# After much debate, tax issue still in limbo

## Board discusses need for public input School, spoke briefly at the meeting and said he was not surprised

BY NATALIE BLACKBURN

Tensions were high, comments were bold and common ground appeared unreachable.

The Orange County Board of Education met Monday to discuss the recent referendum concerning a special district tax for Orange County schools - one that failed on the Nov. 8 ballot.

After much debate, school board members left the issue unresolved.

The special district tax for county schools was seen as a proposal

that would help equal the amount of funding between county schools and the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, which already has a spe cial tax that generates about \$13

The Orange County Board of Commissioners saw the referendum as a way to see whether or not the county would support such a tax - it was rejected by roughly 78 percent of voters.

Graig Meyer, a parent of an Orange County student and chairman of the school governance committee at A.L. Stanback Middle

by the outcome of the vote.

"I was not surprised that the referendum failed," he said in a phone interview Monday. "I was a little surprised at how overwhelmingly it failed."

Meyer was one of the most vocal members of the community in support of the referendum before Election Day, and now he is working to convince the school board to adopt other possible monetary

plans for Orange County schools. The school board, however, is having trouble agreeing on a solution or the level of need. With such disagreement within the group, some mem-

public and ask for some feedback," board member Libbie Hough said.

School board members disagreed on how much the public already had participated and the ability of the board to make discussion easily accessible to the public.

"We haven't embraced the community to come to our schools, to sit down, to ask questions," school board member Delores Simpson said. But school board member

Elizabeth Brown said she believed the school board has been doing enough to reach the public.

Hough voiced her opinions on the

bers thought hearing public opinion would be more beneficial.

"It would be helpful to turn to our a system that is unfair and unjust," a system that is unfair and unjust," said Hough. "It's time to fix that."

Board chairman Randy Copeland, however, disagreed with the need for equity. "I don't think equity is something we need to put our sights on," said Copeland, who also stated that he was against the failed district tax and against a

raise in taxes in the county at all.

Copeland said the county schools do not need more tax money but rather need to look at redistributing

funds throughout the system. Meyer, who could not stay for the discussion, had predicted disagreements would occur during the meet-

"I really want to ask our board to work across their differences and find a unified voice."

GRAIG MEYER, PARENT

ing and made a request of the school board in an interview beforehand.

"I really want to ask our board to work across their differences and find a unified voice."

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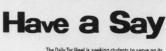
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