

News Briefs

Flu vaccines still available

Public Health officials are urging residents to get vaccinated against the flu. H1N1 is still the predominant strain circulating in North Carolina but seasonal flu is emerging and usually lasts until late March. Free H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines are available five days a week through the Orange County Health Department. No appointment is necessary. Walk-in clinic schedules are: Chapel Hill office, 2501 Homestead Road, Monday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Thursday, 2 to 6 p.m.; and Friday, 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. Hillsborough office, 300 W. Tryon Street, Tuesday, 2 to 6 p.m. and Wednesday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more flu information, visit co.orange.nc.us/health. For specific health-related questions, call the nurse line at 605-2051 or email questions to flu@co.orange.nc.us

Keep your parked cars safe

The Carrboro Police Department is asking for the public's help in reducing the number of vehicle break-ins, as there has been a recent uptick in the number of these crimes. Many of these thefts are from unlocked or unsecured vehicles with valuables in plain sight. The Carrboro Police Department offers these tips to help reduce the chances that your vehicle will be broken into: Always roll your windows up and lock your doors when leaving your vehicle unattended, even if it is parked in front of your residence; do not leave any valuables in plain sight (this means all portable music devices, loose change, laptop computers, GPS units and mounts, cell phones and similar items); park your vehicle in well-lighted areas if possible and if you notice suspicious activity, call 911 and report it.

If your vehicle is broken into, call 911 to report it promptly, as physical evidence can be destroyed with the passage of time. If you have information on the suspects in these crimes, call 918-7397 or Crime Stoppers at 942-7515.

Chapel Hill Police Department seeks feedback

There will be four focus groups dedicated to citizens' experiences with and thoughts on the Chapel Hill Police Department. Citizens are asked to attend and provide input. These community conversations will be Saturday, Feb. 6 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Chapel Hill Public Library; Tuesday, Feb. 9 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the United Church of Chapel Hill; Saturday, Feb. 13 from 10 a.m. to noon at St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church; and Thursday, Feb. 18 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Hargraves Community Center. If possible, RSVP to outreach@townofchapelhill.org

Community meeting on gang and gun violence

Project SAFE Orange will host a community meeting concerning gang and gun violence on Tuesday, Feb. 2 at 2 p.m. at Central Recreation Center, 300 W. Tryon Road in Hillsborough. Organizers invite community members, social-service providers and anyone who can assist in the collaborative effort to reduce gun violence. Project SAFE Orange is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods, a national network that brings partners together to make communities safer. RSVP to Tenesha Robinson at trobinson@townofchapelhill.org or 632-1314.

Town looks at lighting standards

BY BETH MECHUM
Staff Writer

The Carrboro Board of Aldermen held its public hearings for January Tuesday night at the Carrboro Town Hall. First up was a request to revise outdoor lighting standards. Shannon Brummett, a regional property manager with General Services Corp., was there to enquire about the light-pole regulation. He said he preferred one 25-foot light pole on his properties in Carrboro as opposed to the 15-foot poles the plan now calls for. "We looked at the lighting and

the crime in those areas and so on, and we knew we had to protect our residents, and this was one good means to do that," Brummett said, citing the increased efficiency of one 25-foot pole compared to three 15-foot poles. Both cover the same area, but Brummett said the costs and energy efficiency of just having to replace and upkeep one pole was somewhat better than the three. The board asked for more time to hear from the Northern Transition Area Advisory Commission to further review lighting regulations. In a curious aside, the existing ordinance as included in

the meeting package includes a provision that states, "Lighting from a development may not produce a strong light or reflection beyond its lot lines or into the street and impair the vision of a dapper fellow," though according to planning administrator Patricia McGuire the last of that sentence was a typographical error and was supposed to read, "Lighting ... won't impair vision of a driver of any vehicle upon such street." A public hearing on an ordinance amending the Carrboro Land Use Ordinance provisions, dealing with stream buffers in accordance with the Jordan buf-

fer rules, was moved to March. The board also adopted a resolution to reduce street-separation requirements in developments that connect to village mixed-use districts. The land-use ordinance previously stated that no two streets may intersect with any other street at a distance of less than 400 feet. By reducing the length requirement, the streets theoretically become more pedestrian and bicycle friendly for the affected neighborhoods, according to McGuire. Winmore Subdivision has numerous intersections that are around 200 feet apart and one intersection of 110 feet.

LIBRARY
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Council member Jim Ward said he would like to see Ram and town officials begin work on construction plans, including hours, traffic patterns and com-

munications with nearby residents and businesses. Ward said one of the lessons learned during the building of Greenbridge was to start communicating early on with neighbors about construction plans. In other action the council:

- received a petition from Orange

FORECLOSURES
FROM PAGE 1

They're just main-street, middle-class families that are ... suffering from unemployment or other issues and are having trouble meeting mortgage payments." Pearce's agency administers the State Home Foreclosure Prevention Project, an effort to get borrowers in contact with more than 200 loan servicers and 26 counseling agencies statewide. When the project started 18 months ago, the agency was more concerned about the number of homeowners who were threat-

ened by subprime loans that were engineered to automatically increase payments, making the loans unaffordable as soon as the ink was dry on the paperwork. Now the agency has expanded the program to borrowers who are struggling to make their mortgage payments by opening a telephone hotline that lets all North Carolina homeowners tap into the project's network of counseling agencies. Pearce is glad the program has saved more than 2,500 homeowners from foreclosure and gotten another 5,000 to meet with housing counselors about finances and look for ways to avoid foreclosure. "We always would like to be able to do more," Pearce said. "We would like to reach more people, and still too often we find that people aren't calling us

to take advantage of the resources we have." According to a recent study by the Conference of State Bank Supervisors, only 40 percent of borrowers who are seriously behind on their loans are involved in any kind of program to get help. "There's still a lot of people out there that are in these awful loans who, however they've managed to do it, have scraped money together, lived on credit Program] program isn't working, the HARP [Home Affordable Refinance Program] program isn't working, so they're going to lose the house, and it's just a very difficult situation for them to be in." The federal HAMP program has been sharply criticized for its lack of performance: By the end of 2009, out of over 3.3 million eligible loans, servicing companies had only been able to permanently modify a little more than 66,000 loans, with approximately 46,000 still waiting for the final paperwork. Ripley has been frustrated by the inability of servicers to help his clients through the HAMP

of Bolin Creek, east of the Mount Bolus neighborhood and west of the Hidden Hills neighborhood. The property fronts onto Cedar Street and Burlage Circle. It is contiguous with town-owned open space lands along Bolin Creek.

with the homeowner to try save their home with the left hand."

Mainstream issues

While the HAMP and HARP programs were originally designed to help subprime borrowers, as the number of people with prime-rate mortgages getting into trouble increases, Quercia is concerned that these kinds of programs will be less effective. "The kinds of problems we have to deal with I think are somewhat different," he said. "It's not the kind of obvious predatory lending or unlicensed lending. It's really more of the mainstream issues all related to the economy." One program available to help unemployed North Carolinians make their mortgage payments is the Home Protection Program being run by the N.C. Housing Finance Agency. The agency makes interest-free bridge loans of up to \$24,000 for residents who have lost their jobs in the last two years so they can make their mortgage payments.

"I wish the program were 10 times bigger than it is," Ripley said. The State Home Foreclosure Prevention Project has a toll-free hotline you can call Monday through Saturday at (866) 234-4857. To find out more about the Home Protection Program, visit their website at nchfa.com/Nonprofits/HPPPhomeprotectionpi-lot.aspx

"We would like to reach more people, and still too often we find that people aren't calling us to take advantage of the resources we have."

cards, but are basically trying to keep that payment floating and going, and then you run out of ways of paying that higher payment." Ripley says these people don't have the income, can't refinance because the value of the home has gone down and have used up other types of credit, such as credit cards. "So in that kind of circumstance, they're stuck," Ripley said. "They're upside-down on the loan, they can't refinance, they're in default, the HAMP [Home Affordable Modification

program. "What we're literally seeing are servicing companies that on the one hand say to a homeowner, 'Yeah, you can apply for the HAMP program to modify your loan, or the HARP program to try to refinance.' And the homeowner does that, and then they get a foreclosure notice literally the next week, before they've even had their documents reviewed for the HAMP or the HARP program. And so you've literally got a servicer who's foreclosing on the homeowner with the right hand while they say that they're working

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sell your stuff.

CARRBORO CITIZEN CLASSIFIEDS

Win Tickets to Opening Weekend of the NC Comedy Arts Festival

Thurs-Fri-Sat February 4-5-6 at DSI Comedy Theater in Carrboro.

Email contest@carrborocitizen.com to enter

A very limited number of winners will be drawn Tuesday, February 2 and will receive 2 general admission passes for opening weekend.

Opening weekend of the festival features Sketch Comedy with performers from New York, Boston, Toronto and beyond as well as good old NC.

See nccomedyarts.com for list of performers & schedule of shows.

Presented by DSI Comedy Theater

THE CARRBORO CITIZEN

Do You Smoke? Want to Quit?



Cigarette smokers are needed for a research study. Healthy, drug-free participants between the ages 18-65 will be scheduled for a physical screening and 7-9 study visits.

Compensation up to \$320

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