

Briefs

Transit closes F and J stop

Chapel Hill Transit is temporarily closing, until further notice, the bus stop on West Franklin Street in front of Caribou Coffee because of construction. The bus serves the F and J routes.

Business school drops

UNC’s Kenan-Flagler Business School plummeted in the *Financial Times*’ latest Global Master of Business Administration rankings. The school fell from 46th to 62nd. The rankings are based on alumni salary and career development, diversity and research capability.

BOCC on retreat

The Orange County Board of County Commissioners will go on retreat this Friday. The BOCC plans to develop a standard policy to govern citizen advisory committees, outline a process for applying new standard policy and share information about past, present and future economic growth. The board also plans to gain direction on how to organize and structure an Economic Development Commission.

Activists march at UNC

UNC system students and immigrants-rights activists will march down South Road on Friday in protest of proposed tuition hikes and layoffs in the UNC school system. Demonstrators will gather at 10 a.m. in the Pit on the UNC campus and march to the UNC General Administration Building where the board of governors is meeting to discuss budget cuts.

Cuts to farm programs

Funds for the Carrboro Farmers’ Market “Truck Bucks” and other innovative programs for local farmers could quickly dry up if a GOP plan to tap money from the state’s Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund is approved, farm advocates say. The fund, intended to help farmers and rural communities’ transition away from tobacco, is one of several state funds GOP leaders in the General Assembly want to use to fill a budget shortfall.

The state Senate approved the plan this week. Hearings by the N.C. House are expected to open next week. Orange County’s new Piedmont Value Added Processing Center in Hillsborough and Eastern Carolina Organics in Pittsboro are among the recipients of funding from the program.

Almore pleads not guilty

Angela Almore, a former nurse at Britthaven nursing home, pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder on Tuesday in Orange County Criminal Superior Court. Almore, 44, of Berwick Valley Lane in Cary, is accused of intentionally causing several patients at Britthaven to ingest morphine and has been charged with the second-degree murder of Rachel Alice Smith Holliday, who died in February 2010 with high levels of morphine in her system. Almore has also been charged with six counts of patient abuse. The Medicaid Investigations unit of the N.C. Attorney General’s Office and Orange County District Attorney Jim Woodall launched an investigation after nine of the 25 patients in an Alzheimer’s wing at the nursing home tested positive for opiates. Almore is out on bond. Her trial has been set for Sept. 12.

ERB seeks new members

The Chatham County Board of Commissioners seeks volunteers to serve on the county’s Environmental Review Board. Several terms will expire on Feb.19 and volunteers with background and experience in environmental policy are encouraged to apply. The term lasts four years and the board typically meets on the third Thursday of every month at 6:30 p.m. The ERB’s activities include recommending policies, educating the public and county officials on environmental issues and suggesting initiatives that would protect the natural resources of Chatham County. The deadline to apply is Feb. 25 at 5 p.m. Applications can be found online at chathamnc.org/index.aspx?page=49

Council still searching for library solutions

BY KIRK ROSS
Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL — With a vote likely coming on Monday on the idea of permanently moving the Chapel Hill Public Library to University Mall, Chapel Hill’s library plans will pass another milestone.

But discussion last weekend proved that it won’t be the end of an ongoing debate over how to fund the town’s library services. The mall proposal, which was roundly panned at a public forum two weeks ago and has not gained additional traction since details of the idea were released late last year, is scheduled for review by the Chapel Hill Town Council at its meeting Monday night. If the council rejects the idea, the decision would clear the way for work to begin on a temporary move of the library to a space near A Southern Season while a \$16 million addition to the library is under construction. At their annual retreat Friday and Saturday at the former Chapel Hill Museum, members

of the town council said the big concern that remains is the county’s static annual contribution to the town. Construction costs of the addition will come out of the town’s capital funds, but after renovations the town is looking at several hundred thousand dollars in additional operating expenses annually. At the retreat, council members Matt Czajkowski and Laurin Easthom reiterated their support for exploring a shift to charging non-residents, especially if the county refuses to increase its annual \$250,000 payment to the town. Mayor Mark Kleinschmidt said in conversations with former county commission board Chair Valerie Foushee and new Chair Bernadette Pelissier, he’s passed on that there are “strong voices” on the council for charging non-residents. Czajkowski said the town already has a model for doing so in the way charges for Parks & Recreation facilities are handled. He said the timing could coincide with the renovation,

when the library will be in a smaller space. “A good time to do it would be when we move to the temporary facility,” he said. Council members Sally Greene and Gene Pease said they are scheduled to meet with members of the board of commissioners to discuss library issues on Monday. Pease said those negotiations, which started last year, were delayed after the board of commissioners’ elections. He said he had mixed feelings about changing the fee policy. “I’m very conflicted,” Pease said. “I’d hate to shut people out, given the economic times.” Council member Penny Rich said she’s concerned about the county’s recent announcement that it intends to build a new library in Carrboro. The county announced in late October that commissioners had approved a contract on land adjacent to Carrboro Elementary School with the intent of using it for a southwest branch library.



HOW TO REACH US
The Carrboro Citizen 942-2100
P.O. Box 248 942-2195 (FAX)
309 Weaver St., Suite 300 Carrboro, NC 27510
EDITORIAL news@carrborocitizen.com
ADVERTISING marty@carrborocitizen.com
942-2100 ext. 2

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WORKERS
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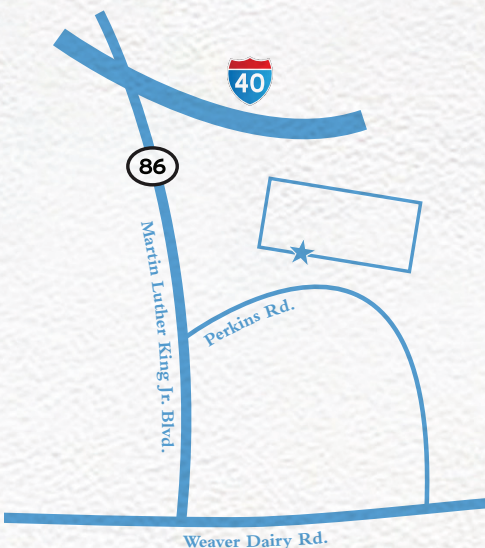
The woman said that some weeks her garbage wasn’t picked up and on other occasions trash was strewn down the street. She described the men as “rude, argumentative ... hostile and inappropriate,” but pointed out that in her complaints to the city she had asked only for a crew change, not that they be fired. “It is astonishing to me that this has ballooned into a race issue,” she said. The caller then declined McSurely’s request to question her, as was her prerogative under the rules of the proceedings. Sneed’s next witness, James Jones, who often drove the collection truck on which Bigelow and Clark worked, was unable to corroborate the caller’s accounts of inappropriate behavior. He did, however, allege that Bigelow became “irate” after being told to stop collecting aluminum cans during his shift and that Bigelow once yelled at his supervisor over the truck’s radio when drinking water was allegedly unavailable. McSurely showed Jones pictures that Bigelow had taken of the truck when it was stopped in the middle lane of Martin Luther King Boulevard. Bigelow had taken the pictures to illustrate the danger he saw in the collectors having to cross a lane of traffic on either side to retrieve cans. Kevin von der Lippe, an investigator hired by the town to look into allegations against Bigelow and Clark, described being told by one resident along the men’s route that she felt so frightened by their presence that she would peek from behind her blinds until she saw that the truck had left. Public Works director Lance Norris stated that he decided to fire Bigelow, despite the fact that Bigelow had been given complimentary job performance ratings and had received no warnings, due to “detrimantal personal conduct” that had included inappropriate exchanges with citizens and created a hostile work environment. Speaking about the report of the frightened woman, Norris said, “It was behavior that the town couldn’t tolerate.” Norris acknowledged to McSurely that it had taken a “month or two” for the department to respond to Bigelow’s complaint about the truck parking along Martin Luther King Boulevard, and added that he didn’t know if the driver still did so. Under questioning from McSurely, Bigelow said that he never cursed or yelled, nor, as reported, flailed his arms at residents. “I don’t carry myself in that way,” Bigelow said.

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