

Briefs

OC Dems oppose marriage ban

The Orange County Democratic Party voted on Jan. 23 to officially oppose Amendment 1, which would define marriage as between a man and a woman and would add a ban of same-sex marriage to the state constitution.

The amendment will appear on the May 8 primary ballot.

In addition to voting against the amendment, the Orange County Democratic Party voted to become a member of the Coalition to Protect N.C. Families and to work actively against Amendment 1.

Bryan appointed judge

Jay Bryan has been appointed to serve on the District Court bench by Gov. Beverly Perdue for judicial district 15-B, which covers Orange and Chatham counties.

Perdue said she chose Bryan to replace Judge Page Vernon, who is retiring, because of his experience as an accomplished attorney and his work in the community.

Bryan served on the Carrboro Board of Aldermen for 10 years and has also served on a variety of civic and charitable boards. He received his law degree from the N.C. Central University School of Law and has been practicing law in Orange County for 34 years.

Police seek info on peeping incident

The Chapel Hill Police Department is seeking information concerning a possible peeping incident that occurred on Halloween night.

Police say they have evidence showing three college-age white females dressed as Christmas gifts getting ready for Halloween.

If you have any information about the identity of the victims or the incident, contact J. Britt at the Chapel Hill Police Department at 968-2767, ext. 131, or jbritt@townofchapelhill.org.

Carrboro declares love month

The Carrboro Board of Aldermen on Tuesday voted to declare February “For the Love of Carrboro” month, in an effort to support local businesses.

During February, the town will sponsor a number of events to promote the town and its businesses, including a dating game event at The Station on Valentine’s Day.

The declaration was made on the heels of the town’s consideration as a location finalist for *Lovetown USA*, a reality dating show produced by the BBC and the Oprah Winfrey Network. Carrboro was not selected as the location for the show.

Biz awards

The Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce announced the 2011 Business of the Year award winners at its annual meeting on Tuesday.

Winners are: Bernadette Pelissier, chair of the Orange County Board of Commissioners – Chair’s Award for Public-Private Partnership; Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools – Progress Energy Sustainable Business of the Year; Helen Antipov of Comfort Keepers –Chamber Ambassador of the Year; Showroom Shine – Small Business of the Year; Harrington Bank – Mid-Size Business of the Year; 3 Birds Marketing and Carolina Brewery – Large Business of the Year (tie); Community Home Trust – Nonprofit of the Year; and employees of UNC Health Care – Citizenship and Service Award.

Telemarketing scams

The Chapel Hill Police Department recently received reports of telemarketing scams indicating that potential victims have won large sums of money or high-price items.

The scams require victims to wire money to the scammer in order to claim their prize. In one particular scam, the calls show up as coming from area code 876 in Jamaica. According to police, scams like this are designed to extort money from victims who never receive a prize, and many scams target the elderly.

If you believe you have been the victim of a telemarketing scam, call 911 to report this to the police. For information on how to protect yourself against scams, visit ncdoj.com/Protect-Yourself/Stop-Telemarketers.aspx

Chatham commissioners move to monthly meetings

In order to reduce meeting expenses, the Chatham County Board of Commissioners voted to reduce their meetings from twice a month to once a month.

The board will now meet on the third Monday of each month effective immediately. Their next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 20 at 6 p.m. at the Agriculture Auditorium in Pittsboro.

Buses to the Dean Dome

The Tar Heel Express shuttle will provide service today (Thursday) for the UNC men’s basketball game against N.C. State at 7 p.m. at the Dean Smith Center. Shuttle service will begin at 5:30 p.m. from the Friday Center, Southern Village, University Mall and Jones Ferry park-and-ride lots. Tickets are \$3 for one-way and \$5 round-trip. A shuttle will also run from the Carolina Coffee Shop, and will cost \$2 one-way or \$4 round-trip. The shuttles will run every 10 to 15 minutes prior to the start of the game and will operate for 45 minutes following the game.

Low-cost rabies vaccination clinic

Orange County Animal Services Department will hold its first low-cost rabies vaccination clinic of 2012 on Saturday at the Animal Services Center in Chapel Hill from 10 a.m. to noon.

The vaccination fee for dogs and cats is \$10. Dogs must be on leashes and cats must be in individual carriers.

Weaver Street open

Weaver Street is now completely open to traffic.

West Weaver Street was opened to thru traffic on Monday morning, and while work will continue with some minor disruptions to traffic, vehicles may now travel the length of the street without detour. Pedestrian access may occasionally be directed to one side of the street or the other depending on the proximity of construction activities.

George Seiz, director of Carrboro Public Works, said workers are still completing line-stripping correction and cleanup, but that the project is nearly complete.

“I think there will just be some general cleanup, and then we’re done,” he said. “Within a week or so, things should be pretty well totally wrapped up.”

“We anticipated that it was going to take a year,” Seiz said, “but now that it’s open and substantially complete, we’re obviously ahead of schedule.”

The Weaver St. Reconstruction Project began on March 7 of last year and has involved the replacement of an existing water main, installation of additional storm inlets and piping and the removal and reconstruction of the existing road.

Work on the east block was completed in July of this year, at which point the contractor began work on the second phase of the project in the west block. The water main was replaced in the west block while work was completed in the east block.

“We now have better fire protection,” Seiz said. “We have a better drainage system. We have



Andre Kearney (left, back), Allen Wendell (left, front) and Mike Hamlett widen the bike lane along Weaver Street shortly after the street was opened to traffic on Monday, one of the final tasks remaining on an otherwise open street.

PHOTO BY DUNCAN HOGE

a better roadway, improved ADA access, crosswalks and sidewalks – so we have a road that looks better and drives better.”

“We certainly really appreciate the businesses adjacent and the downtown, their patience and understanding of the project,” Seiz said.

“We’re really grateful to many of them for that”

– Staff Reports

County dicusses rail route along 15-501

BY ROSE LAUDICINA
Staff Writer

With questions lingering about the overall benefits for Orange County, the routes chosen and the outstanding cost, the Orange County Board of Commissioners have concerns about light-rail plans in the Triangle Regional Transit Program.

These concerns led commissioners to ask the Triangle Transit Authority at their meeting Tuesday night to conduct an analysis of a never-before discussed route for light rail that would run near U.S. 15-501.

Currently the two routes under consideration to connect the light-rail system from Durham to Chapel Hill are running along N.C. 54 East.

However, County Manager Frank Clifton believes these two options provide little to no benefit to Orange County in terms of economic-development opportunities.

Clifton says that because both of the currently proposed routes, C1 and C2, are situated in areas that don’t have the potential for development around them, Orange County is getting the short end of the deal.

“C1 or C2 puts all the light-rail development in Durham County,” Clifton told commissioners when he suggested they ask Triangle Transit Authority (TTA) to look at a route near 15-501.

“I you look at the total route for either C1 or C2, much of it goes through land that can’t be developed,” he said. “Without a thorough analysis of 15-501, we might lose an opportunity for Orange County to be used effectively.”

Wib Gulley, general counsel for TTA, told the commissioners that while he would be happy to talk with Clifton about the options for 15-501, he wanted to remind them

this plan was not created based on counties’ economic-development opportunities.

“This is not an economic-development effort,” Gulley told commissioners. “If it were, we would be doing this in a different way. This is a transportation infrastructure project.”

However, after Clifton planted the idea of looking into 15-501 into their heads, the commissioners seemed to be stuck on it, asking Gulley and Patrick McDonough, the senior transportation planner for TTA, questions about why it was disregarded and how the currently proposed alternatives would be more valuable to the county.

Commissioner Steve Yuhasz echoed other commissioners in expressing his approval for the endpoints of the system, but he wanted to know more about options for 15-501, and without that knowledge, he said, he would find it hard to recommend light rail as the best transportation alternative for the county.

Gulley said he was concerned that additional analysis could cause the project, which has been in the planning stages for three years, to move backwards.

In order to continue to move the project forward, the commissioners are supposed to vote on what route they would recommend pursuing at the Feb. 8 meeting of the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization.

“I have only been sitting on this board for three years,” Vice Chair Pam Hemminger told Gulley and McDonough, “and you are asking me to have to make one of the biggest decisions I will probably ever have to make.”

Commissioners requested the Triangle Transit Authority come to their meeting on Feb. 7 with more information before they vote on the issue.

School board further opposes charter school

BY ROSE LAUDICINA
Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL — In order to further voice opposition to the Howard and Lillian Lee Scholars Charter School, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools Board of Education voted last week to send a letter detailing why the board opposes the school to the N.C. State Board of Education.

However, with the charter school becoming an ever-closer reality, some board members questioned the effectiveness of a letter.

“I am OK with sending a letter,” Vice Chair Michelle Brownstein said at the board’s Jan. 19 meeting, “but I don’t think it will be effective or even considered.”

Board member Jamezetta Bedford said she thought the letter would have no bearing on the state’s decision and that the approval of the charter school was already a done deal.

“We have sent many emails and letters that say we oppose the addition of having more charter schools,” Bedford said. “This is a political battle I don’t want to get into.”

Superintendent Tom Forcella sent a letter to the N.C. Department of Public Instruction on Dec. 7 disputing claims made in the charter school’s application about overcrowding and a still-prevalent achievement gap in the school district.

However, the N.C. Public Charter School Advisory Council still voted to recommend the school’s application to the N.C. State Board of Education at its meetings on Feb. 1-2.

Board member Greg McElveen said that now is a good time to “reiterate our position on this operation,” since the state board is set to meet soon.

“This proposed letter has multiple objectives,” McElveen said, including “to give input on

how this is going to impact the education of the children in this community.”

The school board is worried the charter school will take both money and diversity away from the district.

Although the board is against the Lee charter school, McElveen, Barrett and Bedford said they aren’t explicitly against all charter schools.

Bedford said she felt it was unfortunate that those proposing the Lee charter school chose to partner with National Heritage Academies, a for-profit charter management group, and that if they had chosen to partner with the Knowledge is Power Program, she would support it, adding that she would even help them recruit students.

The board voted 5-2, with Bedford and Mike Kelley dissenting, to send a letter to the state board.

The board unanimously approved Kelley’s suggestion to include a video of the Raging Grannies, who performed a song opposing the school at the meeting, with the letter.

In other action last week, the board again addressed plans to alleviate overcrowding at Glenwood Elementary School.

A number of parents of Glenwood students came to the meeting to voice their opinion on what they felt the board should do.

Suggestions from parents and the Glenwood School Improvement Team included transitioning music and art to rolling carts to free up classrooms and asking for volunteers to redirect to Rashkis Elementary School.

After a lengthy conversation, the board decided to postpone a decision to February, when staff can return to the board with information about moving Glenwood’s pre-kindergarten class to Rashkis.

SOLID WASTE FROM PAGE 1

At the same meeting, the board voted to develop a plan to provide water hookups in the Rogers Road neighborhood adjacent to the landfill and authorize the cleanup of illegal dumpsites in the community, funding the plan with an increase in solid-waste tipping fees.

The closure of the landfill would effectively end the need for the inter-local agreement put in place when Orange County took over management of the landfill in 2000, and tonight at 7, the Orange County Board of Commissioners will come together with the Carrboro Board of Aldermen, Chapel Hill Town Council and the Hillsborough Board of Commissioners to discuss how to move forward as the closure of the landfill approaches.

In anticipation of the impending closure, the county commissioners in 2007 voted to site a transfer station at the Eubanks Road landfill, later reversing that decision after hearing strong opposition from the community.

The county reopened the search for a site that fall, but in December 2009 the commissioners voted not to site a transfer station in the county, instead deciding to contract with Durham County to ship garbage to its transfer station for a three-to-five-year period and to use that time to re-engage the county’s municipalities in developing a long-term solid-waste strategy.

“This issue has been going on for a number of years,” County Manager Frank Clifton said, noting the extensive search process the county conducted. “There was no location that they could find in Orange County that anybody felt suitable with moving forward.”

Carrboro Mayor Mark Chilton recently suggested a plan that calls for the county to keep the landfill open until 2015, allowing time for the county to site a waste transfer station. Chilton identified a possible site at the northwest corner of the intersection of I-40 and N.C. 86, and on Tuesday the Carrboro Board of Aldermen unanimously passed a resolution to ask the county to look into the feasibility of that site.

Chilton noted the high cost of hauling waste to Durham – an estimated \$500,000-\$600,000 for Chapel Hill and \$200,000 for Carrboro, annually – and the environmental impact of the extra miles driven in stating the importance of quickly siting a transfer station within Orange County.

“What would it say about our communities’ priorities to choose to simply pay \$750,000 a year to take our trash to Durham?” Chilton said, adding that the money saved could be used to fund additional infrastructure in the Rogers Road neighborhood, like sewer hookups and a community center.

However, Chilton’s suggestion that the county keep the landfill open for an additional two years has drawn strong opposition from the Rogers Road community and supporters who say it’s time the county and towns keep their promises to the neighborhood and close the landfill.

“Our good mayor from Carrboro talks about how well he knows solid waste. He doesn’t know the impact. He doesn’t breathe the polluted air,” said Robert Campbell, president of

the local chapter of the NAACP and a longtime Rogers Road resident and activist. “It’s time to do the right thing – the moral, just, right thing. The quality of life in Rogers Road is at stake.”

Chapel Hill is already looking into other waste-management options, including partnering with UNC and/or Carrboro as well as possible waste-to-energy options, and has put out a request for proposals from firms.

“We would like to make [the landfill closure] an opportunity to rethink our garbage,” Chapel Hill Town Manager Roger Stancil said.

However, Stancil said that in terms of waste to energy, “The technology is just not where we need for it to be at this point to put something on the ground.”

Meanwhile, Clifton said it will be important for the various boards to come together to reach some kind of a decision moving forward.

“We’ve had many, many years to address this issue, and it’s not that it’s an easy issue to address, but it’s not going to get any easier,” he said.

THE CARRBORO CITIZEN

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