THE DAILY CLIPS

August 7, 2007

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal
USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
Newsweek
U.S. News & World Report
Business Week
Time

East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu  Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481 FAX: 252-328-6300
Stokes steps down as ECU men's hoops coach

Mack McCarthy takes over head coach duties while Stokes will be reassigned as the associate athletics director for basketball.

The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University Director of Athletics Terry Holland announced Monday that head men's basketball coach Ricky Stokes has decided to become the associate athletics director for basketball.

Associate head coach Mack McCarthy will take over as acting head coach for the 2007-08 season, according to the release. McCarthy has 16 seasons of head coaching experience, guiding the Chattanooga and Virginia Commonwealth programs to a combined 369-177 record.

Assistant coach Chris Ferguson, who late last week was rumored to be entertaining offers from Oklahoma State, will assume the role of associate head coach.

Stokes said he "was grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as ECU men's basketball coach for the last two seasons" and would like to believe his "efforts have the basketball program headed in the right direction." Stokes, who had a combined 14-44 record at ECU, concluded by saying, "I know that the Pirate Nation will be proud of the young men that will take the court this year."

Holland, who coached Stokes during Stokes' playing days at Virginia, lauded Stokes for his efforts concerning the team's academic improvement. All nine of ECU's returning players have grade point averages higher than 2.4.

McCarthy posted 14 winning seasons and eight 20-win campaigns during his time at Chattanooga and VCU. Prior to rebuilding the VCU program, which he capped with a 21-11 mark in 2001-02, he led Chattanooga to unprecedented heights during his 12-year stay that included five NCAA Tournament and two NIT appearances.

While at UTC, he was a three-time Southern Conference Coach of the Year selection and left the league as the winningest coach in its history. He enjoyed his finest season in 1996-97, leading Chattanooga to 24 wins and NCAA Tournament triumphs over Georgia and Illinois to help the Mocs reach the Sweet 16 for the only time in school history.
Downtown changes approved

$1.8 million plan will close streets, add parking

The Greenville City Council votes 4-2 to alter traffic patterns and swap land with Jarvis church in a deal opposed by businesses and preservationists.

By T. Scott Batchelor
The Daily Reflector

The Greenville City Council voted 4-2 Monday to close portions of several downtown streets as part of a deal to swap land with Jarvis Memorial United Methodist Church.

Ray Craft made the motion, seconded by Chip Little, to go forward with the closures. Craft, Little, Mildred Council and Rose Glover voted for the motion; Pat Dunn and Larry Spell voted against it.

As part of the proposed arrangement, which would cost the city about $1.8 million, portions of four streets would be closed: Dickinson Avenue/Washington Street from Reade Circle to the alley separating the city's Municipal Building and Jarvis Memorial; and Sixth Street between Dickinson Avenue/Washington Street to Evans Street.

The deal would give the church room to expand its facilities and give the city ownership of 64 parking spaces, including spaces serving Sheppard Memorial Library. The city currently leases parking for the public library from Jarvis.

Downtown business owners said closing Dickinson Avenue/Washington Street, a two-lane, north-south street, could impede traffic and hurt business. Preservation-minded people, including the city's Historic Preservation Commission and a state historic-preservation expert, said closing the streets would harm the historic character of the area.

During discussion after Craft's motion, Spell said he "initially supported this plan."

"I voted for the plan before, and I made a mistake," he said.Securing city-owned parking is a "valid point," he said. But disrupting Washington/Dickinson "is too high a cost to pay" for that gain, he said.

The land exchange would provide a large enough footprint for a future parking deck, on the current Sixth Street public parking lot, proponents of the plan said.

But cutting a nearly $2 million deal to gain "a section of land that may or may not see a parking deck in the future" is not worth the cost, Spell said.

Dunn praised the role of Jarvis Church in the community.

But, she said, "Is this the right place for a parking deck? Maybe it is, maybe it isn't."

"Once we close the street, that could not be undone," she said. "We could always close the street if we choose to do that later."

Closing the two-way street in the downtown district "is an issue for me," she said.

Little said the deal is a win-win for the city and church. Securing parking spaces for the Sheppard Memorial Library should be a top priority, he said.

"For us to have a $10 million library in a growing county and city and not have any means to expand upon it just doesn't seem very forward-thinking on behalf of the city," he said.

He brushed off the idea that closing Dickinson/Washington would curtail traffic into downtown.

"If you come down Dickinson to the new Sixth Street, you're going to have to come downtown," Little said.

Rose Glover said while Dickinson Avenue is part of Greenville's history, having been a pre-Civil War plank road, "Jarvis is also a historical part of downtown Greenville. It has a historic significance. It is very well taken care of, and it sits (as) a beautiful part of uptown Greenville."

As for the former plank road, "I don't think that is a significant enough thing to think about."

She said Jarvis has done much for the community, helping the poor, providing substance-abuse and after-school programs.

"I don't see a bad guy here," she said of the city and church. "I see some great opportunities for growth, where Jarvis can continue to serve the entire community."

Council said she had studied the issue and fielded several calls and letters from people.

"I'm here to serve the city, and I just feel like the best decision was to work with the church," she said. The councilwoman added that nothing beats actually owning something outright rather than leasing it, referring to the parking spaces the city will gain from the deal.

Craft called the vote "a tough decision."

"Once I remove all the emotions ... I'm at peace about voting for it and moving forward," he said.

Mayor Don Parrott, in a speech supporting the land deal, told members of Uptown Greenville, a nonprofit downtown development group, "I have supported you from the beginning. I have raised funds for Uptown."

"Nobody likes to eat at the Starlight (Cafe) better than I do," he said of the West Fifth Street business.

Parrott said he has "good friends that have some businesses in the community, and it's tough to make the decisions that we have to make tonight."

"We're not trying to do anything to hurt anyone."

The mayor said some minds will change when the project is completed.

Katherine Wetherington, owner of Dulcinea on Washington Street north of the closure, has opposed the deal because she says it puts up an obstacle to motorists going by her business, and to potential customers reaching downtown in general.

"I think it's a travesty," Wetherington said of Monday's vote. "But I think it highlights some need for major reform in our city government."

She is running for the District 4 council seat being vacated by Craft, who chose not to seek a fourth term.

"The saddest part of our situation tonight is that a no vote
is what we needed to begin to explore other alternatives (besides closing streets)," she said. "We were merely asking for the opportunity to explore other options that would not do harm.

"I'm very concerned about the economic outlook of the entire uptown," Wetherington said.

Phil Flowers, a Jarvis Church member who represented the church in negotiations with the city, said last week that if street closures were taken off the table, the church would have to start all over in trying to plan for expansion of its facilities.

The closed portions of the streets will become land on which Jarvis spreads out, he said.

Parrott last week said the city commissioned appraisals "on all the properties" from experts certified by the National Association of Realtors.

"(The city is) getting the same value that Jarvis is getting," he said of the deal.

Besides needed parking, the city will wind up with more property along Evans Street, "which is the most valuable property," said Parrott.

Originally slated to be funded with proceeds from city bonds earmarked for revitalizing the downtown area or "Center City," Craft's motion changed that to funding the project from the city's capital reserves.

In related action, the council voted unanimously to award a contract to the Greenville firm, The East Group, for design work on the project. That contract was for $35,000.

T. Scott Batchelor can be contacted at sbatchelor@coxnc.com and 329-9367.
Public Forum

ECU women's teams deserve facilities

I have enjoyed reading the articles about the new East Carolina University's North Recreation Complex. Not only will it benefit the growing student population, but it already shows the signs of giving an economic boost to this area north of the river.

The only thing I see lacking is the working together of the Campus Recreation and Wellness Department and the Athletic Department. This would be the perfect opportunity to do something positive in regards to gender equity in the Athletics Department at ECU.

ECU softball and soccer are two women's sports that play on substandard fields sitting in the shadows of the baseball stadium. With the support of the university, a collegiate softball complex and a soccer stadium could be built on this property in a timely manner to be shared by all students.

By doing this, just maybe these ECU women's sports could catch up to the other universities in Conference USA as well as in North Carolina, not to mention stay ahead of the girl's softball facilities in Pitt County.

JANE REEL
Greenville
Stokes is out as ECU coach

Ricky Stokes will stay on as associate AD; Mack McCarthy will lead the team in '07-08.

BY CHIP ALEXANDER
STAFF WRITER

Barely two weeks away from the start of a new school year, East Carolina athletics director Terry Holland announced Monday the Pirates would have a new men's basketball coach.

In a university release, Holland said Ricky Stokes was giving up the position to become the associate athletics director for basketball. In two years as head coach, Stokes had a 14-44 record.

Holland said the decision was made after "lengthy conversations" with Stokes that Holland said began in the spring. He indicated it was Stokes' decision to take on the new position as associate athletics director.

Holland said associate head coach Mack McCarthy would be the acting head coach for the 2007-08 season. Assistant coach Chris Ferguson will assume the position of associate head coach.

Holland was out of the country and unavailable for comment Monday. ECU has scheduled a news conference for Thursday.

Stokes, who had three seasons left on a five-year contract, could not be reached for comment.

In a statement, he said he was "grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as ECU men's basketball coach" and would like to believe his "efforts have the basketball program headed in the right direction."

Senior forward Taylor Gagnon said the ECU players were not completely shocked by the move.

"We've heard the rumors for a while, but coach [McCarthy] told us a couple days ago that this was going to happen so none of us were taken off guard when it came out today," Gagnon said.

"It's just one of those things which Coach Stokes had to do what's best for his family and with [McCarthy] taking over, it should make for a smooth transition for everybody.

"I think it's for the best, and Coach Mac is taking over so it will be an easy adjustment. We're all extremely close with Coach Mac and he's been a big part of the coaching style and the basketball program the past couple of years, so it's not a hard transition. Overall, I think everybody is pretty excited about it."

McCarthy has head coaching experience at Virginia Commonwealth and Chattanooga. He has a 308-177 overall record, with eight 20-win seasons.

Chattanooga made five NCAA Tournament appearances in his 12 years at the Southern Conference school. His VCU team in 2001-2002 finished 21-11.

Holland, in his statement, said, "Coach Stokes' career change will allow him to continue building a first-class basketball program... by helping us plan and finance a practice facility for our basketball and volleyball programs."

The Pirates were 6-24 last season, with three of the victories over Division II teams. But Holland praised Stokes' academic achievement within the program, noting all nine returning players had grade-point averages of 2.4 or higher. He also credited him with hiring a strong staff.

The news about Stokes stepping down as coach quickly spread across campus Monday.

"I'm sort of shocked," said junior Kristen Allred, an ECU soccer player from High Point. "He was a good guy, but I guess things just didn't work out.

"I saw him a few times this summer because his daughter was at our soccer camp and he looked like everything was fine. He didn't look worried or look like anything was going on."

Brad Coleman, an ECU senior from Archdale, said the change in coaches came at a "weird time."

"I think that if he was fired for basketball-related purposes then it should have taken place when the past season ended," Coleman said.

"I do feel Pirate fans as a whole will be happy with this decision in the long run. The program was not headed in the direction that we had all hoped it would when Stokes was hired, and I feel we will have a chance to at least be more competitive..."

Holland, who became athletics director in September 2004, hasn't been hesitant to make major personnel changes. He fired both former football coach John Thompson and men's basketball coach Bill Herrion. Baseball coach Randy Mazey also was replaced.

Stokes, 45, played college basketball at Virginia when Holland was the Cavaliers' coach. Stokes was the head men's coach at Virginia Tech for four seasons before being fired in 2003.

Correspondent
Ronnie Woodward
contributed to this report.
Cancer center kudos

With the recently passed state budget, our state's leaders have made a remarkable investment, one that will no doubt touch every life in North Carolina.

By establishing the University Cancer Research Fund, North Carolina is now one of only a few states with a dedicated comprehensive cancer research fund. This transformative investment of $25 million this year, growing to $50 million per year beginning in 2009, will help us become the nation's best public cancer center.

Cancer affects one in three North Carolinians. Now our loved ones, friends and neighbors can be assured that the best research and care in the world will be available here in North Carolina. It won't be available only to those of means. It will be available for all of our citizens.

It is unfortunately inevitable that someone you know will someday battle cancer. This monumental step for our state is an investment in the pursuit of a cure and in the knowledge that the best cancer care in the world will be available right here at home.

H. Shelton Earp III, M.D.
Director, Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center
Professor of Medicine and Pharmacology

William L. Roper, M.D.
CEO, UNC Health Care
Dean, UNC School of Medicine
Chapel Hill
UNC-CH'S 'FRONT DOOR'
Some see McCorkle Place as more of a public square

BY JESSE JAMES DECONTO
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL — When Alessandra Maklakoff moved to the Triangle from Hong Kong this past spring, she and her husband chose downtown Chapel Hill in part because they could walk to McCorkle Place.

The five-acre, tree-canopied quad is a grassy, shady pathway from Franklin Street to the university's seat of power in South Building.

It is also home to history: the Davie poplar, where legend says William Davie chose the spot for the university in 1792; Silent Sam, a Civil War soldier; and the Unsung Founders Memorial honoring the black workers who built the university.

"I think the way it is is perfect," Maklakoff said, finishing a lunch of sliced fruit in Silent Sam's shadow. "It's natural. I think anything else would just make it built-up and would ruin it."

But some say McCorkle Place could be more than a cut-through with the occasional picnic. As Chapel Hillians gaze westward at the vibrant social scene at Weaver Street Market in Carrboro, some lament the lack of a public gathering space on Franklin Street and wonder why McCorkle Place isn't it.

"It's underutilized," said Cam Hill, a Town Council member who grew up in Chapel Hill. He remembers political rallies and rock music festivals that brought thousands to McCorkle Place in the 1960s and '70s. "It had a lot more to do, I'd say, with the students being more active," Hill said. "It was certainly ... the front door of the university and the back door of the town."

Will Raymond, among four challengers for Hill's and three other seats on the council this fall, remembers carrying Greek grilled cheese sandwiches and egg rolls from Hector's grill back in the '80s when it was on the ground level — and eating them under a tree across the street at McCorkle Place.

"I would be one of many people doing that," said Raymond, who has criticized the current council for pursuing a condo development, rather than a public park, on a downtown parking lot farther west on Franklin Street.

People such as Maklakoff do picnic at McCorkle Place, but even those who would like to see it become more active don't envision something like the Weaver Street Market lawn.

"The likelihood you'll run into people you know is probably slim and none," said Robert Humphreys, who organized summer concerts at McCorkle Place in the early part of this decade. "It's not the kind of place you go where everybody knows your name."

Staff writer Jesse James DeConto can be reached at 932-8760 or jesse.deconto@newsobserver.com.
College freshmen meet classmates early, online

BY APRIL BETHEA
THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

A couple of weeks before she begins her freshman year at Queens University of Charlotte, Lauren Nation has already met more than 150 of her classmates.

She knows students who will live in the same dorm, share her major, and compete on Queens sports teams. Nation has even talked with some upperclassmen to get insight on college life.

These connections weren’t all made during a visit to campus. Like a lot of incoming freshmen, Nation is meeting other students on the Web.

The Internet is helping new college students make easy connections with others before they even start classes. There are informal “Class of 2011” groups on social networking sites, and at the University of South Carolina there’s an online roommate matching service.

Using the Internet has been especially helpful for Nation, who has spent the past five years in Germany with her military family.

“I really didn’t want to show up on campus not knowing anyone, that’s never fun,” Nation said. “Having Facebook and being in the Queens ’11 group gave us all something in common and made it easier to start that initial conversation and move on from there.”

Gone are the days when most students arrive for the fall semester not knowing anyone except old classmates or hometown buddies. Now students can find out about campus organizations or talk with students they meet during orientation on the social networking sites, said Michele Howard, dean of students at UNC Charlotte.

For some, using the Internet may be easier and less threatening than trying to form friendships in person.

“There are a lot of people who are shy when it comes to meeting people and talking to them in person,” said Nick Jones, who will attend Johnson C. Smith University. “By meeting people on the Internet first, you kind of know people when you go down there.”

At USC, the social sites are helping some incoming freshmen find roommates. The university has used its Web-based UCHOOSE program for seven years. Students first complete a survey about themselves, then search for other students with similar interests.

Leslie Pittman, a Presidential Scholar at Queens who started the Queens class of 2011 group, said she knows the online groups are making a mark. “When I get to campus,” she said, “I will recognize at least 100 names when introduced to me, and that’s a lot better than a blank slate of loneliness.”
Cooper vows to pursue MySpace curbs

Opponents call ideas unworkable

By Gary D. Robertson
The Associated Press

RALEIGH — Attorney General Roy Cooper vowed Monday to keep pressuring lawmakers to approve legislation to require minors to get parental permission before using MySpace.com and other social networking Web sites.

Cooper, along with top law enforcement officials in other states, said the sites provide sexual predators easy access to children and teenagers because people of any age can join. State legislators failed to pass such a bill this year as some House members and Internet commerce groups said a broad restriction would be unworkable and unconstitutional.

"One thing we pride ourselves in doing is being ahead of the curve with ideas," Cooper said during a news conference. "Sometimes it just takes the slow-moving legislature a period of time to see the light."

MySpace general counsel Mike Angus said the bill didn't pass because the verification technology isn't up to par. "Leading Internet and technology experts, as well as respected Internet and media companies, successfully explained why age verification and parental consent would be ineffective," he said in a written statement Monday.

MySpace, the largest social networking site of its kind, lets users create personal profiles with pictures, music and text. Users can send messages to one another and allow their profiles to be viewed publicly, but they can block specific MySpace users or make their entire profile accessible only to users designated as "friends."

Officials in two states have said MySpace recently identified more than 29,000 registered sex offenders with profiles. The company won't confirm the numbers but said it is working to locate and remove profiles posted by sex offenders.

Cooper threatened Monday to take action against MySpace if it fails to require parental consent voluntarily, but he declined to discuss specifics.

Law enforcement officials nationwide are trying to find better ways to keep tabs on sex offenders, such as toughening child pornography penalties or requiring offenders to give authorities e-mail addresses.

Cooper is pushing for a state law that would require social networking Web sites to verify a parent's permission before allowing a minor to create a profile.

A bill including that requirement passed the Senate by a wide margin in May, but it got smothered in the House by lobbyists and attorneys who said parental consent rules wouldn't prevent minors from fabricating their parents' information.

"Parental consent is just not feasible. It won't be feasible next year when they bring it up again," said Braden Cox with NetChoice, a Washington-based e-commerce trade group that lists MySpace parent News Corp., Yahoo and AOL among its members.

A House committee eventually passed the bill without the parental permission component, leaving behind a provision banning registered sex offenders from joining social networking sites and slightly increasing child pornography penalties. But no further action was taken on the measure before the session ended last week.

Cooper said age verification technology is already being used on adult oriented sites that advertise tobacco and alcohol. He said social networking sites just don't want to lose the revenue generated from advertising to young people — an accusation MySpace denies.