AP-SOU SCHOOL VISITS BAN
Newspaper owner banned from school property

GRUNDY, Va. (AP) - The owner of a weekly newspaper has been banned from school property for repeatedly disregarding a policy requiring visitors to check in. His attorney claimed the ban was in response to critical editorials and a news report on roaches in the schools.

Earl Cole is not accused of doing anything illegal, but Buchanan County School Board members said he was seen lurking in trees and bushes with a camera at Riverview Middle School in the far southwest Virginia locality.

The county School Board voted 4-3 Monday to prohibit Cole, owner of The Voice, from setting foot on any campus except to attend public board meetings.

Cole's attorney, Bob Copeland, said the action prevents Cole from conducting business such as covering sporting events, political meetings held at schools and other activities.

"Schools are the heart and soul of rural areas," he said. Copeland said he is considering a lawsuit because of what he called the free speech violation.

He contends the board retaliated for editorials Cole wrote criticizing school-attendance policies and the roach problem.

Cole's disregard of policy, not anything he printed, led to the board's action, board member Bill Crigger said. Parents and teachers complained about Cole's presence, he said.

School administrators twice confronted Cole when he was on school grounds without checking in, according to Crigger, who called it a safety issue. Both times, Cole said he was photographing decorations.

David Thornbury, a board member who voted against the resolution, said the action seemed personal. Not always agreeing with what a newspaper publishes is part of being a public official, he said.

"It's a slippery slope," Thornbury said. "It didn't do anything to enhance public education in Buchanan County."

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Sample Meeting Story (School Board)

Pioneer City school leaders said they will collaborate with a national nonprofit to start a small alternative school for at-
risk high schoolers next fall.

At a committee meeting Tuesday, five of the board's seven members agreed unanimously to use part of a $9.9 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to start an alternative high school. The alternative program is something the district has considered for more than a year.

"This grew out of concern about a group of our students that were not successful in the traditional-model high school," said Terri Someone, associate superintendent for instruction.

The big push came last month, when the Gates Foundation gave the national education nonprofit group Citizens for Schools the multimillion-dollar grant to start small alternative schools in four states. In turn, Citizens for Schools offered about $250,000 to establish the school in Pioneer City.

The alternative program would enroll 75 to 150 students ages 16 and older, with a flexible schedule for students who work or have children.

Through the collaboration, Citizens for Schools would pay for computers, other supplies and one staff member. The school district would have to provide the site, five full-time teachers and operational costs such as transportation.

Because the district gets money from the state to cover each student, the money to pay some of the costs already is available, said Patrick Everyone, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

"To me, it's a very good deal," Everyone told the board members.

The next step, he said, will be finding a site for the school. An official vote approving the school will come at next week's full board meeting.

It was one of few items the members could agree on at Tuesday's meeting.

A discussion on whether to turn Benson Middle School, which has both year-round and traditional students under one roof, into a completely year-round program was more contentious.

Parents and teachers filled the meeting space, saying the change to a one-calendar school is long overdue.

"When I first got there, I was told that the calendar was going to year-round within a year," said Selena Nobody, an eighth-grade teacher on the traditional calendar. "It's now going on five years. ... It's almost become unbearable."

The two-calendar system is confusing and stressful, and creates instability, parents said.

Board member Fredrick Somebody asked the board to vote immediately to convert the school to a year-round program so planning could begin.

But other board members still were pondering whether to require students in Benson’s district to attend the year-round
school or to make enrollment open.

Board member Heidi Everything said she also wanted to consider opening Benson as a year-round program through grade 12. With all the questions looming, the committee put off a decision until January.

The group also previewed courses for the middle school for gifted students opening in the fall at the old Ikard elementary. The school will enroll sixth-graders from June Elementary, Shaw Boulevard Elementary and the new Hartman elementary. The board voted last month to create the middle school.

Residents Offer Housing Ideas
JANELL ROSS, Staff Writer
Raleigh (N.C.) News & Observer
Nov 23, 2005
520 words

One month after Raleigh voters approved a $20 million bond package supporters described as local financing for "affordable housing," the difficult process of prioritizing those projects has begun.

Among the options are transitional housing for the homeless and others who are recovering from addictions, new apartments for people with modest incomes, first-time home ownership programs as well as home and community improvement efforts.

Raleigh residents, investors and city staff gathered Monday for the first in a series of public meetings. City staff is seeking residents' help identifying locations in need of public investment, problems or gaps between local housing programs, and the city's greatest housing needs and trends.

Equipped with brightly colored stickers and markers, citizens punctuated maps of the city's redevelopment areas with message such as "tear down," and "build houses here." Some offered their ideas about what programs and policies the city will need to put in place to deal with neighborhood-specific problems and what the city needs to do to ensure women and minority-owned businesses have access to city contracts.

Others critiqued the city's existing housing purchase and repair programs and pointed to problems likely to develop in the next few years as the city's population ages. And others still questioned the volume of "affordable housing" recently created that is too expensive for the city's poorest residents.

Before the public was given an opportunity to comment, Raleigh's Community Development staff revealed a preliminary spending plan for the next fiscal year. It will not become final until the city receives word from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development early next year about how much money they
will receive from the federal government.

Congress is debating a range of domestic spending cuts that could effect local funding and programs, said Community Development Director Michele Grant.

The city aims to use its bond dollars to meet a variety of housing needs, those of people who might otherwise be homeless and those earning modest to meager incomes.

Before the $20 million housing bond package was approved in October, Mayor Charles Meeker and other city officials said that this funding would be used to help house the very poor, people earning less than $15,000 per year.

In recent years many of the apartments built with bond funds, such as Gateway Park on South Saunders Street, are affordable for people earning 50 to 80 percent of the area's $69,800 median income, adjusted for family size. Bond funds have also been used to help people earning similar amounts, to purchase a first home.

The proposed spending for the next fiscal year calls for slight increases in neighborhood revitalization and housing rehabilitation efforts. But, spending on rental housing and homeless programs, first-time homeownership and administrative costs have been recommended for slight decreases.

A draft of community's developments annual plan will be complete in late December.

Staff also will bring information about the city's affordable housing programs to civic organizations and many of the city's citizen's advisory council's in February and March. Comments will be solicited at each of these meetings.

A citywide public hearing on affordable housing priorities will be held April 4.

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Council Finds Money For Fire Station
BY SARAH MCNEIL, STAFF REPORTER
News & Observer.com

Modified: Feb 20, 2008 02:40 PM

SMITHFIELD -- The Town Council has decided how to pay for renovations to the Smithfield Fire Station.

Earlier this month, the council agreed to set aside $485,000 for extensive additions and repairs to the station. Last year, the town estimated it would cost around $300,000 for the work, but rising construction costs, additional fees and repairs on a leaky roof made the figure skyrocket.

During a retreat Tuesday evening, council members agreed to pay for the work by taking $485,000 from the town's electric fund. The
electric fund has about $4.9 million in cash and investments. The transfer would keep the fund above $4 million and adequate, said Mark Stephens, the town’s finance chief.

Councilman Sidney Broadwell worried that the town was relying too much on the electric fund. “I am getting overly concerned about what we are taking and doing with the electric fund,” he said. “We can’t keep taking from one area to bite the bullet. You are stating it won’t put us in a bad situation financially with the electric fund, but how many more times will be asked to do this?”

“This is a one-time deal from the electric fund,” Stephens answered. “From how the funds are financially set up, I don’t think this will adversely affect it. Anything bigger than this, I would not recommend it.”

Councilman Andy Moore voted in favor of the transfer but felt the town needed to explore other options for future projects. “We can not continue to borrow and borrow and borrow to build things,” he said.

Councilman Daniel Evans said he was ready to move forward with the fire station project, which the town has been talking about for years. “I want this thing closed,” he said. “I want it put to bed.”

Sample Meeting Story (City Council)

DURHAM -- Neighborhood complaints have spurred the Durham City Council to postpone a key vote on N.C. Central University’s planned biotech center until Thursday, and could prompt further delays.

The council had been expected to vote Monday night on a zoning application that would have cleared the way for NCCU to build the Biomanufacturing Research Institute and Technology Enterprise -- also known as the BRITE Center -- at the corner of Fayetteville and Lawson streets.

But members opted to postpone the decision after critics led by activists and business owners Larry and Denise Hester said university officials hadn’t done enough to address neighborhood concerns about the building’s parking, screening and handicapped-accessibility arrangements.

Mayor Bill Bell and his colleagues instructed NCCU officials to meet with the neighbors and try to hammer out a deal before Thursday’s council work session. He warned that the alternative might be a delay in the review process that could last up to a month.

Bell hinted that the precedent matters more to city officials than the details of the actual dispute.

"It's important enough to the relationship we're trying to establish between the university and the residents to take that extra step," he said, justifying the postponement.

The council’s unanimous decision came even after NCCU Chancellor James Ammons warned that a postponement could
jeopardize the school's plan to open the 65,000-square-foot BRITE Center in the fall of 2007.

"Any further delay is going to have an impact on the building," Ammons told the council.

The university, he said, also has to go through unspecified "state processes" that can't begin until it has the city's consent to the zoning in hand.

The Hesters and other critics complained that NCCU's plan omitted 20 parking spaces required by the city, and a fence and buffer plantings university officials had once hinted they'd provide.

They also felt the plan didn't include the accommodations needed to allow a wheelchair-bound person to get into the building directly from its parking lot.

More broadly, they contended that NCCU had made only a token effort at working with neighbors, at times delegating the task to low-level officials who lacked the power or influence within the campus administration to make binding commitments.

The issue, the Hesters said, is that NCCU's expansion could undermine the stability of the already fragile neighborhoods around the campus if officials don't do the job right.

"Each time the university adds more buildings, there are visible and invisible impacts to the neighborhood, and the university has done very little to mitigate those fears," Larry Hester said.

Council members said they want NCCU and other developers to work directly with neighborhood groups to resolve complaints before zoning hearings begin.

"It's disconcerting that we're having this conversation tonight. Why couldn't we have had that before tonight?" Councilman Thomas Stith said.

Councilmen Howard Clement and Eugene Brown echoed the point.

Stith added that direct discussions between neighbors and developers sometimes fail to produce an agreement, a point Bell touched on in the course of saying that officials have to try to calm neighborhood fears about change.

"Whether people will actually be harmed is one thing," Bell said. "Whether they perceive they'll be harmed is another."

Monday's postponement vote affected one of NCCU's signature projects.

Ammons said the BRITE Center is part of the university's efforts to develop "programs that will make our students competitive in the new millennium," specifically by creating an academic program to train students for work in the biotech sector.
NCCU is working with N.C. State University and the state's community colleges on the initiative, and has received $21 million in state subsidies to finance work on the BRITE Center.

Ammons left the council in no doubt that the facility and its labs are key to the effort.

"Without the building, we can't deliver on the program," he said.

Both sides, however, hinted that the larger issue is a pending rewrite of NCCU's campus master plan.

The existing document called for the university to take control of several residential properties on the edges of the campus that are still in private hands, raising the specter of a property-acquisition fight with neighbors.

The chancellor has "made it very, very clear that [that] plan is antiquated," and pledged that NCCU officials will talk to neighbors as they update the campus plan, said local architect George Stanziale, who's been helping the university design the BRITE Center.

Council members were equally plain that they're serious about wanting consultations.

"You have a unique opportunity to build your program at the same time you're working with the neighborhood to build that area," Clement told Ammons.

IFC passes resolution supporting Student Media

By Erik Myers
Rocky Mountain Collegian (Colorado State U.)
02/12/2008

(U-WIRE) FORT COLLINS, Colo. - Members of the Interfraternity Council, the group that governs CSU Greeks, passed a resolution Monday expressing support for a student media independent of corporate interests.

The resolution comes after CSU President Larry Penley held a secret meeting in January with two Gannett representatives, Coloradoan publisher Christine Chin and executive editor Bob Moore, to discuss the media conglomerate's interest in attaining the Collegian as a for-profit newspaper.

The meeting, arranged in early November, was conducted without Student Media representatives present. Katie Gleeson, president of the Associated Students of CSU, attended the meeting and later said she lobbied heavily for Student Media representation in the meeting.

Penley, who denied discussing an all-out sale of the paper, charged Chin and Moore to create a formal proposal, listing what Gannett, the nation's largest media corporation, could offer to the CSU community through "a strategic partnership."
But despite their fair share of negative coverage and criticism on the opinion pages of the Collegian, Greeks said they'd rather have students covering their organizations, not a media giant.

"I wanted to bring it up with the council delegates and see what their opinions were," said Mike Rager, IFC president and author of the resolution. "I just hope it strengthens the relationship between IFC and the Collegian and shows our support for student-run organizations."

Supporters of the resolution said Collegian coverage of Greek community and philanthropy events in the past motivated them to issue their support.

"We voted for the resolution because we realize Greek Life has been supported by the Collegian for many years, and we wanted to continue that," said Steven Thomas, delegate for the Sigma Chi fraternity. "We don't know if an outside business coming in would affect the support we have from Student Media."

One fraternity, Sigma Phi Epsilon (SPE), abstained from the secret ballot vote.

The IFC endorsement comes three weeks after a similar resolution supporting independent student media was introduced to the ASCSU Senate. The ASCSU resolution is currently under committee review without a set deadline.

CSU officials announced today that a proposal-review committee, charged with accepting and reviewing all proposals for change to the Student Media, has been formed.

That group, a so-called "advisory board," is scheduled to meet Thursday, from 4-6 p.m. in the D.C. Bottoms at the Durell Center.

The committee will review any forthcoming proposals requesting partnerships with or specific changes to Student Media, which includes the Collegian; KCSU, the campus radio station; CTV, the campus TV station; and College Avenue, the campus magazine.

The committee, chaired by Blanche Hughes, vice president of Student Affairs, will be composed of students, faculty and community members, and will include representatives from the Collegian, CTV, KCSU and College Avenue.

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Published: Oct 10, 2007 12:30 AM

**Wake Schools Delay Diversity Policy**

*More discussion will be given to allowing higher concentrations of low-income students*

**KINEA WHITE EPPS, Staff Writer**

*The News & Observer of Raleigh*

An anticipated change in Wake schools’ diversity policy was delayed for a few weeks Tuesday after a board committee shied away from making a recommendation that would raise the ceiling on the percentage of low-income students at each school.
Board members said more discussion was needed before a final vote after concerns were raised during the policy committee meeting about increasing the limit on low-income students at each school from 40 percent to 50 percent.

Board members have said they have heard from parents who are concerned that a further increase could hurt academic performance at schools that already struggle with a large percentage of low-income students.

They have also heard from some parents who fear that raising the limit would result in the district ignoring schools that already have a higher percentage of low-income students than the target of the current policy.

“This doesn't mean that we wouldn't pay attention to those schools,” said Chuck Dulaney, Wake schools’ assistant superintendent for growth and planning.

But school board member Carol Parker said parents have said that if the limit is increased, they would bolt for private or charter schools to make sure their children get a quality education.

“I'm concerned about losing those parents,” Parker said.

Since 2000, the Wake school system has been married to the idea of having no more than 40 percent of students who receive subsidized lunches at any one school. School leaders have touted the idea that schools perform better if the populations are more diverse socially and economically.

But as the number of students receiving subsidized lunches has increased over the years, school leaders have found it difficult to maintain the 40 percent ceiling.

Dulaney said having a 40 percent target is no longer reasonable.

Increasing the percentage of low-income students at each school would mean more schools in Wake would be in compliance with the district’s new policy. As many as 51 schools are out of compliance with the district’s current policy.

Changing the policy would bring more than 20 schools into compliance, which critics argue is only a cosmetic change that helps make the district look better.

School board Chairwoman Rosa Gill said the board could continue discussions of the policy at its meeting next week and a vote could come later this month.

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New Hanover Won't Get Waterfront Funding; Brunswick, Pender Might Do Better

By Chris Mazzolini
Staff Writer
chris.mazzolini@starnewsonline.com

MOREHEAD CITY – New Hanover County won't receive any money from the state's new Waterfront Access and Marine Industries Fund, according to recommendations from a citizen advisory committee.

But projects in Brunswick and Pender counties may fare better.
On Monday, the committee, tasked with prioritizing which projects will receive a chunk of the new $20 million fund, denied money for projects in Seabreeze and Carolina Beach. But plans to provide more parking for a boat ramp in Sunset Harbor and public boating and fishing facilities in Hampstead were recommended to receive funding.

The $20 million Waterfront Access and Marine Industries Fund was created by the General Assembly last summer to protect and expand public water access along the coast, a diminishing resource in the face of increasing development pressure.

The committee met in Morehead City on Monday to provide recommendations to Louis Daniel, Division of Marine Fisheries director, who will decide which projects receive funding. He is expected to announce his decision in early April after receiving further recommendations from other state officials and groups.

Committee members spent Monday discussing the merits and problems of 20 projects, finalists culled from a total of 159 proposals sent in last fall. Not all of the projects will receive funding. The 20 finalists requested about $50 million.

The problem with the project in Seabreeze, a historic waterfront retreat for the state's black community, is that part of Snow's Cut is a primary fish nursery, which led the Division of Marine Fisheries to pass on the project.

Neal Lewis, parks and recreation director for New Hanover County and chairman of the advisory committee, said in past discussions with state environmental officials the county believed it could build a boat ramp there.

Plus, a dredging barge docks in that area and a commercial pier extends from a now-defunct fish house, Lewis said.

Daniel said he would gather more information on that area and if there is an environmentally friendly way to complete the project, it could be added to future funding requests.

Carolina Beach's project to expand transient boating facilities at the municipal marina was shot down because the project the state really wanted — preserving Blackburn Brothers Seafood — was pulled because the property owners decided not to sell.

"When Blackburn pulled out, I lost interest, personally," Daniel said.

Not all of the area's projects fared so poorly: The committee felt the Sunset Harbor project in Brunswick County is the area's top priority.

The boat ramp there is already operated by the Wildlife Resources Commission, but the land traditionally used for parking is now on the market.

Gordon Myers, a deputy director with Wildlife Resources, said the commission has a conditional offer to purchase the land
for roughly $800,000, but the deal can only be struck if it's funded.

The Hampstead project – purchasing land to provide dock space, boat ramp and other marine facilities at the end of Lewis Road on the Intracoastal Waterway – is also a good project because of a great need. It would provide the only public boat access between Surf City and Wrightsville Beach, Myers said.

One snag is that the owners are asking for $10 million. The land would need to be appraised before any deal could be struck, Daniel said.

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**Sample Meeting Story**

RALEIGH - The city's Planning Commission today unanimously rejected new environmental rules that would limit development across 5,000 acres in North Raleigh.

The commission instead recommended less restrictive rules -- the minimum the state requires -- which would exempt most homeowners.

The City Council makes the final decision next Tuesday and is expected to agree with the commission's recommendation.

The state is requiring the rules to protect a potential water source on the Neuse River next to the former Burlington Mills textile plant off Capital Boulevard. Franklin County is interested in drawing the water.

The new rules would make it more difficult for some homeowners to add a deck or even a few concrete pavers.

The 5,000 acres, which includes Wakefield Plantation, Bedford at Falls River and Falls River, is divided into two sections, according to the rules.

In the primary watershed -- within a half-mile of the water source -- 50 percent of the land could be developed with buildings, driveways or other impervious surfaces. The Mallinckrodt pharmaceutical plant takes up most of the primary watershed.

The rules would allow development of up to 70 percent of the remaining 5,000 acres.

Any development that covers more than 24 percent of a lot would have to catch the first inch of rain that runs off the impervious surface.

Many lots in the area already are more than 24 percent developed. If homeowners wanted to add a deck or pave a driveway, they would have to comply with the stormwater requirement.

The new restrictions also would require 100-foot buffers next to streams if the impervious surface on the property exceeded 24 percent and if there were more than two units per acre.

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**Knightdale Will Offer Incentives**

BY DENISE SHERMAN, STAFF WRITER
KNIGHDALE – Town Council voted recently to approve an incentive policy to certain types of new industry and for the expansion of existing industrial projects.

A one-time grant could be awarded to qualifying projects with a minimum investment of $5 million in new taxable property.

The facilities receiving grants must be new industrial, manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, flex-space, office parks or corporate headquarters. Expansion of existing industries qualify for any portion of the expansion that represents new investment.

The town agreed to award 1 percent of the tax value of the new building and equipment through property tax breaks.

A percentage of property taxes will be paid back to the companies over a period of up to five years or whenever the grant incentive is paid during that time.

The first year after completion of the project, the town pays back 95 percent of the company’s tax bill as a grant. If that amount does not equal the 1 percent, the next year it pays back 85 percent of the bill.

In subsequent years, the town pays back 75 percent of the tax bill until it equals the 1 percent of the project.

Most grants will be paid after three years, Assistant Town Manager Seth Lawless said in an interview after the meeting.

Lawless said the town needs the grant program to attract new manufacturing and industrial business to town.

Right now, 70 percent of Knightdale’s tax revenue is from homes. The town has a goal of 40 percent of its tax revenues coming from businesses and industry.

The policy also includes a one-half percent additional grant to corporate headquarters if they have a minimum of 50 or more fulltime employees. If the project is an expansion, the expansion must result in the employment of a minimum of 50 additional full-time employees.

“What type of assurances or guarantees do we have for businesses to stay?” asked Councilman James Roberson.

“There are no guarantees,” said Lawless. “But if they up and left, we’d still be in the black.”

Councilman Jeff Eddins noted some existing businesses elsewhere have said incentives are unfair and asked if there were any pending cases on the legality of incentives.

Town Attorney Clyde Holt said there were, but that no court to date has ever ruled that they were illegal.

“I do support this,” Eddins said. “But I think this would be a good opportunity to incentivize in our downtown overlay district. We need to help in any way we can to help current businesses to expand.”

Mayor Russell Killen said the new water and sewer allocation policy does that by effectively making it cheaper for new downtown businesses or expansion projects to get water and sewer.

Lawless said the plan was modeled after Wake County’s and the town of Garner’s. However, the county requires $100 million investment for the incentives to apply while Garner requires a $10 million investment.
The town will hold public hearings before approving any grant, Lawless said.

In other business, the town voted to annex .13 acres of land at the request of Wake Stone Corporation.

–Referred the road and drainage project fee ordinance to the Land Use Review Board for its March 10 meeting.
–Set a March 3 public hearing for the town’s water and sewer allocation policy.
–Voted to approve off-street parking and related environmental protection regulation amendments after receiving a recommendation from the LURB to do so. The town has to vote again March 3 because Councilman Mike Chalk and Councilman Terry Gleason were out sick. The council needed a two-thirds majority, Holt said.
–Heard a report from staff that did not recommend restricting street parking along Beechwood Court.

Town Council has asked the staff to make recommendation after they heard from residents about on-street parking. The council voted not to restrict it after hearing that surveyed residents were split in their decision. Council also considered that fire Chief Tim Guffey and police Chief Ricky Pope said there was no public safety reason to restrict parking.

-Chapel Hill Tunes Up Rules On Towing

Towing fees capped, but cash-only is OK
Published: Mar 04, 2008 12:30 AM

MEILING AROUNNARATH, Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL - Towing fees will be lighter on downtown patrons' wallets this year.

On Monday, the Chapel Hill Town Council approved an amendment to the town’s private-lot towing ordinance, aimed at more clearly defining regulations on towing fees, the tow-truck operators’ and vehicle owners’ rights and responsibilities, and towing procedures. The amendment seeks not only to address the problem of predatory towing but also to help protect tow-truck operators’ small businesses.

“Officers find themselves thrust into difficult situations attempting to mediate issues such as fees, which are beyond their control,” according to the staff report to the council.

Several tow-truck operators, speaking at a previous public hearing, asked for a cash-only operation.

They said people who pay with credit cards, debit cards or checks sometimes cancel the transactions before they go through. It’s also expensive to accept cards, they said, because of all the fees and percentages they have to pay banks and credit card companies to provide the service.

The new ordinance says:
Tow operators do not have to accept checks, credit cards or debit cards but must provide receipts for all payments when payments are made.

Drivers who park in private lots will pay no more than $100 for towing and no more than $20 a day for storage. The storage fees would not apply within the first 24 hours.

Tow-truck operators will call the police within 30 minutes of placing a vehicle in storage, providing police with the car’s license tag number, description and where it is being stored.

A driver will avoid towing fees if he returns to his vehicle before it has been attached to the towing truck. A driver who reaches his car after it has been attached but before the towing truck has left a private lot will be charged no more than $50, and the vehicle will be released to him.

The council will review the ordinance and hold public hearings every year to make sure the fees stay fair.

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Wake schools seek extra $35 million

BY T. KEUNG HUI, Staff Writer
The News & Observer of Raleigh

RALEIGH -- Wake County Superintendent Del Burns wants county commissioners to ante up $35 million more to operate the schools in the coming fiscal year.

In a budget proposal released this afternoon, Burns wants commissioners to provide $335.8 million for the 2008-09 fiscal year, a 12 percent increase in county appropriations. School leaders are justifying the increase as needed to keep up with growth and state-mandated salary increases while also providing local pay raises and new academic programs and rebuilding a rainy day fund.

The school board will review the budget before making any changes and sending it to the commissioners. The commissioners will vote on school funding as part of their budget in June.

Overall, Burns is proposing a $1.2 billion operating budget. Although state funding covers a majority of the budget, the most contentious aspect is the county's share. Wake is expecting 6,441 more students this fall.

School officials have based the request on several factors:

-A $16.4 million increase to cover growth costs, such as hiring new teachers not funded by the state.
-A $10.1 million expected increase in state-mandated employee pay raises and health benefits.
-Using $7.6 million less from the fund balance.
-A $6 million increase for system-wide issues such as purchasing new school buses.
-A $4.6 million increase in new and existing programs.

After factoring in $8.3 million in savings from the current budget and a $1.4 million increase in local revenues, the net increase is $35 million.
Administrators want to set aside $3.1 million for local pay raises, with $1.8 million for support staff and $1.3 million for teachers.

Administrators propose to start English as a Second Language Academies at three high schools — Cary, Garner and Millbrook — to work with ninth-grade students who have limited English skills.

Administrators also want to expand funding for an alternative school program that helps average middle schoolers.

Money is also set aside to plan two new magnets schools for the 2009-10 school year. The schools haven't been picked yet, but one will likely be Smith Elementary in Garner.

One potentially controversial point is a recommendation to use less from the school district's rainy day fund. The fund has dropped to about $15 million due to a variety of issues, including the rising costs of diesel fuel and the cost of converting schools to a year-round calendar when the commissioners refused to provide the money last year.

The school board passed a policy in December to reduce the use of the rainy day fund to balance the budget. The policy also called for setting aside up to 6 percent of the money it gets from the county, around $20 million, for the rainy day fund.

Some commissioners have argued that the school district shouldn't have a rainy day fund. They argue that the county can meet emergency needs.

Last year, commissioners clashed over the school district's request for a $29.9 million increase. Commissioner Joe Bryan broke ranks with his fellow Republicans to support a Democratic-sponsored compromise to provide the school district with a $24.9 million gain.

But considering that the county is coming off a difficult property revaluation in which commissioners are trying to minimize the financial hit on taxpayers, meeting the school district's funding request could be challenging.

Some commissioners have also questioned how much the school district should get this year because of miscalculations in the current budget. Commissioners have said that the school board got $6.5 million more than it should have because enrollment fell short by 2,100 students and school leaders overestimated how much the state would raise teacher pay.

-POLICE BOARD AT CENTER OF TOWN TURMOIL-

February 7, 2008

By DIANE KRIEGER SPIVAK
Post-Tribune staff writer

A clean sweep of the Police Commission at Tuesday's Council meeting was just a fraction of the changes that raised the ire of some councilmen and residents alike.

All five Police Commission members were removed, in a 4-3 vote.
After November’s election put four Democrats on the council, the January meeting required public speakers to sign in and limit their talks to no more than three minutes.

The usual department head reports were conspicuously absent, as well. Residents complained Tuesday, so the sign-in sheet was removed.

Councilman Bill Landske, a Republican, said he and the other two Republicans on the council had no input into the changes.

Those removed were Greg Rambo, Mary Joan Dickson, Eileen Hunley, Dan Engleman and Marvin Miller.

Rambo and Hunley, whose terms had expired in December, were then renamed to the commission, said Police Chief Roger Patz. Engleman was replaced, but Dickson and Miller were replaced by former police chief Chuck Kowder and Antoinette Krupa.

Landske said the new commission "will definitely get rid of Roger."
Patz said he had not heard any information that he might be replaced, adding that he has no problem with the new commission members.

"I'm hoping we have a police commission and I think we do, that is going to be very positive and open-minded and supportive of the police department," Patz said.

"The reason for a police commission is to separate the police department from politics of town government," said Patz, who last week was elected head of the five-county District One Indiana Association of Chiefs of Police.

Miller, who attended Tuesday's meeting, said he wasn't sure if he had been replaced on the commission due to the disorderly fashion in which the appointments were made.

"I didn't know what they were doing," he said. "They didn't know what they were doing. I'm very disappointed."

"I wish we could work in the business of the town and throw personal agendas away," Councilman Greg Parker said.

"I'm sure these issues could be worked out," he said. "It's just insulting to the people who live here. If the chief gets removed it's going to be awfully fishy."

Councilwoman Pat Wisniewski, a Democrat, said she was disappointed in the comments made at Tuesday's meeting. "because I didn't think it was necessary," Wisniewski said everyone on the council had been notified of the meeting protocol changes, which had been made at the January meeting, she said.

Wilkening could not be reached for comment.

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Moeser: UNC to aid N.C.

JANE STANCILL, Staff Writer

UNC-Chapel Hill can and will do more to serve the state, Chancellor James Moeser said in a speech Thursday to faculty, staff and students.
In his annual State of the University address, Moeser announced that he had set up a task force to study ways UNC-CH can help North Carolinians improve their lives.

"We have a responsibility to continue leading and probing with humility and curiosity for opportunities to match our resources with the state's needs," Moeser said. "Our commitment to engagement and public service is part of Carolina's genetic code."

Part of that will be an effort by the university's School of Education to improve teaching and learning in public schools. The school won a $10 million federal grant to help reform rural schools. The dean of the school, Thomas James, will work with State Board of Education Chairman Howard Lee to usher in new initiatives, Moeser said. Others will contribute, too.

"I am committing Carolina's full range of intellectual power to address these complex issues," he said.

While the university must improve its relationship to the state, Moeser said, it must deepen its global emphasis in a changing world. This summer, UNC-CH leaders explored new programs with heads of the National University of Singapore, including a new undergraduate degree between the two institutions.

Moeser emphasized, though, that universities abroad also are turning up the competition on U.S. campuses -- especially in China and India, which are making large investments in higher education and in scientific research.

Meanwhile, he said, U.S. federal funding for research is on the decline in many areas, and test scores of American middle-schoolers show poor performance in math and science.

Judith Wegner, chairwoman of the UNC-CH faculty, said she was glad to hear about Moeser's focus on service to the state, as well as the international emphasis.

"The global presence is certainly important," she said. "That was very good that he put that in the forefront."

The chancellor also highlighted the university's continued success in raising private dollars, including the announcement of a $10 million bequest from the estate of Col. John Harvey Robinson, a career Army officer from New York who earned a graduate business degree at UNC-CH in 1957. That money will go toward a $60 million campaign to raise funds for merit scholarships.

The university also recently received a $5 million challenge grant from the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust to establish an investment fund to support the campus performing arts series. Last week, the university reopened its primary arts venue, Memorial Hall, after a nearly $18 million renovation.

Easley asks for water conservation, orders ban on open burning

By STEVE HARTSOE
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER
RALEIGH, N.C. - Stopping short of imposing statewide water rationing, Gov. Mike Easley asked North Carolinians on Monday to stop watering lawns and washing cars to help fight a prolonged drought he called unprecedented in state history.

“A bit of mud on the car or patches of brown on the lawn must be a badge of honor,” Easley said. "It means you are doing the right thing for your community and our state.”

Inside, Easley said, residents should turn off the water when shaving or brushing their teeth. He asked restaurants to only serve water when customers ask for it and said water fountains and other ornamental devices should be shut off. The state's local governments also need to improve their efforts to support water conservation in their communities.

"We have to change the way we think," Easley said.

Easley's speech to the annual conference of the N.C. League of Municipalities in Fayetteville came as the state and the rest of the southeast are in the midst of a relentless drought. More than half of North Carolina's 100 counties are now experiencing an "exceptional" drought -- the most severe category listed by the federal U.S. Drought Monitor.

Another 30 counties are listed in next worst category of “extreme drought,” while 11 counties are in a “severe drought” and three are in a “moderate drought.”

“Several communities have as little as three month's water supply remaining," Easley said. "If we do not get significant rain, some areas face the once unthinkable possibility of water rationing and potentially running out of water entirely."

Easley also ordered a statewide ban on open burning, which the state temporarily suspended for several weeks in August and September.

“The last thing we need is a forest fire because we do not have the water to put it out,” Easley said.

Forecasters expect a dry winter in North Carolina, making any possible relief from drought several months away.
“If we don't get significant water supply over the winter we're going to have problems in spring ‘08,” Easley said. “We have to act now to avoid running out of water.”

**Professional athletes encourage goal-setting** *(Presentation story)*

*Kennedy students were told to listen to parents*

By Patrick Wilson

JOURNAL REPORTER

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Setting goals and making good choices will pay off later, two professional athletes from Winston-Salem told students yesterday at Kennedy Learning Center.

"You're going to make mistakes, but if you make a series of good choices, the outcome will be so much greater," said Germane Crowell, a former receiver for the NFL’s Detroit Lions and New Orleans Saints.

Crowell's mother, Patricia Crowell, is a teacher's assistant at Kennedy. His brother, Angelo Crowell, is a starting linebacker for the Buffalo Bills.

Germane Crowell overcame a stuttering problem he had through high school. "He persevered and he stayed focused and he was determined to reach his goals," his mother said.

Angelo Crowell couldn't attend yesterday's assembly. But another athlete from Winston-Salem, Tory Woodbury, was there. Woodbury was a quarterback on the Buffalo Bills roster last season and is now a free agent in the NFL. He said he was raised by his grandmother in the Happy Hill Gardens public-housing project.

"When I was small, I knew I wanted to play in the NFL," he said.

Woodbury told students: "Set your goals high, make your parents proud and listen to your parents."

The meeting also provided a chance for a group of students to read poetry they had written through the Young Authors Initiative, sponsored by the Winston-Salem Youth Arts Institute.

Among them was Rochelle Wright, who said the program was teaching her to project her voice and present herself well.

Kennedy Learning Center serves students who are behind their grade level and are trying to catch up, students who have behavior problems and students who speak limited English.

"We really want students to have goals and focus on those goals, and to self-examine," said Debbie Chance, the assistant principal. "And to get mentors to help them reach those goals."