

The Cary News

- WEATHER -



CURRENT: 64 °F
Partly sunny

TODAY: High 67°F; Low 48°F. Warm with some sun.

TOMORROW: High 58°F; Low 30°F. Clearing and breezy.

- NEWS -

Cary backs off annexation plan

Agreement to avoid annexation could be near

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Signs of discontent over annexation

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Face of Change: Michael Joyce 'always one who liked challenges'

Holton sentenced for thefts, fraud

Residents give Cary officials earful on annexation

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Britt asks for another attorney

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Death Notices Dec. 18, 2003

Death Notices Dec. 11, 2003

Death Notices Dec. 4, 2003

Published: Wednesday, December 24, 2003

Cary backs off annexation plan 'We hear you'

By ADAM ARNOLD

It took Cary's Town Council eight minutes to seal a boundary deal two years in the making with Holly Springs and undo a plan to annex 4,800 people that had been under way for a month.

In a special meeting Friday afternoon the council voted to accept a utility-boundary agreement with Holly Springs. With passage of the agreement, the proposed annexation of two areas south of Cary became unnecessary, as it was largely based on the lack of the boundary agreement. Both motions passed 6-0. Council member Jennifer Robinson was not present.

Applause erupted from the flag-waving, red-wearing, placard-carrying audience of potential annexees, who followed with a standing ovation. "We hear you," Mayor Ernie McAlister said over the tumult.

Drawing the line

On Nov. 24, Cary's council passed a resolution of intent for the annexation, saying it was necessary to protect more than \$60 million in infrastructure from potential encroachment by Holly Springs. The move was predicated on town officials' belief that Holly Springs leaders had tried to entice property owners in the area Cary believed would be on its side of the boundary to voluntarily annex into Holly Springs. Holly Springs officials deny that charge.

The parcels for which Cary approved the resolution of intent ring the land Cary officials said Holly Springs supposedly solicited.

The towns had worked for two years to come up with a workable line and seemed nearly ready to vote. Both held public hearings earlier this fall on a proposal using Pierce Olive Road as a dividing line. The road is a ridgeline and thus a natural boundary for utility planning purposes.

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Starting Over/Starting Up
Part 4

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swing

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freedom

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administrators

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However, members of the Pierce and Olive families objected to putting the split there, saying it would divide their land between the towns and mean tracking two sets of regulations. Between them, the families own almost 700 acres that will be divided by the agreement.

Holly Springs commissioners tabled the agreement, they said, to try to come up with an agreement that would suit the Pierces and Olives.

Though Holly Springs' staff had come up with several alternatives, the only one the Holly Springs commissioners considered Dec. 16 was the one using Pierce Olive Road as the boundary, which Cary officials had insisted on.

Good neighbors

Holly Springs Mayor Dick Sears jokingly said "Love thy neighbor as thy self" would be added to his town's motto, "the fastest growing town in North Carolina."

He said the agreement would go a long way to heal wounds between the two towns.

"I would hope that with fresh eyes, and fresh eyes on the council, we can get beyond the baggage that apparently goes back to the Civil War and start afresh," Sears said. "At this point we have spent most of our time continually denying the reasons why the Town of Cary said it did this involuntary annexation."

McAlister, who took office this month, is also eager to patch things up. "Getting it done now is good for everybody and I hope it's an indication of how we can work together in the future," McAlister said.

"Holly Springs adopted that boundary agreement and that opened the way for us to adopt it, which opened up the way for us to deal with the annexation."

'Issue doesn't go away'

As the uproar died down, McAlister added a dose of reality: annexation may be over for now, but it is not over. According to state policy, those areas that are urban in character should be part of a municipality, McAlister said.

"The issue doesn't go away," McAlister said. What will be necessary is "to continue the dialogue we've started here."



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Cary council member Marla Dorrel said considering these areas could fit well with discussion of areas placed under a resolution of consideration in 2002. That discussion is likely by April, when the resolution of consideration is due to expire.

"That would be a logical time for the town to determine whether additional areas should be placed under consideration and whether we should proceed with annexation at that time," Dorrel said. Dorrel also said she and other council members want a 10- to 15-year annexation plan.

In 2002 the council was enmeshed in the town's last involuntary annexation. While the council decided to move forward and bring in several areas, it put several others under a "resolution of consideration." That resolution put several subdivisions on notice that they may be subject to involuntary annexation.

The council needs to readopt the resolution every two years to keep it effective.

McAlister agreed with Dorrel about the logic of revisiting the status of the two areas when the resolution of consideration needs attention in April.

"That's not saying we would do it, that's just you put them all on the table ... and go ahead with an orderly plan," McAlister said.

McAlister also thought a long-term annexation plan is a good idea, considering how many people were caught by surprise — and infuriated by the lack of notice — this time.

Council member Nels Roseland said bringing those areas into Cary is a matter of "when, not if."

Like McAlister and Dorrel, Roseland said the council needs to pursue an orderly process.

Over the next 20 years, "there'll be tremendous growth pressure on Cary and Wake County and we'll need an orderly process to bring people in," Roseland said.

Council member Jack Smith said he thought discussing the areas south of Cary when the existing resolution of consideration re-emerges is premature.

"The other areas are doughnut holes we need to look at when it's practical to phase in," Smith said. "The areas south of Cary are different."

The areas to the south are not yet doughnut holes

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Results

— areas contiguous to or encircled by the town that are not within municipal limits, Smith said. Smith said he is willing to listen to the discussion, but that it might be two years or 20 years before he thinks the areas to the south are ready to come in.

Recently installed council member Michael Joyce said he does not envision any involuntary annexations during his four-year term.

Joyce said his biggest concern is whether the town could afford the services annexation would require without raising taxes.

"The preparation to consider is something that I'm going to have to review and if there is a voluntary way to attract new citizens, that would be acceptable," Joyce said. "Otherwise, we are facing the challenges we just put to rest."

Residents in the affected areas are still wary of the town's plans. "StopCary is not going to disband," said Ron Thoreson of Dutchman Downs. "This isn't going to go away."

StopCary is an umbrella organization of all the neighborhoods affected by the Cary council's November resolution.

Thoreson said he hopes Cary does not return to the matter until after the next session of the General Assembly begins in May. Thoreson said he and leaders from other neighborhoods still plan to work with legislators "to add a few more layers of protection."

"I hope they will not revisit this issue for a long time to come," said Leo Josemans of Dutchman Downs. "It didn't do any good for Dutchman Downs and it didn't do any good for Cary."

Josemans, who grew up in Holland during World War II, said Cary's approach to involuntary annexation reminded him of Lebensraum, the German idea of spreading out into what was perceived as that country's natural "living space."

"We had no say in it whatsoever and I hate for Cary to be associated with the Nazis," Josemans said. "The Town of Cary would always have been seen as an occupying force."

Nevertheless, if his neighbors ever agreed to be voluntarily annexed, Josemans said he would go along.

"Then I have no choice, because majority rules,"

Josemans said.

Tres Prince of the Hallmark neighborhood said he is very pleased. "I think now I would really like to see Cary change its policies on involuntary annexation and make it more fair for the people involved," Prince said.

Nevertheless Prince said the council's decision will "definitely" make for a better holiday. Now that this stage is over, "I can sit back and relax at least for a couple of weeks," he said.

Although his phone-call and letter-writing campaigns of the last month have kept him up, he realizes Cary council members have probably been keeping late hours, too.

"I don't think they've been getting a lot of sleep either," Prince said. "It just makes me wonder if some of them aren't stressing some over this."

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