

BOARD EDITORIALS

SHOW SOME LOVE

A proposed neighborhood conservation district for Mason Farm Road would do too much to shut students out of housing near the University.

Attention, students: You are not welcome in the Mason Farm neighborhood.

The Mason Farm Neighborhood Association, which represents town residents near the southernmost part of campus, wants the Chapel Hill Town Council to make the area a neighborhood conservation district. This would allow the community to levy all kinds of specifically tailored ordinances on property owners in the neighborhood — which is also antithetical to the idea of being able to do what you want with your own property.

The stated idea behind the Mason Farm petition is that the University is building more and more on the southern edge of campus — and that will make the neighborhood attractive to students.

The rationale is sound. And it's silly to suggest that the small-neighborhood feel of Mason Farm hasn't been changed, perhaps even dramatically, by the equally dramatic University expansion in the area.

But that's not a good enough reason to discriminate against students.

Sure, students are more likely as a whole to be loud, obnoxious or any other number of things. But

that doesn't justify targeting them. If the neighborhood association had said that it didn't want minorities to move to its area because they are statistically more likely to be involved in crime or tend to lower property values, there would be a huge public outcry. But students don't have the lobbying power in the town to cry foul.

Creating a neighborhood conservation district also would place limitations on who property owners could sell to. Who are Mason Farm residents to try to tell their neighbors who they can and cannot sell their land to? No one likes a subdivision going up next door, but that doesn't mean you can pull all kinds of shenanigans to make it hard on them. At the end of the day, you didn't pay for the land — your neighbor did.

That doesn't mean NCDs are a bad idea across town, just that the Town Council should make sure they're absolutely necessary. And in this case, there's not a compelling enough argument. If students have the money to rent or buy a house in Mason Farm, they have a right to do just that without the interference that an NCD would promote.

A FAILURE UP TOP

By failing to act after students messed up Student Congress elections, Student Body President Seth Dearmin has failed his constituents.

Silence. That and inaction are all Student Body President Seth Dearmin has given students in the aftermath of an embarrassing and scandal-plagued election.

Maybe we shouldn't be surprised; Dearmin, though he's had his successes, also has demonstrated a surprising and disappointing unwillingness to act on important issues.

At a time when student elections have been compromised and parts of student government have demonstrated an alarming lack of competence, there has been no visible leadership from the executive branch.

Despite the fact that they bungled the recent Student Congress elections, Dearmin has neither asked for the resignations of members of the Board of Elections, nor has he begun the process of removing them. After all the incompetence shown, especially by BOE Chairman Nick Mosley and Vice Chairman Jim Brewer (the group's unofficial spokesman), it seems obvious they should be gone — or at the very least reprimanded strongly. Yet they will be overseeing today's elections.

And if Dearmin does believe that Mosley and Brewer

should stay at the helm of the BOE, an incorrect but not impossible position, then he should have made a public statement to that end.

Anything would have been better than nothing, but nothing is all Dearmin has given the student body. Aside from a great deal of attention, nothing really has changed since the election two weeks ago. How can students be expected to have faith in student elections when nothing has changed and nothing has been said? Why should we expect today's election to be different from the last?

Perhaps the BOE has learned from its mistakes. Even so, if today's election does go awry, will student government have a solicitor general ready for any disputes about the interpretation of the Student Code? No. And has anyone even been nominated? No. This was inexcusable two weeks ago, and it still is. Dearmin might refuse to comment on government failures, but he should at least make an effort to fill empty positions in student government.

Silence might be golden, but not when it comes to leading and governance. And when it comes to the task of helping to provide fair elections, Dearmin appears to have been struck dumb.

A FAMILY REUNION

A policy that would allow faculty more say in University donations will do much to tighten the bonds between professors and administrators.

When, last year, a philanthropic group that once gave seed money to a conservative think tank offered money to UNC, it seemed in some quarters that the sky was falling.

It wasn't, of course. But the controversy caused by a proposed curriculum in Western studies that would have been funded by the John William Pope Foundation showed a serious need for the University to respond strongly to the concerns of its faculty. Administrators squared off with dozens of faculty members who thought the foundation would provide dirty money, dragging UNC's name — and millions of dollars — through the mud. Ultimately, the Pope Foundation withdrew its proposal, with students as the ultimate losers.

Thankfully, the foundation has come back to UNC with an alternate proposal to expand already existing programs in Western studies. But it still might not have ended that way — making a new proposal that would allow faculty to appeal a University decision on fundraising a good idea.

Based on an Emory University policy, the move could bridge the gap between faculty and administrators. If it were in place during the Pope Foundation controversy

last year, such a policy likely would have quelled faculty fears, avoiding the media frenzy that quickly arrived.

But it's not just the potential for good PR that makes the move a solid one. There's also the fact that faculty simply deserve more of a voice in UNC's affairs; they often provide a different perspective than the officials who make the major decisions, and if the University is to accept money that could affect professors' teaching, those faculty should be able to say their piece.

The development task force's ideas also reflect that principle of fairness. It rightfully calls for more transparency in the way UNC conducts its business with donors, including more upfront talk between faculty and administrators.

The relative lack of outcry about the Pope Foundation's new Western studies proposal shows that the great majority of people at UNC are willing to be reasonable, provided that their concerns are heard. The task force on development ought to be applauded for recognizing that — and for coming to see that, as much as possible, the University ought to consider donations in public.

Sometimes, it's good to be afraid of the dark.

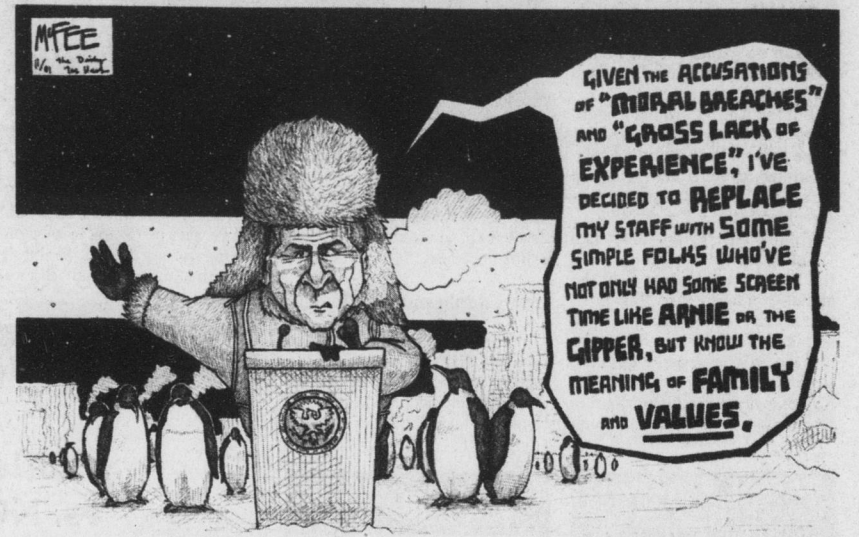
FROM THE DAY'S NEWS

"We had people grabbing the microphone. ... People were barfing in the restaurant. Some people even stole hamburgers."

GREG MITCHEL, FORMER MIAMI SUBS MANAGER, IN A POST-HALLOWEEN 1997 DTH INTERVIEW

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Philip McFee, pip@email.unc.edu



COMMENTARY

Halloween's ancient customs are worth respecting today

If you can manage to peel the vodka-soaked mask off your face and make sense of the written word before using this newspaper as a receptacle for last night's candy corn and Purple Jesus, consider this: You've just celebrated a Pagan holiday.

And despite what Jerry Falwell might have told you, it wasn't the devil's birthday or an excuse for lesbians and Teletubbies to cavort about and invite another hurricane.

It was Samhain Eve, a ceremonial threshold at the cusp of the Celtic new year. Long before undergraduates in polyester costumes roamed Franklin Street, Celts in Scotland and Ireland celebrated the last harvest before winter settled in, making the preserves and salted meat that in some American bastardization of tradition became Jolly Ranchers and Jell-O shots.

Granted, the tradition is nearly as dead as the taboo of Halloween in Chapel Hill, where the town's name strikes a note of irony when the Bell Tower's temporary jack-o-lantern glowers down on stumbling freshmen.

But the national perception of Halloween's roots underscores a lack of understanding that has too long marred the canvas of religious cohesion.

Samhain, literally meaning "summer's end" in Gaelic, is one of many ancient Pagan holidays that have left their mark on mainstream religious practice. Before there was Easter there was the Spring Equinox, a Pagan fertility festival marked by the birth of farm animals that were later manifested in the bunnies and eggs that now fill Hallmark window displays.

And even Mr. Falwell himself might refer to the Christmas season as "Yule," a term which in actuality describes the Pagan celebration of the winter solstice. The logs, wreaths, evergreen trees



SARA BOATRIGHT KEEP 'EM ON THEIR TOES

and even the exchange of gifts have their roots in Halloween's far more ancient Celtic counterpart.

I'm not trying to say that we should revere Christian holidays any less; if anything, they should be made richer by their storied pasts. Yet a misguided modern interpretation has aligned "Pagan" with "evil," equating a term that simply describes a non-Christian individual with a so-called Satanist.

In turn, the delicate intricacies that bind Pagan tradition to Christian origin have been buried beneath hellfire and damnation, robbing subsequent generations of their own magnificently enmeshed history.

In few places is this more apparent than in the mission statements of interfaith ministries, including the Interfaith Alliance of Wake County. The organization seeks to unite "Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, Native American and Unitarian-Universalist religions" to serve the community.

Its cause is inarguably a just and commendable one, yet it overlooks the estimated 770,000 Pagan-identified individuals in the United States. Perhaps more significantly, such organizations suggest in their omission of Pagans that this minority religion — largely characterized by a worship of multiple gods and goddesses and a connection to nature — is a malevolent one.

In a country founded on freedom of religion, few implications could

be more harmful. The Satanic association is doubly unjust given that it originated in 1969, when a high school dropout named Anton LaVey published "The Satanic Bible" and used an upside-down Pentagram — the Pagan symbol of equilibrium and protection — as its cover illustration.

Thus, centuries of tradition were tarnished by a Californian outcast with an 11th-grade education, and a stigma was born.

The greatest loss, however, is not the public perception of Pagan individuals or the lost heritage of mainstream religion, but the missed opportunity of united public service and exemplified tolerance.

When a society of organized religions labels a particular brand of faith as wanton and wicked, it not only condones an atmosphere of ignorance but projects the message that discrimination is acceptable. If we are welcoming of all races and genders but closing our doors to a religion that gave us everything from Easter eggs to environmental protection, we are far from the realization of true equality.

So today, when under-eye shadows replace masks and the University's best and brightest sip black coffee to recover from the revelry, they will be doing so on the first day of the Celtic year. Few will know or care that the newly minted winter, known by Pagans as the "dark season," is not a period of death or depravity but one of regeneration and unseen growth.

Celts saw this as a seed beneath the frozen surface, a silence that could give birth to the raucous music of spring. With any luck, when the last frat boy in drag has shuffled from the gutter and the final sterilizing spray has lent the town a fresh sheen, some root of tolerance will remain.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions solely of The Daily Tar Heel editorial board and were reached after open debate. The board consists of four board members, the associate opinion editor, the opinion editor and the DTH editor. The 2005-06 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials. Address concerns to Public Editor Elliott Dube at dube@em.unc.edu.

The Daily Tar Heel

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READERS' FORUM

Students need to put up or shut up — Go to games before asking for more tickets

TO THE EDITOR:

I was disheartened today to read in Justin Johnson's letter that 1,000 student tickets remain for the defending National Champion North Carolina Tar Heels' rematch of April's title game with Illinois. I and many other students have been huge advocates for increased and better student seating in the Smith Center, but this has caused me to rethink my position.

We're the defending national champions and yet our student body leaves 1,000 tickets on the table? I understand that the recent Saturday distribution conflicted with the registration schedule for sophomores, but one does not have to stay at distribution the entire time.

You show up for line check, and if you're a low number in line, stay and get your tickets — if you're a high number, stay until you can determine the pace of distribution then go to a campus computer lab to register and come back in time to hear your number called.

Until we as students can actually pick up all of our allotted tickets, particularly to games of the magnitude of the Illinois one, we simply do not deserve more or better seating in the Dean Dome. I know I will be at the Smith Center cheering on a young, hard-working Tar Heel basketball team every game possible this year, just like I did as a freshman in 2002-03 to see a young Felton, McCants and May grow up before my eyes on their path to becoming champions.

Will you be there?

Brian Strang Senior Political Science/PWAD

Speak Out

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. If you're a student, include your year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff: Give us your department and phone number. The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Bring letters to our office at Suite 2409 in the Student Union, e-mail them to editdesk@unc.edu, or send them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515. All letters also will appear in our blogs section.

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