discuss the implications of the new state lottery system on local education, as well as the progress of construction projects under way at this time.

But not much was finalized at the end of the meeting. The commissioners explained to the school boards that they want to discuss the issue further before opening it publicly.

"I think you should know we will be discussing this issue, and we will be discussing it with you," said Alice Gordon, a member of the Board of Commissioners.

Board of Commissioners Chairman Moses Carey Jr. expressed guarded optimism about the new

program.

"The state says it will provide a big benefit to education — we hope it will affect the system as they think it will," Carey said.

Ninety-five percent of the proceeds from the lottery — which was pitched as benefitting education reform — will go to the state school system.

Half that figure will go to elementary education, 10 percent will go to higher education scholarships and 40 percent will go to the Public School Building Capital Fund, which would supply monies for construction efforts in North Carolina counties. Orange County's projected benefit exceeds \$2.6 million in 2006-07.

For now, however, Orange County is attempting to gather the necessary revenue to complete construction projects already under way.

City schools have already broken ground on a third high school in Carrboro, and county schools are constructing a third middle school in Hillsborough.

"We're currently clearing the site," said Neil Pederson, superintendent of city schools, of the new-

est high school. "It's pretty dramatic right now."

The third middle school to join the Orange County system is moving forward as well.

"It's very clear at this point that there is going to be a school there," said Shirley Carraway, superintendent of county schools.

The rising prices of steel and other construction materials are somewhat hindering progress, however, as are other outside factors.

Starting July 1, schools will no longer receive a refund on sales taxes.

"High school three is dependent on sales tax refund," Pederson said. "It's a loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars."

The lottery was passed by the N.C. Senate 25-24 at the end of last month. North Carolina was the last East Coast state to make the move.

"North Carolina has had a lottery for some time. It's just that it was run by South Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee," said N.C. Rep. Bill Faison, D-Orange.

He said the now-formal state lottery will add much-needed support to underprivileged children and construction.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Town receives update from largest developer

BY KATHY CHO
STAFF WRITER

Construction is going faster than usual, necessitating a change in the University's Master Plan, campus officials said.

UNC planning officials presented a proposed update to the Master Plan to the Chapel Hill Town Council on Monday.

The original master plan was first ratified in 2001. "At the time, we envisioned that would last us about four to five decades," said Bruce Runberg, associate vice chancellor for facilities planning and construction.

Then the Higher Education Bond was approved by a statewide referendum, injecting \$510 million into 49 projects at UNC, about one-third of the planned total. Running on this fuel, the speed of development has been fast.

"Within one decade, we would have completed over half of that master plan," he said.

School officials said few significant changes have been made.

Anna Wu, University architect and director of facilities planning, explained to the council some of the changes, which include converting plans for an amphitheater in the southeastern area of campus into open space and smoothing out the

"We came to the conclusion that 750 cars is really the responsible capacity of (the Bell Tower lot)."

ANNA WU, DIRECTOR OF UNC FACILITIES PLANNING

vehicular flow from South Columbia Street into the Health Area system loop. In the Bell Tower area, plans for the 1,000-space parking deck have been reduced.

"We came to the conclusion that 750 cars is really the responsible capacity of that site," she said. "We will restore the rest of the surface parking lot into an open space."

The lost spaces would be incorporated into the Craige parking deck, she said. The planners also are committed to pursuing an access road from the south of campus to Fordham Boulevard.

In addition, officials want to address increasing congestion on Manning Drive and Ridge Road.

"I wanted to commend you on continuing to be committed to public transit," said Mayor Kevin Foy about the update plans. "Your growth plans are ahead of schedule and regional transit is behind

schedule and that's creating a gap, so I hope you don't lose faith in the ability of regional transit initiative to catch up."

Council member Ed Harrison emphasized the importance of getting nearby neighborhoods involved in the process, especially when tackling projects that touch the jurisdiction of the town, such as the access road to Fordham Boulevard.

"I would involve the town and the neighborhoods as much as you can, or they certainly will assert themselves at a later date when you don't want them to," he said.

University staff will continue to refine the plan this fall and hold meetings with the campus and town communities, then make their final presentation to the Board of Trustees in November.

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