

The News of orange county

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Finance study group sets realistic goals

Some realistic goals for improvement of public school facilities and school organization in Orange County have been proposed by the 14-member School Finance Advisory Committee.

Adoption of all or a good part of the committee's program is likely. And the county commissioners judgment in closely studying and enacting these recommendations will be well founded. The committee has given very practical answers to questions that will be raised on its recommendations for \$3.6 million in school spending during the next decade.

That its proposals are greatly reduced from the needs cited by the school boards themselves shows that the committee is not a rubber stamp to help sell the school boards' programs to the people. Though three Board members served on this group, the committee's cost analyses have already been questioned by some school authorities.

But at the least the citizens committee has proposed a very ambitious program, yet one that can be carried out with a digestible tax increase, and that can put future school financing on a businesslike basis.

Propose bonds, five-cent hike . . .

For instance — it proposes for this year a five-cent increase in the tax rate to obtain school building funds. If a proposed \$1.5 million bond issue is authorized and approved by the voters next spring the estimated additional tax rate increase would be \$.11 — or a total of \$.16 over the current \$.95 rate.

On the same basis, the combined requests of the school boards for the coming fiscal year would necessitate an increase several times this comparatively modest hike.

—A substantial number of Orange County citizens could not and would not "buy" a single whopping tax increase.

The Advisory Committee's report is defensible and further commendable in that it does not now propose "frills" in buildings. Yet it realistically acknowledges the necessity for setting up adequate facilities to pave the way for good instruction.

The Committee has honestly evaluated the existing buildings and facilities, made a thorough study of expected enrollment growth, and turned in an attainable set of recommendations for financing a 10-year building program. Then the Committee urges that its study be reviewed and revised at least every three years.

The Committee has obviously not proposed too much. It will be major accomplishment to make a successful start on what has been recommended. There is no need to bicker over whether it is too little.

Fraternity site set for its proper place

After traveling a full circle of considering four other locations the University of North Carolina has come back to the logical solution to the need for a new fraternity house area.

A strip of land in the University's Mason Farm property—more specifically, bordering the Finley Golf court development.

The University first offered a smaller tract nearby to fraternities several years ago at a time when the fraternities preferred to be closer to the campus. Since then three ill-fated proposals to locate new fraternity areas in Chapel Hill residential neighborhoods have been brought forth and properly killed off.

The Mason Farm site one short mile east of the campus is and always has been the proper place for fraternity development. The Town of Chapel Hill should be glad to annex the area and have this public property put on the tax books through long-term lease to the student Greek letter groups.

Various benefits cited . . .

The site is in an area where it cannot be considered harmful to existing private residential property. The building there of a well-planned fraternity court will be an improvement of undeveloped land and will bene-

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Price of peace is the problem that confronts school board

It's foregone that the appeals of four Negro pupils who are seeking admission to Chapel Hill Junior High School will end up in federal court.

There the School Board may find itself in a peculiar position to defend. True enough, the Chapel Hill Board is the only one in the state that has set down a potential de-segregation plan in advance and stuck to it. This plan will result in the transfer of three Negro first graders to white schools in the fall.

This policy will apparently be the basis of the Board's defense of the suit. The court may agree that this permissive policy is "all deliberate speed" toward the elimination of race as a consideration in the assignment of school pupils. But any difficulty in defending the action is going to come at this point.

It's a question of whether the court will consider as sufficient "speed" this plan that continues segregation until someone until someone seeks integration. Undeniably this policy alone doesn't constitute compliance with the 1954 Supreme Court edict, though it may qualify as a defense in being an acceptable step toward compliance in due time.

Since North Carolina has a Pupil Assignment Act that specifically authorizes desegregation to whatever extent a local school board chooses, the Negro integrationist is invited legally to seek his own goal.

The Hodges administration feels that the effect of the North Carolina plan, which specifically authorized racial desegregation locally while the other southern states were trying "massive resistance," has been to "buy" racial peace inexpensively.

Now the question confronts local Board members. Will they "buy peace" less expensively if they okay the pending appeals? Their risk, and they know it, is that by going to court they may stir up more upper grade desegregation requests during the litigation — and they may also lose the court suit—unless they can make the present year's permissive desegregation policy stick as a defense against such lawsuits.

School funds dilemma is another dilly, too!

Here's the kind of problem that puts the county commissioners in such a tough spot in their slot as arbitrator between the County and Chapel Hill School Systems.

During the commissioners' discussions of the current expense budget requests for the schools last week it was brought out that the Chapel Hill Board's request would divide out to about \$46 per pupil. The County Board's request would amount to \$37 per pupil.

The commissioners notes that the County System proposed to hire 12 new teachers on local funds within its request, while Chapel Hill already drew a tidy sum from its \$.20 supplementary school tax. So the commissioners wondered figuratively: Why should it cost \$9 a pupil more to educate a child in Chapel Hill than it does in the County system.

To reason the problem out only to this extent of course does not

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—Walt Partymier, York Gazette & Daily

fit its private owner-residents. It will benefit the University in providing housing for over 500 students. And it will benefit the town as valuable revenue-producing property, while relieving the perennial pressure to locate unwanted fraternities in settled residential areas.

Just one warning note: The University, though its supply of land is dwindling every year, may as well be prepared in due time to allot more than the 12 acres of the presently proposed area to fraternity use. If the growth of the University of North Carolina is to continue unrestricted, a tract several times this size may eventually be needed.

The money should go for better education

During his Democratic primary campaign for governor Terry Sanford was scoffed at for his endorsement of the United Forces for Education program that would increase school operating expenditures about \$50 million.

The idea was called a "Santa Claus program." North Carolina's schools were depicted as quite adequate without such an outlay for their betterment. The candidate was tagged "High Tax Terry" for his boosting of the program which would allegedly burden the citizenry with an unjust tax bill.

Saw funds available . . .

Sanford himself stood fast by this plank in his platform, declaring that his examination of the state revenue picture showed this \$50 million program could probably be accomplished without a tax increase.

Last week the State Revenue Commissioner, never known for his radical predictions, pointed to a 22 per cent increase in revenue collections over the previous fiscal year. In fact, he forecast, it looked as though there'd be about a \$50 million surplus for the biennium ending next June 30.

So, as it turns out, Governor-nominate Sanford's arithmetic was pretty accurate and his optimism was well justified.

—Seems he was right' . . .

The people of North Carolina overwhelmingly voted for the man who suggested a \$50 million additional expenditure for better public schools. He told the public where he thought the money could be found.

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