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# Candidates debate Chapel Hill-Carrboro schools

By NANCY HARTIS

Three new members will be elected to the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Board of Education in the city election next week. Below, the six candidates explain what they consider to be the vital issues confronting the Chapel Hill-Carrboro school system and what they think should be done about those issues.

**George LaChapelle, 48,** has lived in Chapel Hill for three years and is plant manager for the Eaton Corporation in Roxboro.

LaChapelle is voicing concern about two new laws that require exceptional children who have been previously grouped for specialized instruction to be placed back in the mainstream of average students.

"This has to be done in a way that doesn't short-change our responsibilities with the other children," he says.

Administrative spending and discipline in the classroom are two other major concerns of this school board candidate. On discipline, LaChapelle says, "Teachers need to feel there's a clear policy to provide back-up and support for their actions. There's some feeling that the discipline policy needs to be restated in simpler terms.... And I think it needs to be enforced uniformly."

On administrative spending, he says, "We apparently don't have community-wide agreement on how much administrative spending we're doing.... I would not support any off-the-cuff thing, but the numbers are saying we should take a look and evaluate it."

LaChapelle believes the present redistricting of the public school system is an important issue also. As school authorities consider drawing up new school districts for the system to improve space utilization and racial balance, LaChapelle says they should listen to what the parents have to say.

He says that strict quotas should be flexible, especially in the elementary schools. "Stability and security are important to these young children. I don't think you should move them if you can help it," he says.

LaChapelle says he believes there is a need for improved communications between parents and the school board, but he considers communications more "an area of concern" than an issue.

**Verla Insko** is a 41-year-old homemaker and former junior high school science teacher. A Chapel Hill resident for 13 years, Insko says she feels there is too much administrative spending, too little support for teachers trying to discipline students, and a lack of communication between parents, teachers, the board and the administration.

On administrative spending, she says, "I think it's higher than it should be. Part of the problem comes from inadequate job descriptions for administrators.... I'm highly in favor of redefining some of the jobs."

On discipline, Insko says, "I think teachers feel like they cannot go to the principal with their discipline problems.

"Too often we have looked at one problem when we think about spending, rather than look at the total program as a whole. This has been the problem. I think we could have done better if we had looked at the entire system and the entire school program and then decided from there," she adds.

Francisco says she believes emphasis should be restored on basic education in the classroom, but at the same time, she says there need to be programs of academic excellence. She calls for remedial and tutorial programs for after-school and in the summer.

On discipline, she says, "In order to combat this problem, we must insist on a policy from the board, enforcement from the administration of the policy

program, a committee which would meet periodically with the school board to discuss issues and to keep adults aware of the frustrations of children.

**Theodore Parrish, 43,** is a policy adviser in the N.C. Department of Administration. A Chapel Hill native, Parrish says, "I think basically a great deal of disruption, a lack of communication and frustration is associated with the whole school system right now because this community is very diverse.

"We need to get parents of all types of children working together, which means that the school board needs to be much more responsive to everyone," he says.

Parrish also says discipline is a problem in the schools right now. He says, "We need alternatives in that school where the student is. A disruptive student needs a place where he can be temporarily removed until he can be re-integrated into the classroom.... We need appropriate remediation as well as discipline for repeatedly disruptive students."

On competency testing, Parrish says, "If handled in a positive way, competency testing is good. You can view it as an opportunity to help design remediation. The board can influence this positive outlook."

Better use of resources is another area of concern, Parrish thinks. "A lot of the things we talk about here need not require money, if we use the resources of the university more and the many retired individuals who live in this community.

"We need to broaden and beef up our deficiency of resources. We need to utilize more volunteers and elicit more support from the school community."

Parrish talks also about increasing communications between teachers and the school board. "We've also got to invite the teachers in and ask them what's on their mind. We need to let them know that we respect them and their point of view."

**William Strickland, 43,** is an associate dean of student affairs at UNC. He has lived in the community for the past six years and he believes the role of the school board is one of the most important issues in this election.

"The significant overriding issue is control of the schools," Strickland says. "The board is either responsible to the community or it is responsible to the administration. Somehow, the board must direct itself to what the community wants and be responsible to the administration," he says.

"But the overriding educational issue is the fact that Chapel Hill is not preparing a vast majority of the students to function adequately after graduation. They've done a poor job with the below-average student also," he says.

Strickland said there are not very many above-average students in the school system. "We need programs in this system that prepare the below-average students without taking away programs for the others," Strickland says.

As a former principal of Chapel Hill High School and currently a University administrator, Strickland feels he is qualified for the school board. "I think I have an unusual advantage. My past experience has given me a real insight into the education process and I feel I know the community well," he says.

Nancy Hartis, a senior journalism major from Kinston, N.C., is a staff writer for the Daily Tar Heel.

## Shared-ride taxi service requires modifications

The Chapel Hill Transportation Board and the University reached an agreement several weeks ago concerning the fate of the night shared-ride taxi service. The pact gave the service until Oct. 31 to justify its existence in its present form. Justification would be an average of 100 riders each evening, a little more than half the number of riders of the fixed-route buses on a typical night last year. Anything substantially less than that figure would require the town to modify the shared-ride taxi system, either by eliminating the 25-cent surcharge on bus pass holders or by instituting a "mutually acceptable" combination of buses and taxis.

The deadline has passed. And the shared-ride taxis have yet to carry 100 riders in any one evening. The most successful night was this past Monday, which saw 74 people use the system. According to a taxi dispatcher, the average ridership is more than 50 riders per night.

Even though the shared-ride taxis have failed to justify their existences under the agreed criteria, the Transportation Board has chosen to recommend continuation of the present service. In a board meeting Tuesday, Transportation Director Bob Godding noted that while the 100-rider figure has not been met, ridership has been improving. Board member Paul Morris seems equally reluctant to give up on the project, as he recommended an additional week or so — without the surcharge — to promote the taxis. And Gorman Gilbert, another board member, claimed that the town was still learning about the shared-ride taxis.

It is obvious that the shared-ride taxi service is cheaper than fixed-route buses at night. The question before the Transportation Board and the University, though, is whether the taxi service can meet the transit needs of the community. The University has already indicated it believes that some modifications will have to be made before these needs can be met. The town, however, has been less than ready to share the University's belief.

If the town wishes to salvage the shared-ride service, it must be willing to modify it. It is highly unlikely that ridership will improve by leaps and bounds as long as the 25-cent surcharge is still in effect (of course, wintry weather will bring a few more riders to the service — but by necessity and not choice). Certainly, elimination of the surcharge will make the service more popular — and therefore, more expensive to the town — but the benefits to the riders will certainly outweigh the relatively modest increases in cost. And increased demand can also make bus passes more popular, thereby allowing the town to recoup some of its losses.

Also, a pass solely for the night taxis is a viable modification which the town should examine. Such an alternative could add to the town's revenue, yet also make the taxis more appealing to prospective riders.

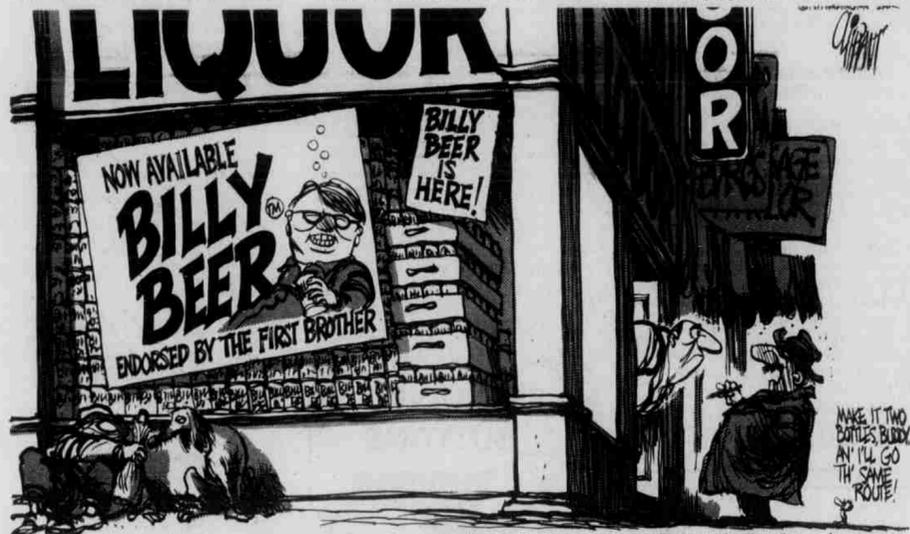
Finally, some provision must be made to accommodate riders without bus passes. Fixed route buses served individuals without passes, and until the shared ride system can include reasonably these riders, it will be inferior to fixed route service.

We seriously recommend that the Transportation Board realize the present shared-ride taxi service needs modification, and we urge the board to investigate the possible alternatives thoroughly and promptly. Until it does, the transportation needs of Chapel Hill will be far from satisfied.

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# Two bond issues and five constitutional amendments on Tuesday ballot

By DAVID STACKS

Voters in Chapel Hill and across North Carolina will go to the polls Tuesday to decide on two bond issues and five amendments to the N.C. Constitution.

The proposed amendments, if approved, will exempt widowers from the state's homesteading laws, allow wives the right to buy life insurance (only husbands can buy now), permit electric companies to share ownership of utilities with local government agencies and require the N.C. General Assembly to balance the state budget.

Approval of the two bond issues will allow the state to issue \$300 million in highway bond certificates and \$230 million for construction and renovation of water treatment facilities.

If voters approve the \$300-million highway bond, the N.C. Department of Transportation will spend \$250 million on rural primary and secondary roads, \$50 million on city streets and \$30 million on bridges.

Transportation officials have said completion of current highway projects may be delayed and new projects postponed if the bond is not approved because of increased construction costs. Highway officials argue that inflation has doubled construction costs since 1967, while the last highway improvement bond was issued in 1965.

The proposed bond issue also would allow \$30 million to replace inadequate and obsolete bridges across the state. The money would be set aside from funds allotted to primary, secondary and urban road projects.

Highway officials have estimated that 16,000 of the state's 71,000 miles of primary and secondary roads are not up to passable

standards; 300 of 4,000 miles of urban streets do not pass inspection and more than 5,000 of 16,000 bridges do not measure up to standards.

The U.S. Department of Transportation has promised to match state funds if the Nov. 8 referendum passes. Projected revenue from the bond, matching funds and supplementary state and federal taxes would provide \$1.3 billion for highway use over the next five years.

Officials have said one cent of North Carolina's 9/4-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax will go toward paying interest to certificate holders if the highway bond passes. Presently, that one cent goes to paying off bondholders from the 1965 issue.

Gov. Jim Hunt and Transportation Secretary Tom Bradshaw have endorsed the highway bond issue.

"Bond funding can assure that the present level of effort can be continued on these local problem areas," according to a report by the state Division of Highways. "Moreover, many of the problems to be addressed on the rural primary roads are in suburban areas just outside municipal limits. Solving these problems will be of great benefit to the urban areas."

Another ballot that will be handed to voters when they go to the polls asks the electorate's approval to float \$230 million in clean water bonds.

If approved, the water bond will allow the state to help municipalities and governmental agencies improve and expand existing water treatment facilities and build new wastewater treatment plants and water supply systems.

The bond would set aside \$112.5 million for pollution control, \$110 million for additional water supplies and \$7.5 million for a contingency fund.

From the pollution control account, \$75 million would be handed out to eligible municipalities and \$37.5 million to counties that qualify under the state's distribution system. From the water supply fund, \$31 million would be distributed statewide and \$79 million allocated to counties that qualify.

## Bonds and Amendments

The federal government will match the \$230 million, if the state's voters approve the bond.

The state will provide half of the nonfederal share of pollution control projects up to a minimum of 25 percent of the total cost of a project, according to a brief prepared jointly by the N.C. Departments of Administration, Human Resources and Natural Resources and Community Development.

State grants for development of new water sources and renovation of existing facilities also is limited to 25 percent, and if approved next week, would be distributed on a "what is available" basis. The \$7.5 million contingency fund for emergencies also will be allocated on a first-come basis.

Hunt and Howard Lee, secretary of natural resources and community development, have endorsed passage of the water bond. Both have campaigned for voter approval in the referendum Tuesday.

State officials have said passage of the highway and water bonds will make a general tax increase unnecessary. Interest on both bonds would be paid from taxes already collected for

the general revenue fund.

On a separate ballot are five proposed constitutional amendments:

• **Homestead exemption.** The amendment would allow a surviving spouse of either sex to receive the benefit of the state's homestead exemption. The law now says a homestead left to a widow is exempt from the debts of her husband. The amendment would extend to a husband or widower the same benefits now extended to a wife or widow.

Any North Carolina resident who owns and occupies property designated as his home has a lifetime homestead exemption. Under the law, the holder of the exemption is free from forced sale to meet any debts except unpaid taxes and debts stemming from the original purchase of the property.

The homestead amendment is designed to allow a family to remain in its home without fear of creditors seizing the entire property.

• **Life insurance.** The amendment would extend to wives the same rights husbands now have to insure the lives of himself and his wife for the benefit of the wife or children. The N.C. Constitution now says only the husband may insure his or his wife's life for his wife and children.

Under existing law, life insurance benefits are exempted from the husband's creditors both before and after his death, provided the policy's sole beneficiaries are the man's wife and children.

Passage of the amendment would extend to the wife the privilege of insuring her life for her husband's and children's benefit, free from the claims of creditors.

• **Joint ownership of electric generation facilities.** The proposed amendment would allow

private utility companies and associations to own electric generation facilities jointly with local governmental agencies. Existing law says local governments and private utility companies each can own entire electric systems. The amendment would allow each to co-own with the other.

Regulatory requirements, such as minimum environmental standards, would not change under the proposed amendment.

The amendment would also allow the facility owners to issue bonds to finance the operation. The bonds would be sold by the N.C. Local Government Commission. Interest would be paid from the electric facility's revenues.

The N.C. Utilities Commission has endorsed the electric facility amendment, saying joint ownership would produce financial savings to co-owners and increase the reliability of power supplies.

• **Balanced budget.** The amendment requires the N.C. General Assembly to balance the state budget each year. N.C. General Statutes already mandate a balanced budget, but existing law could be changed by the legislature. If approved, the constitutional amendment could not be changed by legislators.

• **Succession.** The amendment would allow the state's governors and lieutenant governors to run for second consecutive terms of office. Current law says the state's two top executives are limited to a single term but may run again after at least one consecutive term has passed.

David Stacks, a sophomore journalism major from Blowing Rock, N.C., is a staff writer for the Daily Tar Heel.