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Thursday, December 4, 2003 6:49AM EST

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## A vote could ease the pain

By RUTH SHEEHAN, Staff Writer

Like many of his neighbors in that sliver of Wake County between Holly Springs and Cary, Tres "Trey" Prince has a lot of problems with Cary's proposed annexation.

To name a few:

It's going to cost a bundle. Prince estimates \$10,000 for water and sewer hookups alone.

It's going to increase fees over time. By Prince's best reckoning, \$500 a year more for the "improved services" Cary promises.

But for Prince (as for so many others in southwestern Wake County), the thing about forced annexation that really sticks in his craw is that he has no say in the matter.

"There needs to be a democratic process," he said. "The way it is now, [Cary leaders] just make up their mind, and they do it. I would really like the General Assembly to change those laws."

North Carolina is one of only five states that allow forced annexations. As a result, the only opportunity for residents to voice their concerns is at public hearings (which they did, en masse, at Cary's Town Hall Tuesday night). There is no vote of the people.

Folks such as Prince, who lives in the Hallmark subdivision a mile outside Cary's current borders, call this taxation without representation.

Of course, these folks (and their property values) have also benefited greatly from their proximity to Cary, even if they don't want to admit it. Still, the outpouring of complaints prompted local legislators Paul Stam and Richard Stevens to send a letter to Cary's mayor and council advising against such a contentious forcible annexation.

"Such moves as this one could cause the General Assembly to rethink this legislation," Stam and Stevens wrote.

The question is, what might that rethinking bring?

I have a simple suggestion: a vote of the people. Not just the people in the area proposed for annexation. They'll always oppose it because of the cost.

### Divided they stand

Masons in N.C. still split into white, black as membership declines.

### Primaries nigh for Democrats

Dean rated man to beat; some see race ending fast.

### Town ready to soar

These are strange days for Kill Devil Hills, with the old and new blending freely.

### 3 Duke building plans advance

Trustees approve the design of a science center and give the nod for construction to start on 2 other projects.

### Wood scraps help spread warmth

Raleigh man dedicates time, effort to help keep people's heat on.

### Man shot, killed outside Raleigh cinema

An unidentified man was shot to death outside a crowded movie theater Saturday night, and police had few clues as to a suspect or motive.

### Best defense


Winget has blanked the field so far in the NCAA Tournament.

### Duke picks Roof

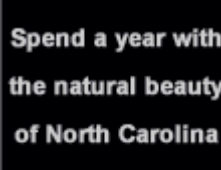
'Long shot' gets permanent job after impressing Devils officials over final five games of 2003 season.

### Depth -- not St. John's -- a problem for Duke


No. 6 Blue Devils have little trouble with Red Storm, but short bench



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concerns Krzyzewski.

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Instead, I would propose a vote, up or down on annexation, in both the area being gobbled up and in the municipality doing the gobbling. In short, everyone affected by the move.

I know, the number of people in the area proposed for annexation is less than 4,800, and the city of Cary's population is at least 20 times that.

But consider how few people vote in local elections. And consider what sort of turnout might be expected in a soon-to-be-annexed area. Ninety percent?

That would even the playing field.

Also, a vote of both the gobbled and the gobbler would be a small check on any town whose residents might think it's growing too fast, or too greedily. Residents of the annexation zone could make their case directly to the people.

Not that a vote would be likely to affect the outcome in southwestern Wake. Prince and his neighbors are fighting the good fight, but they're probably fighting a losing battle. At some point, they'll almost certainly be part of Cary.

Still, requiring a vote would allow folks in population magnets such as the Triangle to have a direct say on the issue of growth, a key factor in our quality of life. No longer would they feel voiceless, with annexation being shoved down their throats.

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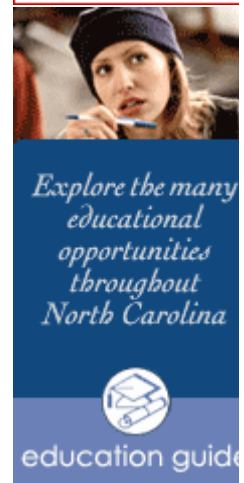
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