THE DAILY CLIPS

October 27, 2010

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

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The New York Times
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East Carolina University News Bureau
E-mail to durhamj@ecu.edu Web site at http://www.news.ecu.edu
252-328-6481
ECU fence request denied
By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, October 27, 2010

A request to build a 6-foot fence wrapping around the front and sides of the East Carolina University chancellor's residence was rejected Tuesday by the city's Historic Preservation Commission.

A wrought-iron fence with brick columns would provide security and protection from harassment without detracting from the home's appearance, said Bill Bagnell, vice chancellor for campus operations.

The university-owned home at the corner of Fifth and Jarvis streets has been the target of multiple pranks, Bagnell said. He described two of the more serious events for the commission's consideration: a person found passed out in the front yard at 3 a.m. and a separate incident in which a young woman actually entered the residence. She was arrested and charged that same August evening.

City design guidelines do not allow for fences taller than 3 feet at homes in the College View Historic District. Six-foot fences are permitted in backyard areas, and a privacy fence at that height exists around the back of the residence. Bagnell said that incidents have occurred from both the front and back entrances of the residence.

A security system is in place at the house. Commissioner Bryan Patonay asked if ECU had considered installation of a lower fence in light of design guidelines. Bagnell said officials determined a 3-foot or 4-foot fence “just isn't adequate” to deter people intending to enter the yard.
Commissioner Kerry Carlin suggested the use of landscaping as a deterrent — especially some thorny bushes or shrubs. Campus landscape architect John Gill said he felt landscaping would create a less transparent blockade.

Vice Chairman Dennis Chestnut opposed the university's request, stating that while he understands the concerns he doesn't want to give ECU preferential treatment. He said other citizens in that neighborhood experience similar problems, and they've been told to cut fences down that were too high. Chestnut said that the proposed wrought-iron fence would create a “significant streetscape change.”

The N.C. Department of Cultural Resources submitted a letter to city staff and the commission against the proposed fencing. Patonay said that the design guidelines are specific, and “to double that (height allowance) would be a stretch.”

The commission voted to deny the fencing request 6-1. Patonay voted against the denial, also asking that the group reconsider the fence height requirement at a future meeting.

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at kkennedy@reflector.com or (252) 329-9566.
Greenville officials are preparing for a large crowd of partiers to celebrate Halloween downtown on Sunday.

The police department issued a statement Tuesday that said the city would “invest considerable time, resources and finances” to ensure public safety during the annual gathering.

Thousands of East Carolina University students and other costumed partiers hit the downtown club district each Halloween. Police close parts of Fifth, Cotanche and other streets in the area.

The department said in Tuesday's release that it will have more than 125 officers on duty. A large portion will be devoted to downtown and adjacent areas, the release said.

Entry to the area will be controlled, and officers will ask people to submit to an inspection of personal belongings, the release said.

Alcohol, drugs and weapons will not be permitted, nor will costume items that look like weapons or any item that may be used as a weapon, the release said.

Officers from the following agencies will assist: Pitt County Sheriff's Office, Alcohol Beverage Control, Alcohol Law Enforcement, Bethel Police Department, Ayden Police Department, Winterville Police Department, East Carolina University Police Department and Pitt County Memorial Hospital Police Department.

Officers will enforce all applicable state laws and city ordinances, the release said. The effort does not guarantee safety for people who choose to come downtown, the release said.

“Remember to never travel alone,” it said. “Please take appropriate safety precautions, and please behave responsibly.”
An armed robbery report at a student apartment complex on Monday was drug-related and involved a false statement to investigators, the Greenville Police Department reported.

An investigation began when a 20-year-old man went to the East Carolina University Police Department and reported being robbed in the area of Forest Hills Drive and East Eighth Street about 9 p.m.

The man said that while he was walking home he was approached by an individual who started a conversation and then drew a handgun and demanded money. The victim said he turned over $15 and his cell phone.

Three hours later, two other males, ages 18 and 20, called from 2208 University Suites Drive to report that an armed robbery occurred at that location. The incident allegedly occurred about 5:30 p.m.

Police learned while conducting interviews that the first victim was at the apartment and was robbed there along with the other two men. Officers determined he provided false information about the incident he had reported earlier, a department news release said.

The two men at University Suites said three black males, each armed with a handgun, entered the residence. The robbers forced the men on the floor while they rummaged through the apartment.

The suspects took electronics and clothing valued at $1,178 along with $455 in cash, the men told police.

It was determined the suspects were attempting to steal marijuana from one of the men and left with an estimated 1.5 grams of pot, a news release said.

No drug charges or false report had been filed against the robbery victims Tuesday afternoon, police department spokesman Kip Gaskins said.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call Pitt-Greenville CrimeStoppers at 758-7777.
The economy, education and crime are priority issues that the candidates for State Senate District 5 focused attention on this election cycle.

Finding new sources of jobs in their districts and statewide will be the main priority, said Democratic incumbent Don Davis of Snow Hill and Republican challenger Louis M. Pate Jr. of Mount Olive. Educating and preparing young people for new economic growth will be a key to economic success, they said.

Support for crime control and first responders is a continuing need, they said. The Daily Reflector spoke with Pate, a former mayor and state representative, and Davis, also a former mayor and professional educator, about issues driving the election.

Economy and jobs

Pate promoted the growth of small business through corporate tax cuts and advocates development of infrastructure.

“I foresee an opportunity to develop our seaports, which are woefully under used right now,” Pate said. “We currently get about 2 percent of East Coast shipping, and we’re within easy driving distance of so many people, and should take advantage of the increase in global trade if we develop our seaports into thriving distribution centers.

Public-private partnership can put people to work and cost the taxpayers very little money.”

Davis reflected on what he hears from his constituents about business and job growth. “People tell me they want the government to stimulate jobs, then get out of the way and not be too restrictive on business,” he said.

Both candidates addressed the home ownership crisis. “Our attorney general has joined those in other states calling for lenders to refrain from foreclosures based on false or incorrect data, and I support that,” Pate said. “On the other hand, I do not feel we should offer mortgages to people who cannot afford to pay them. Rather than regulate banks and lenders, the attorney general and governor can use their bully pulpits to entreat bankers to take a fair look at people in danger of losing their homes.”

Davis commented on veterans' mortgages.
“I helped get a bill through in the last legislative session to help prevent foreclosure procedures against returning veterans, requiring a judicial process to do that,” he said. “That takes North Carolina a step further toward protections for military veterans, especially those in deployment.”

Promoting the state university system also is a great means to building the economy, Davis said.

“Look at the impact the new East Carolina University School of Dentistry will have on our community and the rural areas of eastern N.C.,” he said. “The same is true of the new heart institute. We have worked to keep these goals on task during this term. I've also been highly engaged in other bills generated from this district, including the southwest bypass.”

Education

Pate wants to cut the cost of education, which comprises nearly half of the state's budget, by eliminating administrative redundancies.

“We have to take a hard look at the excessive administrative levels of the education system and see to it that the money appropriated by the state goes to the classroom,” Pate said. “I think public schools have some overages in central office staffs. We need more teachers in the public school classrooms than we're getting right now.”

Davis, a former community college teacher, said responsibility must be spread wide among teachers, students and parents.

“It's very important to instill a sense of self-responsibility within the student,” he said. “They must understand that what they do today impacts tomorrow. Parents have to be engaged in the life of the student, and we must encourage parental involvement.”

Pate mirrored that approach.

“There has to be a commitment from the child and the parent to excel. That's not how it is right now in many cases. We can give everyone a laptop and a Smart board, but if the child goes home in the evening and gets no educational opportunity there, that's something we have to address,” Pate said.

Davis talked about the dropout problem in public schools.

“As the chairman of the dropout prevention commission, I know we have to continue efforts to curtail the dropout rate in Pitt County and across the state,” he said. “A bill I'm proud to have championed now charges the State Board of Education with establishing specific goals to reduce the dropout rate.”

Pate wants some other options for quality education to be examined.

“Perhaps we also have to take another look at charter schools,” he said. “We've had the same cap on charter schools just about since they were first authorized by the state as a
part of local school systems. The bad ones need to be rooted out and the good ones should be encouraged to go ahead with their experiments and prove themselves one way or the other over the years.”

Crime prevention

Davis received the endorsement of the Police Benevolent Association and has served on the state's emergency management committee.

“We need to find grants for equipment and training of police and emergency services,” Davis said. “We also worked hard the last session to make sure there is more flexibility in the 911 funds, to help alleviate the tax burden on communities. We need to move further toward the integration of services and continue to make sure we have good local plans in place for emergency situations like the recent floods we had.”

“We seem too often to give people a slap on the wrist and let them go to do their deeds again,” Pate said. “People who do serious crimes should suffer the consequences.” Pate said protecting law enforcement and emergency services people is a priority.

“We have to stay a step ahead of the bad guys with available technology,” he said. “The VIPER communications system is not complete statewide, but it has merit and should be fully looked at for funding. Out in the counties, volunteer fire departments who lay their lives on the line also should be honored and supported in any way possible.”

Contact Michael Abramowitz at mabramowitz@reflector.com or (252) 329-9571.
In the span of just five or six seconds last Saturday, Michael Brooks experienced the jubilation and the consternation that is college football.

The sophomore defensive tackle on the East Carolina football team is in the midst of his second standout season with the Pirates, and his five straight starts have been crucial in establishing some continuity on the front four.

In the midst of a play during the second quarter against Marshall, Brooks found himself in one of those situations in which one's position becomes relative, the play has broken down and the only thing left to do is just play football.

A pass from Thundering Herd quarterback Brian Anderson was deflected into the sky, and as everyone's eyes shifted upward to see where the errant pass would fall, it was directly above the 6-foot-3, 280-pound Brooks and soon was in his clutches.

“Josh Smith did a great job of getting pressure, and I guess it came off somebody's helmet,” Brooks said of the interception. “I saw the ball and went to go get it, tried to take off and go score.”

While it didn't turn into one of those rare moments when a defensive big-body trucks all the way to the end zone, Brooks' 14-yard return gave the Pirate offense a first down at midfield.
But Brooks' big play was nearly derailed when a couple of Marshall defenders tomahawked the ball out of his grasp at the end of the return and nearly created the second turnover on one play. Lucky for Brooks, the officials ruled he was down before the ball popped loose.

“I think I was down,” said Brooks, who has 21 tackles for the 5-2 Pirates. “I felt it coming loose so I tried to get my knee down real fast.”

ECU extracted four turnovers out of Marshall in the 37-10 win, three interceptions and a fumble.

According to Brooks, it was the result of a dedicated effort on the part of the ECU defense to not only kill Marshall drives, but to cause major miscues. “That was the thing this whole week, trying to get turnovers because we haven't gotten a lot,” said Brooks of the Pirates, who are 37th nationally with 14 turnovers gained in seven games. “Doing fundamental things, routine things and staying within the scheme of the defense, they'll come.”

Zeroed in

The ECU offensive line has done a remarkable job thus far in protecting junior quarterback Dominique Davis, and against Marshall that meant the line holding its ground in the face of some all-out blitzes.

It's becoming a trend for ECU opponents to try new things to put pressure on the Pirate passer, and last week the Thundering Herd brought the house numerous times, yet the ECU line surrendered just a single sack for a seven-yard loss.

“Marshall came out and did some different things on defense they had not done before,” ECU head coach Ruffin McNeill said, noting that the Herd ran numerous zero blitzes at his team, meaning they left no one back in coverage and sent everyone after Davis. “They went to a more three-man or odd-front line with more blitzing and variation of blitzing with man coverage behind it,” McNeill said. “It was a good test, and they had not shown that on film, but our kids did a really good job of adjusting to it.”

The Pirates rank 38th in the nation in sacks allowed, giving up 1.4 per contest.

Contact Nathan Summers at nsummers@reflector.com or (252)329-9595
Former Chief Justice of the N.C. Supreme Court Burley Mitchell, left, swears in Randy Woodson as chancellor.

Woodson aims high, needs to pay for it

RALEIGH N.C. State's problem isn't thinking big, Randy Woodson said Tuesday as he was officially installed as university chancellor.

It's paying for it.

At a time when the expense of innovation is clashing with a decline in revenues, NCSU must do a better job of generating its own money, Woodson told the crowd at a Reynolds Coliseum ceremony designating him as the university's 14th leader.

The primary areas for improvement are in federally funded research and private donations to NCSU's endowment, he said.
Woodson hit on these themes and several others in a wide-ranging speech inside a hot, humid coliseum that he joked could use an air-conditioning system if a donor wants to contribute $6 million to pay for it.

A massive recent expansion in federal funding for research through the National Institutes of Health "largely bypassed NCSU," Woodson said, a problem he hopes to attack by placing a greater emphasis on traditional university strengths like life sciences and genetics.

Since he arrived on campus in April, Woodson has spoken of the need for better fundraising. At $400 million, NCSU's endowment is nowhere near the size of many of the university's peers, Woodson noted. Some have private endowments twice or three times as large, he said.

As state appropriations continue to decline, public universities increasingly point to the importance of private giving as a difference-making revenue source.

"We are not going to let budget challenges cripple us, but we have to move forward knowing that we have to think differently about our operation," Woodson said.

The installation ceremony felt a little like a pep rally. Woodson delivered his speech in front of a 20-foot-high, red-lit foam-and-plyboard replica of the bell tower, a leftover prop from a years-ago visit to campus by the game show "Jeopardy."

Woodson said he hopes to improve student and faculty success, engagement and economic development, and organizational effectiveness. He wants to hire more tenure-track faculty, a bold move to some given recent budget constraints. But those faculty conduct research, bring in grant money and attract graduate students who, in turn, help shoulder the undergraduate teaching load, Woodson argued.

To NCSU from Purdue
A native of Fordyce, Ark., Woodson, 53, came to NCSU in April from Purdue University, where he had spent 25 years and was serving as provost.
Though not a North Carolinian, Woodson said he has had a minimal learning curve, in large part because Purdue, like NCSU, is a well-regarded land-grant university with similar strengths and challenges.

Affable and quick with a joke, Woodson has quickly endeared himself to various Wolfpack constituencies, said Lawrence Davenport, chairman of the university's board of trustees.

"He's a lot better than I ever dreamed," Davenport said in an interview before the ceremony. "We were looking for a great administrator, an experienced academic and someone who could be well-liked. We thought it would be impossible, but he does it all very well."

Being well-liked matters for a chancellor, whose job is often to close the deal when a wealthy donor is contemplating a big gift. Woodson said he has spent much of his first six months currying favor with alumni.

"I feel like I've made it a high priority," he said in an interview following his installation ceremony. "It's a people-intensive business built on relationships."

eric.ferreri@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4563
University of North Carolina Daniel Arneman, an energy expert at the University of North Carolina, on the solar-paneled roof of Morrison Residence Hall. The dormitory cut its energy use by 36 percent, the E.P.A. said.

*By JOHN COLLINS RUDOLF*

There was no prize for winning the Environmental Protection Agency’s first-ever National Building Competition, in which 14 teams across the country engaged in a Biggest Loser-style contest to wring the most energy savings out of their respective buildings. The reward was the cash savings from reducing energy use, and perhaps some bragging rights.

As it turns out, though, those cash savings add up to a pretty nice prize after all. The winning team, from Morrison Residence Hall at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, managed to reduce its energy use 36 percent, trimming an estimated $250,000 from its energy bills.
Chris Martin, director of energy management at the school and the efficiency team leader, said that payoff came from an investment of less than $30,000.

Other teams that reaped big savings were a Sears store in Glen Burnie, Md., which came in second with a 31.7 percent energy reduction, and a J.C. Penney store in Orange, Calif., in third place with savings of 28.4 percent. Over all, the 14 teams involved saved an estimated $950,000 on their energy bills, the E.P.A. said.

For the Morrison Residence Hall team, the biggest savings were achieved through adjustments to the building’s heating and cooling system. In a major shift, the computer-controlled system for the 10-story, 217,000-square-foot building was reprogrammed to run significantly more slowly during moderate weather.

As a result, students who reached to crank up their air conditioning on a warm day, for instance, were met with a cool breeze rather than an Arctic blast — and the savings mounted.

The effort was not without its bumps along the way. “You tweak things, and then you stand back and watch the results,” Mr. Martin said. “Invariably there were some legitimate complaints that came out of this effort, but in general it’s been pretty smooth.”

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has already made big strides toward energy efficiency in recent years, with modifications of more than 100 buildings that reaped savings of nearly $4 million last year. The average savings per building was $33,000, on an average investment of about $7,000.

“The payback is on the order of months, not years,” Mr. Martin said.

Still, the school is not ready to rest on its laurels. “I think we’ve got lots of opportunity left on the campus,” Mr. Martin said.
Caffeine and Alcohol Drink Is Potent Mix for Young

By ABBY GOODNOUGH

Mixing alcohol and caffeine is hardly a new concept, but a rash of cases involving students and others who landed at hospitals after drinking beverages that combine the two in a single large can has alarmed college and health officials around the country.

The drinks are dangerous, doctors say, because the caffeine masks the effects of the alcohol, keeping consumers from realizing just how intoxicated they are.

A brand called Four Loko — a fruit-flavored malt beverage that has an alcohol content of 12 percent and as much caffeine as a cup of coffee — has come under particular scrutiny after students who drank it this fall at Ramapo College in New Jersey and Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Wash., ended up in emergency rooms, some with high levels of alcohol poisoning.

“This is one of the most dangerous new alcohol concoctions I have ever seen,” said Dr. Michael Reihart, an emergency room doctor at Lancaster General Hospital in Lancaster, Pa., who said he had treated more than a dozen teenagers and adults over the last three months who had been brought there after drinking Four Loko. “It’s a recipe for disaster because your body’s natural defense is to get sleepy and not want to drink, but in this case you’re tricking the body with the caffeine.”

At the urging of 18 attorneys general, the Food and Drug Administration, which has never approved adding caffeine to alcohol, is reviewing whether the drinks are safe. And in July, Senator Charles E. Schumer of New York asked the Federal Trade Commission to investigate whether the drinks, with colorful packaging and flavors like watermelon, blue raspberry and lemon-lime, are “explicitly designed to attract under-age drinkers.”
Lawmakers in several states, including New York, have sought to ban the drinks, though no legislation has passed yet.

Peter Mercer, the president of Ramapo College in Mahwah, N.J., went so far as to ban energy drinks that combine caffeine and alcohol this month after six students were taken to the hospital after drinking Four Loko. One, he said, “admitted to drinking three cans of Four Loko and several shots of tequila in just over an hour.”

That student had a blood alcohol level of .40 afterward, Dr. Mercer said.

“I do not see any socially redeeming purpose being served by these beverages,” he said. “At the end of the day, they’re aimed at a young, inexperienced market for the purpose of enabling them to become rapidly intoxicated.”

Chris Hunter, a co-founder and managing partner of Phusion Projects, the five-year-old Chicago company that owns Four Loko, said Tuesday that the drink, introduced in August 2008, was being unfairly singled out. The company takes steps to prevent its products from getting into the hands of minors, he said.

“Alcohol misuse and abuse and under-age drinking are issues the industry faces and all of us would like to address,” Mr. Hunter said. “The singling out or banning of one product or category is not going to solve that. Consumer education is what’s going to do it.”

In a separate statement published on its Web site, Phusion Projects questioned why a police investigation into the Central Washington University incident had focused on Four Loko when, according to the police report, a number of other alcoholic beverages, including beer, vodka and rum, were also found at the off-campus party where students got sick. Rob McKenna, the attorney general in Washington, said that while many students at the party had mixed alcohols, some of those who were hospitalized had drunk only Four Loko.

“You have a product where people don’t appreciate how much alcohol they’re consuming,” Mr. McKenna said.
Students at several universities around the country said Tuesday that Four Loko and similar drinks were catching on among their peers because they were cheap and potent yet did not taste like alcohol.

“You can get drunk for $5 all night,” said Christine Binko, a junior at Boston University who said she had noticed Four Loko cans littering streets near campus on weekends. “But I definitely think it brings out the aggression in people.”

Ms. Binko and most others interviewed expressed wariness about the drinks. At Xavier University in Cincinnati, Adam Stowe, a sophomore, said that Four Loko was showing up much more at parties, but that most people only drank one to start their night with a powerful drink and then switched to beer. “I just tasted it once and said, ‘That’s gross,’ ” he said.

Also under scrutiny is Joose, a caffeinated alcoholic beverage made by United Brands, a San Diego company. It comes in the same 23.5-ounce can as Four Loko but has a lower alcohol content, 9.9 percent, and, according to Michael Michail, the company president, less caffeine. Mr. Michail said a can of Joose contained 54 milligrams of caffeine; Mr. Hunter said a can of Four Loko contained 156 milligrams.

“It is ludicrous for someone to come out and say we are targeting under-age drinkers,” Mr. Michail said. “We understand what the laws of the land are, and we stick with it.”

Both Mr. Michail and Mr. Hunter said their beverages came in 23.5-ounce cans because when they started out, that was the standard for malt liquor drinks. Mr. Michail said he was considering a smaller can; Mr. Hunter said Four Loko drinkers could already choose between the version with 12 percent alcohol and another with 6 percent alcohol, though the former is far more popular.

Both Four Loko and Joose are sold in 47 states; Mr. Hunter said his company had added 10 states in the last three months alone.

“We have seven spots on our labels that identify it’s an alcoholic product,” he said. “We go above and beyond industry standards.”
Critics, though, say that the brightly colored cans Four Loko comes in look like iced tea, soda or energy drink containers, and that it is easy to mistake the product for nonalcoholic drinks.

“I’ve talked to parents who were shocked because the can was in their refrigerator and they didn’t realize it was an alcoholic beverage,” Dr. Reihart said. “It looks like every other energy drink out there.”

*Katie Zezima, Bob Driehaus and Staci Semrad contributed reporting.*