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In review
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CHAPEL HILL

County raises impact fees on new homes

The Orange County commissioners approved a series of increases to impact fees on residential construction.

The new fees would raise the fee contractors pay to build new single-family homes in Chapel Hill and Carrboro by 38 percent to \$6,092 on Jan. 1. On Jan. 1, 2010, the fee will go up again, this time to \$7,616. Over two years, that's a 73 percent increase.

In Orange County, there will be no increase to the \$3,000 fee on single-family homes next year. But in 2010, it will rise to \$3,749, a 25 percent increase.

Commissioners approved the fee changes reluctantly, acknowledging the added stress they place on homebuilders already struggling in the bad economy.

"It's a lose-lose situation," said Commissioner Bernadette Pelissier.

The county has budgeted \$1.6 million from impact-fee revenue to pay down some of the debt for new schools. That budget depends on the higher impact fees. A county can have impact fees only if state legislation specifically allows it, and Orange County is one of just a handful with such a law on the books. It has not increased the fees since 2001.

Omar Zinn, a local builder, told commissioners Thursday night



Yarmolenko

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that home sales are down 30 percent or more and many of his colleagues in the business are hurting.

"I know it's been seven years since we've had an increase," Zinn said. "But to have it at this time -- to say it's a bad decision is an understatement."

-- Staff writer Eric Ferreri

Council votes to support gay marriage

The Chapel Hill Town Council has voted to "endorse and support the rights of same-sex couples to share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities and commitments of civil marriage."

Tom Greene, a teacher at Chapel Hill High School who presented the resolution, said he and his partner moved to Chapel Hill because they knew "in this town we would at least be treated as human beings." But his partner was recently denied coverage under Greene's state employees health care plan.

Council member Mark Kleinschmidt, one of only a few openly gay elected officials in North Carolina, called on the council to endorse the resolution immediately, rather than asking for advice from staff.

The council endorsed it unanimously Monday night. It will be sent to state and federal lawmakers.

The resolution acknowledged "victories by anti-gay activists" in California, Florida and Arizona, where voters last month amended their state constitutions to prevent same-sex marriages.

-- Staff writer Jesse James DeConto

MOUNT HOLLY

2 charged in murder of Chapel Hill woman

Authorities have charged two Gaston County men in the killing of UNC-Charlotte student Irina Yarmolenko of Chapel Hill.

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Mount Holly police announced the arrests at a news conference Friday.

Mark Bradley Carver and Neal Leon Cassada Jr. were arrested Friday morning and charged with first-degree murder and felony conspiracy charges.

Yarmolenko was killed on May 5. Surveillance video shot from the University Goodwill on Harris Houston Road near campus shows her last stop.

The drop-off of clothes and other items takes only a few minutes and the video captures her driving away in her car, turning right onto University City Boulevard.

Less than three miles away and 15 minutes later, Yarmolenko made a stop at Jackson's Java Coffeehouse on University City Boulevard.

At 1:18 p.m., her body was found near the Catawba River in Mount Holly.

Yarmolenko was also seen that morning at the North Carolina State Employees' Credit Union on University City Boulevard.

-- The Charlotte Observer

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