



FRIDAY
Thunderstorms
70/34



SATURDAY
Clear
56/40



SUNDAY
Partly Cloudy
67/52



A carefully managed prescribed burn at Mason Farm Biological Reserve will usher in the resurrection of our Piedmont savanna vegetation. PHOTO BY JOHNNY RANDALL

FLORA BY KEN MOORE

The once and future Piedmont savanna

The 40-plus walkers accompanying me “in the footsteps of John Terres” around Mason Farm on Sunday saw something there that John never saw. Some of the fields and forests had been recently scarred by fire. I’ve invited my good friend Johnny Randall, assistant director for Natural Areas and Conservation Programs at the N.C. Botanical Garden, to tell the story in this week’s Flora:

“Like the mythological phoenix, many of our natural communities are periodically reborn through fire. If you perchance saw a plume of smoke rising from Mason Farm Biological Reserve last week, you witnessed evidence of an event that will usher in the resurrection of our Piedmont savanna vegetation. From the newly scorched landscape will emerge sun-loving grasses and wildflowers that create the habitat preferred by ground-nesting birds, turkeys and many other critters.

“You’ll recognize the names of these fire-responsive plants: blazing star (*Liatris*), wild blue indigo (*Baptisia*), sunflowers (*Helianthus*) and coneflowers (*Echinacea*). Native grasses such as Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium*) and big bluestem (*Andropogon*) also comprise this savanna matrix. Mown roadsides and other rights-of-way clearances have provided a refugium for these plants, while the former Piedmont vegetation succumbed to the shade of dense forests.

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Heels’ weapon

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Aydan Court still draws concerns

BY KIRK ROSS
Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL — The last time developer Carol Ann Zinn’s Aydan Court project was reviewed in a public hearing, she and then-Chapel Hill Mayor Kevin Foy engaged in a heated colloquy after the mayor and council appeared ready to reject a rezoning request for the project.

Zinn castigated the council and said she had been misled by them during a preliminary review of the project. Foy, in an uncharacteristic display of anger, strongly disagreed.

On Monday night at Town Hall, a different mayor and council opened a public hearing on the latest iteration of the project, which is located on 5.8 acres off N.C. 54, across from the Downing Creek Parkway.

The new plan calls for 90 condominiums in three three-story buildings and 146 parking spaces.

Zinn and engineer Bruce Ballentine sought to assure the council that the new plan took into account longstanding worries about the development’s proximity to nearby Jordan Lake gamelands and the Upper Little Creek waterfowl impound-

ment, which is adjacent to the site.

Ballentine said it was a challenge to take into account concerns raised by the council in the previous plan but still make it economically viable. He stressed that although the project is far denser than the current zoning on the site allows, the design affords greater protections from stormwater runoff and other impacts than if the project were to be a cluster of about 15 large homes, as the zoning now allows.

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A whole new Whirld



Artist and inventor Josh Lev watches as visitors enjoy his latest innovation, ‘new Whirld,’ at an exhibit in Carrboro on Sunday. PHOTO BY WILL BRYANT

BY WILL BRYANT
Staff Writer

Artists have always aimed to expand people’s creative horizons and challenge a culture’s standards and perspectives.

Local artists Josh Lev and Leo Gaev have done just that and more with their latest piece of interactive art, titled “new Whirld.” At the piece’s official display at Leo Gaev Metalworks in Carrboro on Sunday, the two showed how they’ve

put a spin on art, flipping it completely upside down.

Literally.

Standing more than 12 feet tall and weighing nearly 500 pounds, new Whirld is the Earth’s first spinning camera obscura.

“It’s an observatory to everyday life,” Lev said. “It modifies the world just enough to get your attention and it allows you to see the world in a new way.”

Constructed by Gaev, new Whirld looks and feels like a space-

ship but actually features an ancient technology under a new-age disguise. Built with an aluminum frame and a stainless-steel exterior, Gaev said new Whirld was a one-of-a-kind project.

“We basically had to figure out how to make it,” said Gaev, who has been working in the Carrboro-Chapel Hill area for nearly four years. “There were no plans. We had to problem-solve every step of the way.”

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ArtsCenter loses executive director

BY SUSAN DICKSON
Staff Writer

The ArtsCenter Board of Directors announced last week that board members had voted to restructure the center’s leadership, eliminating both the executive director and Youth Performing Arts Conservatory director positions.

Board Chair Karen Regan said board members and staff would fill the gaps left by the empty positions. According to an ArtsCenter press re-

lease, the adjustments are a reaction to “shifts in funding that affect [The ArtsCenter’s] current budget.”

Ed Camp, who was hired as executive director in August 2009, will remain as director through Friday, after which a volunteer interim executive director will be named, Regan said. Prior to coming to The ArtsCenter, Camp served as general manager of University Mall.

Lawruh Lindsey, the director of YPAC, submitted her resignation in December and her last day

will be Monday. Regan said they don’t plan to fill her position as the board looks at the leadership structure of The ArtsCenter and YPAC.

According to Regan, The ArtsCenter has struggled financially with the economic downturn, experiencing a loss of more than \$100,000 annually over the last few years.

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Everybody’s kid

RECENTLY ...
BY VALARIE SCHWARTZ

After attending a panel discussion on teens and substance abuse hosted by the United Church of Chapel Hill in January, discussions with those who know the teen scene led me to six weeks of collecting data and stories.

My overwhelming finding is that teens appear to be no more out of control than they’ve ever been, but they may be in more danger because of the state of our society.

The panel, which included professionals who work with teens (among them, a drug treatment court manager, an assistant district attorney, a counselor who treats teens with addictions and law-enforcement officers), spoke of the substances teens are using, the higher likelihood of addiction the younger they start and the availability of substances.

According to 2010 statistics from the police departments of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, those aged 16 to 18 were arrested 170 times in Chapel Hill and 69 times in Carrboro (for a wide range of charges). However, there were reports of children – from infants to 18 year olds – being victims of crimes 284 times in Chapel Hill and 103 times in Carrboro.

But Jim Huegerich, crisis human services manager for the Chapel Hill Police Department for the past 37 years, said the statistics are skewed because “teens don’t report. It’s masked as acted-out behavior.” If they did report, we’d see a lot more reports of bullying, much of it generated on the Internet. “A fair amount of people are using social sites to bully,” Huegerich said.

Besides not reporting victimization, not all teens using substances get caught.

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A panel discussing teen substance abuse at a meeting in January included some of the teens of the Youth Community Project and their adult guides, from left to right, Rachel Valentine, Victoria Law, Michael Irwin, Jessica Batson, Sam Getka and Gabby Abrams. In conjunction with an adult board, the Teen Support Coalition, the teens are working toward creating a teen-run nonprofit coffeehouse/cultural center in Carrboro or Chapel Hill.

PHOTO BY VALARIE SCHWARTZ

Board takes first look at budget

BY SUSAN DICKSON
Staff Writer

The Orange County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday took its first look at the 2011-12 county budget, which staff said could avoid major cuts and a tax increase – but only if changes at the state level do not take county revenues or pass expenses to the county.

“Based on everything we know right now, we’re not projecting a need for any layoffs right now, any major cuts in departmental spending,” county finance director Clarence Grier told the board.

However, he added, “We don’t know what the state may do.”

The \$176.9 million proposed budget represents a \$1.6 million increase over the 2010-11 fiscal year budget and includes no growth in operating budgets.

County Manager Frank Clifton said the county needed to be prepared for changes at the state level that would pass expenses from the state to the county or take away revenue, given the state’s anticipated budget gap, which officials have estimated at \$2.3 billion.

He also warned that there are likely to be substantial changes to state government programs that the county participates in, like the Clean Water and Tobacco trust funds.

“You have to keep in mind ... that come the end of the day, [a tax increase] may be your only option to deal with some of the impacts,” Clifton told the board. “There are ways to further reduce that, but it involves doing away with programs, not just reducing the programs.”

Commissioner Steve Yuhasz said he would like to avoid a property-tax increase, even if the county lost revenues through state changes.

Commissioner Earl McKee agreed.

“I’m afraid that we may have to take a stand and possibly set expectations that there will not be a property-tax increase,” McKee said.

Commissioner Barry Jacobs said he too would like to avoid a tax increase, but that he wasn’t willing to make extremely drastic cuts to avoid one.

“There is a certain point beyond which we cease to be Orange County and we become something less, and I don’t think that that’s where we want to go,” Jacobs said.

The commissioners will review the budget in coming months, with approval slated for June 21.

The board also reviewed the requested 2011-16 Capital Investment Plan, which includes proposed county and school capital projects.

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