New Horizons Task Force
Dec. 11, 2006
Minutes

a. A meeting of the New Horizons Task Force was held on Dec. 11, 2006 at 7 p.m. at the Homestead Community Center.

b. Present and presiding: Lydia Lavelle (Chair), Charlie Buckner (Vice Chair), Mary Rabinowitz, Peggy Vincent, Laura Van Sant (NHTF members), Dan Coleman (Carrboro Board of Aldermen), Linda Bowerman (Meadow Run).

c. Minutes of 11/13/06 meeting: approved unanimously.

d. Rogers Road committee: Linda and Peggy attended a town of Chapel Hill informational meeting about a Rogers Road committee. They reported that Chapel Hill is forming a committee to look into the future of the Greene Tract, but that most Rogers Road-area residents in attendance were more concerned about annexation issues, taxes and the split of the road between Carrboro and Chapel Hill. Lydia will see if Laura Wenzel wants to serve on the committee. If not, Mary will represent the NHTF.

e. Northern Small Area Plan review update: NHTF may have to appoint a representative.

f. Annexation recommendations. The TF discussed recommendations to make at its February presentation to the Board of Aldermen regarding future involuntary annexations. Among the possible recommendations:

1. Form an NHTF-type transition group before the annexation vote.
2. Post informational signs early in the process.
3. Provide realistic financial data and other information during the public-information meeting. The town should provide information, not try to sell people on annexation.
4. Future annexations should be effective as of the beginning of a fiscal year, July 1.
5. Annexation shouldn't take place until town services (i.e., fire stations, road maintenance) are in place or scheduled.
6. Someone in the planning department should be a contact person for prospective property owners and others seeking information about possible future annexations.
7. The town should have stricter annexation standards in place than those called for in state law regarding density, contiguity with town limits, etc.

g. Economic development plan. The TF discussed a town consultant's report, which had some ideas people liked and others that seemed less likely to increase the commercial tax base. The TF didn't have any comments to pass along to the aldermen.

h. Taxes. Charlie had solicited annexed residents' suggestions on how to reduce residential property taxes. Most of the suggestions fell into two categories:

1. Merging Chapel Hill and Carrboro or the more politically realistic combination of some services, in particular fire, police and public works. Dan said the aldermen are open to merging some services but when they've looked at the issue in the past they haven't found short-term cost savings.
2. Commercial development. Carrboro should join with Orange County and Chapel Hill to boost commercial activity.

The February presentation to the aldermen will include a slide recommending Chapel Hill and Carrboro explore service consolidation. Charlie said he's not sure how else the NHTF can deal with taxes, the biggest issue on the summer survey of annexed residents.

i. Items for the January meeting will include working on the February presentation to the Board of Aldermen and continuing to discuss issues raised in the survey.

j. The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.