

BOARD EDITORIALS

3 FOR ALDERMAN

Jacquelyn Gist, Randee Haven-O'Donnell and Katrina Ryan make up the trio that can best lead Carrboro through the next four years.

With Election Day fast approaching and half of the seats on Carrboro's Board of Aldermen up for grabs, the next few weeks could prove to be decisive in shaping the town's future.

The town, North Carolina's most quirky enclave of liberalism, has a lot at stake. It must maintain its long tradition of protecting the environment, including the Bolin Creek corridor. It needs to find a way to keep the town affordable for lower-class — and increasingly, middle-class — residents. It must continue to reach out to its growing Latino community. It needs to re-establish a downtown identity as developers look skyward.

And she knows enough to realize that there are no easy solutions for groups such as the Inter-Faith Council, which recently drew backlash from the business community when it suggested that it might consolidate its services for the homeless in downtown Carrboro. Her solution to the issue — balancing protection for the homeless with the needs of the business community — shows that her long tenure has attuned her to all of Carrboro's needs.

Gist also is pushing for an improved public transit system — meaning more routes at more times — and has said she'll look at Carrboro's budget to find the money. She also wants to ensure that UNC works with the town to make sure that the southwestern part of the tract — the portion that's in Carrboro — is beneficial for all involved; her track record shows she'll be able to do so.

Jacquie Gist

With 16 years as an alderman under her belt, Gist has proven that she knows Carrboro and the issues that the town must address. Her experience will serve Carrboro well, especially as the board loses long-time members Diana McDuffee and Mayor Mike Nelson.

ZAFFRON FOR MAYOR

The Carrboro mayoral race is a win-win proposition, but Alex Zaffron — however slightly — has set himself above opponent Mark Chilton.

It's turned into a bit of a joke: Whenever Carrboro aldermen-cum-mayoral candidates Mark Chilton and Alex Zaffron go anywhere, they're asked, "How are you guys different?"

The truth, of course, is that on most of the major issues facing the town — on business, on the recent forced annexation of out-of-towners, on the environment — there just isn't much of a difference to point out. Both have a long record of public service, Chilton beginning in Chapel Hill as a UNC student and Zaffron as a long-time member of the Board of Aldermen.

Either would be a successful mayor. But Zaffron's experience in Carrboro — and his strong push to continue the work of the current aldermen — give him the edge.

For better or worse, Zaffron — who has been on the board much longer than Chilton — will be identified with the work of the last decade-plus. We think it's for the better. Zaffron is unabashed about his push for taller buildings downtown in an effort to bolster the town's commercial tax base; he's taken heat for that decision, but it will make Carrboro a better place to do business and won't require too much of a sacrifice of its small-town

Ryan's work in the business community will give her a unique perspective on how to make Carrboro run as a business — streamlined, with high revenue and fewer (or at least reduced) expenditures.

She also demonstrates a strong understanding of student concerns. Her proposal to reduce the term for town advisory boards to one year in order to make serving more amenable to students might not be practical, but her insistence that safety and crime are the No. 1 issues for students is dead-on, and she's pledged to look into bolstering the police force.

Randee Haven-O'Donnell

Perhaps the most "Carrboro" of all the alderman challengers, Haven-O'Donnell boasts an impressive résumé that includes the town planning board, Friends of Bolin Creek and the Recreation and Parks Master Plan Committee.

And in a town that has made the environment one of its key concerns, Haven-O'Donnell's record is just about impeccable. Her insistence on protecting Bolin Creek and widening buffers around the area — if not purchasing the land outright — gels with the values of her community, and she's put her money where her mouth is through her work with the Friends.

We're not entirely sure how Haven-O'Donnell will work with the University, and that gives us pause. But given her record of getting things done in other arenas, she deserves the benefit of the doubt.

The rest of the pack

David Marshall shows practicality by pushing for tax credits for developers to get affordable housing built. And as an active member of the town, Marshall — a native of Panama — would be a strong advocate for the Hispanic community.

But he faces considerable time constraints as a father, a grad student at Duke University, a law student at UNC and a reservist in the military.

John Herrera, an incumbent, has proven a strong advocate for underprivileged and minority populations. But this campaign season — in which he failed to show up for many election forums and skipped out on the DTH endorsement project — calls into question his desire and ability to serve.

Catherine Devine has a long track record of service which is greatly appreciated by all. But she hasn't given any fresh ideas on any major issues.

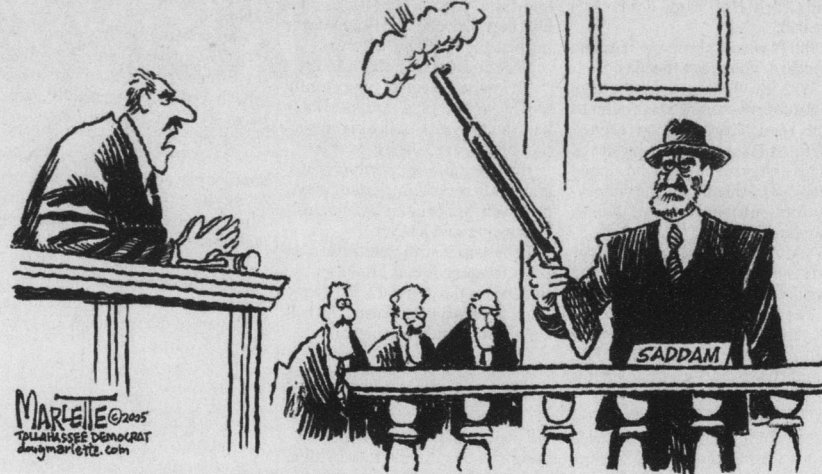
FROM THE DAY'S NEWS

"I'm doing OK. It takes more than a botched carjacking to keep me down."

CAM'RON, RAPPER, ON BEING SHOT IN HIS LAMBORGHINI ON SUNDAY

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Doug Marlette, Tribune Media Services



"OBJECTION OVERRULED!"

COMMENTARY

Drug war's focus on grass obscures addiction's power

Marijuana, apparently, loads unloaded guns. That's what the public service announcements would have you think, with dramatized scenes and stern voice-overs nearly culminating in a satire of themselves.

Never mind, of course, that marijuana-related deaths are almost unheard of. And overlook the fact that while the "war on drugs" spews forth public service announcements such as bitter drafted soldiers, the war's true casualties remain bleeding in the shadows, their addiction spawning disease.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy has appropriated nearly \$38 million for the 2006 fiscal year not to treat recovering addicts or safeguard youth, but to "collect and analyze drug trafficking and related financial investigative information."

But while blameless voices waft from the White House, citing ruined lives and troubled youth, those lives are still lying in ruin — and the youth have yet to find solace or salvation.

The iron fist of current drug policy has adopted a zero-tolerance approach that wastes time and resources on the harmless, deflecting desperately needed attention from the already harmed.

Some of the nation's finest are persecuting marijuana mules while heroin addicts drift beyond the narrow scope of bureaucratic



SARA BOATRIGHT KEEP 'EM ON THEIR TOES

concern, leaving fading trails of dirty needles. And when a single pinprick can deliver any number of death sentences, teenagers with bongs seem the least of our national worries.

The first step toward an unscathed nation, however, is not to cover its scars but to prevent new wounds. The shields could be as simple as clean syringes.

North Carolina is among the states contemplating needle exchange programs, which, if approved in selected counties, would allow injecting drug users to trade used syringes for clean ones.

Yet for all the years that the drug war has been raging, the only certainty is that some addicts will remain addicts, despite handcuffs and handholds alike. If they must be drug users, the prevention of infectious diseases among them is a logical first step.

It also could be an effective step, as a 1997 survey demonstrated that HIV rates among injecting drug users in cities with needle exchange programs dropped nearly 6 percent per year.

infection is a life that might yet recover and revive, potentially gathering others in its ascent back toward normalcy. The possibility for such a chain reaction, or at minimum the containment of a pandemic, does not require millions of dollars' worth of "investment."

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration estimated outpatient drug treatment costs to be more than \$1,400 per course, a sum that low-income families simply cannot afford.

The only way to be guaranteed affordable treatment by the federal government is to go to prison, where both methadone and tax dollars often disappear to no avail.

Still, the "investigative" budget of the war on drugs outpaces that of disease prevention and treatment programs, and federal agents chase trafficking ghosts while addicts go on dying. There is no moral redemption in this, no tangible justice to offer to America's drug-torn families.

Those who see their children, their parents, their siblings and their spouses fallen beneath dirty needles and fractured federal systems cannot fathom the logic of chasing paltry marijuana dealers, nor should they. In its tunnel-vision obsession with the war on drugs, the American government has forgotten how to battle.

Contact Sara Boatright, a junior public relations major, at scb419@email.unc.edu.

READERS' FORUM

Baker's campaign transcends student issues

TO THE EDITOR: Since yesterday's Daily Tar Heel endorsements were released, I've received dozens of e-mails and calls from my supporters saying that I should respond by explaining why I'm more qualified than candidate X, Y or Z, or to lash out at the DTH editorial board.

But that's not what I'm about — I'm not running for Town Council to oppose any person or organization. I'm running to bring a better quality of life to the 50,000 or so of us who call Chapel Hill home.

I'm running because environmental preservation, sound transportation policies, affordable housing, responsibility in the budget and a comprehensive plan for downtown development need a strong advocate.

I'm running because town-gown relations could be greatly benefited from including the perspective of a qualified student council member, especially as we look forward to the plans for Carolina North.

I'm running because I think it's more important to take a principled stand than to follow the whims of the moment and throw to the wayside the very qualities that make our town unique.

I'm running because adding diversity to the council should include socio-economic status, age, background and stature as much as anything else.

And I'm very grateful for all of the praise and assistance my campaign has received. I'd like to publicly thank Students for a Progressive Chapel Hill and Democracy for America for supporting my candidacy.

But although I appreciate any endorsement, I have faith that the people of Chapel Hill are independently minded enough to make their own decisions about their leadership, and I humbly ask that they consider me to represent them for the next four years.

Jason Baker

Chapel Hill Town Council Candidate

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Readers' Forum: Baker's campaign transcends student issues. We welcome letters to the editor and aim to publish as many as possible. In writing, please follow these simple guidelines: Keep letters under 300 words. Type them. Date them. Sign them; make sure they're signed by no more than two people.

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