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Council to consider rezoning for Kings Arms area

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, March 3, 2010

A rezoning request for an area where an aging apartment building sits on Charles Boulevard is expected to come before the Greenville City Council at its meeting tonight. Plans to build a student housing development at 1209 Charles Blvd., where Kings Arms Apartments sits, require the Edwards Community Group ask that more than 16 acres be rezoned from office-residential to office-residential with an urban core overlay. Developers also have asked to amend zoning in the entire area hemmed in by 10th and 14th streets, the railroad tracks and the Green Mill Run/East Carolina University easement to establish an “urban core overlay.” The overlay district is intended to facilitate development or redevelopment of in-fill sites in an area near a city’s urban center. The ordinances require separate approval from the City Council. The staff has determined the change is in compliance with the Horizons Community Plan, and the Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval at its Jan. 19 meeting.
City Councilman Calvin Mercer wrote Saturday in his bi-monthly constituent communication e-mail that it’s important to consider the sustainability of the nearby Rock Springs neighborhood, located behind the proposed development. He added that he’s been working closely with neighborhood representatives and they are agreeable to the project.

The public will be provided an opportunity to comment at the meeting.

Also up for public hearing tonight:
An ordinance rezoning jmore than half an acre at the southeast corner of the intersection of Airport and Old River roads from unoffensive industry to heavy commercial.

An ordinance amending zoning regulations to include “hotel, motel, bed and breakfast inn; extended stay lodging” among special uses in general commercial zoning districts.

An ordinance directing removal of the nonresidential building or structure at 1901 Chestnut St.

A resolution extending the $1 lease with the Vietnam Veterans of America, George F. Semick Chapter No. 272, for the property at 2805 E. Second St.
Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@reflector.com or (252) 329-9566.
Editorial: Task force can help address crime issue
Thursday, March 4, 2010
Greenville will struggle to get a handle on its crime rate absent a broad section of the community, representative of its diverse population, working together on the issue. The problem has so many facets and the contributing factors are too numerous to believe that any other approach will produce tangible results.
That is the argument behind creation of the city’s Special Task Force on Public Safety, a 15-member board that met for the first time last week. Its perspective promises to be valuable, and its recommendations should offer a compelling point for discussion as the city seeks to bring this problem to heel.
Last summer’s shooting death of two men on a Fifth Street sidewalk placed renewed focus on crime and public safety, specifically in Greenville’s downtown. Meetings and public forums allowed residents and business owners to express their concerns, and the City Council began work on a number of ordinances aimed at deterring criminal behavior and restoring confidence in safety there.
As part of that community discussion, the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce requested that the council form a Special Task Force on Public Safety. The council followed through, forming the group that had its first meeting last week. Its membership was selected by the mayor and council members, and from local constituencies like East Carolina University, the Neighborhood Advisory Board and Citizens United Against Violence.
Over the next year, the task force is expected to study the crime issue, collecting statistical and anecdotal information, in order to provide recommendations for action. It intends to stay clear of the Greenville Police Department’s efforts, allowing officers to execute their duties without interference, but will rely upon police officials for experienced assessments and some degree of guidance.
The hope is that the task force can assist the City Council in meeting its top priority this year of making Greenville a safer place to live, work and play. In order to do so, however, focus cannot be confined to one section of the city. It is imperative that the task force take the long view, addressing crime in all neighborhoods, with the goal of finding comprehensive solutions that can deliver demonstrable success.
The issue of crime in Greenville has received considerable attention in the last year, and deservedly so. Citizens want action. With this task force helping in the effort, there is greater potential for strong recommendations that can meet residents’ reasonable expectations of progress.
UNC to dedicate garden in memory of Carson

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. -- The University of North Carolina will mark the second anniversary of the shooting death of the school's former student body president by dedicating a garden in her memory.

The Eve Marie Carson Garden will be dedicated Thursday afternoon in Polk Place, a grassy area behind the Campus Y. The 22-year-old student from Athens, Ga., was found shot death in the early morning of March 5, 2008, in a Chapel Hill neighborhood.

Two men have been charged in her death.

The school says the garden will honor all UNC-Chapel Hill students, past and future, who die before they graduate.

After speeches by officials including Chancellor Holden Thorp, a Carolina blue ribbon will be cut and students will plant ferns in the garden.
The norovirus is one bad bug

It is nasty, and the norovirus that is causing widespread outbreaks of diarrhea and vomiting across North Carolina is one super bug.

Impervious to sanitizing gels, able to sicken wide groups of people in tiny amounts and fearing no vaccine, the norovirus has struck conferences, play groups, schools, restaurants, retirement homes and day care centers.

"It's a very successful virus," said David Bergmire-Sweat, food-borne disease epidemiologist for the state Division of Public Health.

A count of infections isn't available, Bergmire-Sweat said, because the ailment isn't among those the state tracks and reports to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But he said outbreaks can sweep through large clusters of people in waves of illness, with just a few particles of the virus transmitted in airborne droplets, on surfaces or in contaminated food.

And it packs a wallop. Although the intestinal turmoil usually lasts no more than a couple of days, it can be serious for older adults, young children and people with fragile immune systems. At WakeMed in Raleigh, hospital officials said Wednesday that they've seen a large number of people in the emergency department in the grip of the virus's misery.

Most are sent home. There is no treatment.

Agnes Stevens, with the state's Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission, went from feeling fine to feeling wretched within two hours Sunday evening, and spent the entire night vomiting.

"It was not an experience I enjoyed," she said. Wiped out, she took Monday off.

The virus can spread from its recent victims days and weeks after they've fully recovered.

State health officials caution people who have had bouts of the virus to refrain from fixing food for at least 48 hours, and to wash clothing and bedding in detergent and hot water.

What's also little known is that norovirus is untouched by sanitary hand gels, which rely on alcohol to kill germs. Only bleach works against noroviruses, so people are better off washing their hands in warm, soapy water.

Other than that, science offers little against the pathogen. Along with no treatment, there's no vaccine.

Seeking a vaccine

Ralph Baric, an epidemiologist at the Gillings School of Global Public Health at UNC-Chapel Hill, is working to rectify that. Baric, who studies noroviruses, said he has had success immunizing mice against the virus. His technique uses inactivated parts of the pathogen to train the immune system into mounting
a defense.

But the virus is tricky. Like influenza, it comes in dozens of strains, and it's constantly changing. As a result, people have almost no immunity to any one variant. Baric said people can suffer norovirus illness time and again, because each bout can be caused by a different strain.

For his vaccine to work, he said, he'll have to pack the inoculation with multiple strains, selecting them through a process similar to how seasonal flu shots are created each year.

But there is a good potential market among older people, the military and travelers. Cruise ship companies also have strong interest.

"Between 10 million and 20 million people take cruises each year," Baric said. "Cruise ship companies spend a tremendous amount of money and time and effort keeping the viruses off ships."

And still the virus cannot be vanquished. Half the time, Baric said, it's the culprit behind traveler's revenge.

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Rallies to focus on cutbacks in education

Protests by students, parents and faculty members are planned at state campuses and in Sacramento.

By Carla Rivera

March 4, 2010

Thousands of students, teachers and parents in California and across the country are expected to stage rallies, demonstrations, walkouts and other actions Thursday to decry what they say is an assault on public education at all levels.

The so-called Day of Action is in response to education funding cuts that have affected schools nationwide, but have been especially severe in California, where public colleges and universities have canceled classes, ordered furloughs and layoffs and enacted unprecedented student fee increases.

Faculty, students and alumni are expected to descend on the state Capitol in Sacramento for a rally and teach-in that will include personal testimonials on the effects of the cutbacks and fee increases. In downtown Los Angeles, participants plan to rally in Pershing Square and march to the governor's office in the Ronald Reagan State Building.

In addition, events are scheduled at most of the 10 campuses of the University of California, California State University's 23 campuses and many of the state's 112 community colleges. Many students are expected to walk out of class to protest the cutbacks.

Many of the demonstrations are being planned by campus faculty unions, but the actions, along with earlier advocacy efforts by students and faculty, have also drawn at least qualified support from some top administrators.

In a statement, Cal State Chancellor Charles B. Reed said the university "supports the efforts of our students, faculty and staff to bring awareness about the importance of higher education in California. It is critical that legislators in Sacramento hear from businesses and the community about the importance of CSU."

The California effort -- aided by the use of social media such as Facebook -- has also spread eastward. Schools and colleges in New York, Texas, Rhode Island, Michigan, Louisiana and other states are
expecting similar demonstrations on their campuses.

One of the newest aspects of this wave of campus protests sparked by budget cuts is the alliance of students, faculty, staff and alumni on issues that directly affect so many: college costs, career options, and job and financial security.

Also unusual is the expected participation in the protests of kindergarten-to-12th-grade educators, who are experiencing similar budget problems that have forced layoffs, led to larger classes and resulted in cancellations of art, music, physical education and other programs.

More than 100 K-12 schools and districts have planned demonstrations and community events, raising expectations that Thursday's protest may be one of the most widespread ever in California and increasing the chances of catching legislators' attention, organizers say.

"The goal is to try to increase public awareness about the crisis in public education," said Teri Yamada, a professor of Asian studies at Cal State Long Beach and president of the campus' California Faculty Assn. chapter.

"We haven't seen much movement at the state level or in the Legislature to try to improve the problem," she said. "The public needs to become more aware of exactly how devastating these cuts are going to be and have been. If they keep cutting, they are going to destroy the education system and wreck the economic viability of the state."

The activities planned by teachers and staff at many Southern California secondary schools focus on parents' engagement. Campuses in the K-8 Ontario-Montclair School District, for example, are expected to hold tailgate breakfasts and pass out information about the budget cuts to parents.

Some educators involved in planning the protests say they see a measure of hope. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, in his State of the State address, proposed shifting some money from prisons to education and mandating that no less than 10% of state general funds be used for universities by 2014. But some students say they still feel neglected.

"The biggest thing you're seeing with these actions is the buildup of frustration," said Christopher Chavez, 22, a political science major at Cal State Long Beach and student government president. "Students feel like the state doesn't care about them anymore, that we're just a set of numbers on paper and we don't count."

Some university faculty say they are feeling that way too, as funding cuts permeate departments and affect programs, workloads and research.

"No doubt many Californians feel we live in an ivory tower, but we're more than willing to climb down and join a just cause," said Richard Walker, a UC Berkeley geography professor and member of the faculty group SAVE the University. "We're defending a public education principle, but the practicality is that if California's schools and colleges aren't producing good students, we suffer."

More than 750 students and faculty from UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz and the University of San Francisco have signed up to board about 14 buses to the Sacramento rally, Walker said. "We have more than 120 faculty going. We consider ourselves like Harvard or Yale and to get 120 faculty off their duff to go to Sacramento is unprecedented."
College students rally over tuition, education quality

By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY
College students on more than 100 campuses nationwide plan walkouts, rallies and other actions Thursday to protest budget cuts, layoffs and tuition increases, which they say erode quality of education and limit access.
Students in at least 32 states are expected to join the grass-roots campaign. It has been bubbling up since demonstrations last fall in California, where students, faculty and unions protested plans for a 32% tuition increase amid the state's fiscal crisis.

GROUP: Improve colleges' quality of 'actual learning'
ADMISSIONS: Applications rise, but budget cuts cap enrollment

COLLEGE BLOG: Where you enroll can make a difference for student borrowers
"Students saw that there was an opportunity to do something in their own states because the budget cuts didn't happen just in California," says Monique Teal of the United States Student Association, which represents student governments.
University of California regents increased fees as planned. But Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed that at least 10% of annual state spending go to the UC and California State University systems.
Most of today's efforts focus on public education, where enrollments are growing most rapidly and tuition has risen fastest. But some private schools, including the University of Chicago and Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Fla., are protesting the effects of campus budget cuts.

"The biggest thread that ties these protests together is the current financial crisis in higher education," says Angus Johnston, who teaches history at City University of New York and tracks protests on his blog, student activism.net.
Among demands:
•The University of Illinois-Chicago and University of Minnesota are calling on high-level campus administrators to take pay cuts — "chop from the top," they say — rather than lay off workers and junior faculty.
•Michigan students statewide plan to rally at the Capitol in Lansing to demand that state scholarship funding be restored.
•University of Connecticut students, who say recent protests helped limit next year's tuition increase to 5.6% despite proposals as high as 7.5%, plan to train students in lobbying the state Legislature.
•Students at the University of Maryland-College Park and Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond plan to raise concerns about the effect of budget cuts on quality.
"We're seeing more classes taught by adjuncts and grad students who aren't getting paid (fairly). We're seeing larger class sizes, and some kids in certain majors ... can't get all the courses they need in four years," says Maryland junior Jon Berger.
California State University chancellor Charles Reed says federal stimulus money kept the effect of budget cuts on his 23-campus system to a minimum. But "students are paying more and getting less, and they have every right to be outraged about that."