

## ROBIN CUTSON | Chapel Hill Town Council

BY TED STRONG  
CITY EDITOR

Robin Cutson doesn't exactly blend into the field of Town Council candidates.

She's vociferous when she speaks at council meetings, decrying the policy of the current council and calling for changes that she feels will advance her goals of environmentally and business-friendly growth and fiscally responsible government.

She's also a wildlife advocate for issues including live trapping of beavers at Eastwood Lake and local animal shelter services.

All of her pets have been adopted, either as strays or from local shelters, and Cutson likes hiking. It's her outside take on issues that

could be the key to winning a seat.

Terri Tyson, who ran unsuccessfully for the council in 2003, said Cutson makes many points she agrees with that the current body's members don't necessarily represent.



"I believe that she's offering a little bit different point of view," she said. Tyson cited issues such as money for public art, which she and Cutson oppose, as important factors in her decision to back Cutson in 2005.

Some political insiders have been taken aback by what they perceive as Cutson's aggressive

style, but Brooke Hayes, a Chapel Hill resident and Cutson supporter, said what could look like forcefulness is really just Cutson's honesty coming through.

"I think she's just very honest, and has an honest view about what is best for this town," she said.

That honesty or forcefulness, whichever it ultimately is, has come through on several occasions.

She has spoken out against what council members call "smart growth," saying the town's regulation is not sufficient to prevent ecological damage.

She also has called for major changes to the Carbon Reduction Program, such as the inclusion of the University in the plan. The program, recently adopted by the

town, is run by UNC professor Douglas Crawford-Brown.

She has said local leaders have not paid enough attention to water-management issues and criticized the town's affordable housing policy, saying it promotes high-priced growth. "That's gentrification with a few affordable housing units, you know, tacked on the end."

Cutson also has condemned the present council for what she sees as fiscally foolish policies.

"We have excessive spending, and that's increasing taxes and fees and it is threatening to drive people of moderate and fixed income out of this town," she said.

In the end, it could be those views, and the way Cutson expresses them, that determine her fate.

### Nice to meet you

Age: n/a

Job: n/a

Favorite movie: n/a

Inspired by what album: n/a

Political figure he would like to meet and why: n/a

## Laurin Easthom | Chapel Hill Town Council

BY TED STRONG  
CITY EDITOR

Laurin Easthom doesn't want to be called a soccer mom.

She wants to be known as a caring and open person — one that cares for her kids as a mother, cares for her patients as a dentist and cares for Chapel Hill neighborhoods as an advocate.

And she said she feels that those attributes could be useful when the Town Council tackles what she sees as the most important issue looming over the horizon.

"I think that the most important thing is to elect someone who is going to share the vision for how Carolina North will develop, because ... you need to have a council member who is going to be able

to effectively understand what the University is proposing and be able to negotiate, if necessary, in the town's best interest," she said.



Easthom, who does her best thinking while out running, said that her professionalism will help her with such negotiations.

Randy Kabrick, chairman of the Horace Williams citizens committee, on which Easthom, a longtime neighborhood advocate, serves said Easthom has kept her constituency in mind while looking at the issue.

"She's been able to kind of look

at those plans with the neighboring neighborhoods kind of as a focus point," he said.

Easthom also wants to ensure that people working at places such as Carolina North can call Chapel Hill their home. "We don't want to be seen in Chapel Hill as a gated community," she said.

But right now, she said, housing prices are just not where they need to be. "We're seeing extreme highs and ... extreme highs."

She also wants different groups to work together to pull out a downtown that acts as a bridge between the town and its academic neighbor. "Here is a chance for students, UNC administrators and the town to work together to make a social place, a place that we all

can use together," she said.

And Kabrick said Easthom is the kind of person who could foster that sort of understanding.

"She's outgoing, participative in terms of expressing her opinions, definitely willing to listen to the opinions of others," he said.

On the campaign trail, Easthom also said she prefers neighborhood get-togethers, which allow her to mingle with residents to large forums, at which candidates engage in more oration than conversation.

But all of that doesn't mean that Easthom doesn't like seeing her kids out kicking the ball around.

"I enjoy going out and spending time with my kids and seeing them excel at a sport and seeing them engage in teamwork."

### Nice to meet you

Age: 41

Job: part-time dentist

Favorite movie: The English Patient

Inspired by what album: any Dave Matthews Band album

Political figure she would like to meet and why: Former president Bill Clinton to see how smart, quick and sociable he is and to talk to him about local politics and how he thinks they can influence politics at the national level

## ED HARRISON | Chapel Hill Town Council

BY TED STRONG  
CITY EDITOR

Few people would accuse Ed Harrison of being an overly loud man.

Fewer would accuse him of being under-prepared for Town Council meetings.

Harrison tries to devote substantial time prior to council meetings to preparing for them, reading the voluminous packets the town staff supplies and talking with other council members.

That's a lot of zoning districts, height restrictions, open space conservation and affordable housing requirements.

"He seems to have a lot of energy and the ability to command a lot of info, and I guess that's what I like about him," said George Cianciolo,

chairman of the town's transportation board, to which Harrison is the council's liaison.

But it's not like complex documents are new to Harrison: he's been an environmental planner for years, graduating from Duke University with degrees in English and environmental management.

He currently works as an environmental planner and lives in Durham County, residing in the sliver of Chapel Hill that's across the county line.

That experience has played into the way Harrison — the only coun-

cil member from Durham County — shapes town policy.

Harrison has consistently voted for conservation measures and says he hopes to develop transit planning to guide the future of the region's connectivity away from multi-passenger vehicles with single occupants.

He still zips around town on the Diamondback Trailstreak he bought used in the spring of 1986.

But Harrison is known for more than his in-depth knowledge on technical issues.

He said that his approach to issues — lots of research and reasoned debate — could be as important as his own take on the issues. "People need to look at the approach that they want council members to take to the issues," he said.

Cianciolo said that Harrison has a quality approach. "I haven't seen him get in any arguments with any council members, but in all honesty, I don't know if he pals around with any others, either."

Cianciolo also praised Harrison's devotion to the board, noting that he attends virtually every meeting — a devotion not all council liaisons share.

Harrison is hoping to keep on applying that approach to all sorts of items before the town.

"When you have a really large, complicated issue like what to do about Carolina North, I think you need to start with the position that you're going to have a civil and constructive relationship with anyone that's going to have to do with this."

### Nice to meet you

Age: 55

Job: environmental planning consultant and ecology instructor

Favorite movie: Casablanca

Inspired by what album: Miles Davis, Kind of Blue

Political figure he would like to meet and why: Thomas Jefferson because I think Jefferson is the most influential president that the country has ever seen