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DAILY DIGEST

Friday, February 27, 2004 6:22PM EST

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Final Word (Part 1)

Cary not a villain

Given what a hot-button issue annexation is to many in our area, I was very disappointed in the misleading information included about Cary in "Border Wars."

Obviously, the idea was to inspire a dialogue on the role and purpose of involuntary annexation because that is the type of annexation that can happen without the permission of the property owner. Yet no effort was made to explain that there are two types of annexation: involuntary, where the municipality determines that the property should be annexed, and

voluntary, where property owners request that the municipality annex their property. Instead, data for the two types of annexation were lumped into one group and, thus, misled readers by implying that Cary has a long and rich history of involuntary annexation. That's absolutely false.

For example, the article states that the annexation Cary is considering in Chatham County is receiving opposition, implying through its lack of detail that the owners of the property are upset. Not true. This is a voluntary annexation, where the property owners have requested that Cary annex the parcels.

The article states that Cary quadrupled its land area between 1980 and 2000 through annexation but again fails to note that 98.34 percent of this increase -- or about 205,077 of 205,440 acres -- was due to voluntary annexation.

The article also incorrectly states that Cary has taken "the first step" to annex 7,000 acres, including Dutchman Downs. Again, not true. There is no Resolution of Intent or Resolution of Consideration to annex these areas, and these are the only "first steps" recognized under state law for involuntary annexation.

What Cary has done is request that the county extend [extra-

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The issue

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Local retailers raided

Law enforcement officers this morning announced a crackdown on stores that sell pipes and other products the government considers drug paraphernalia.

Stocks jump in early trading

A spike in consumer spending motivated buyers on Wall Street today and sent stocks higher.

The 'King' reigns

Final film in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy wins a record-tying 11 awards, including best picture.

Top contenders spar over experience

Sen. John Edwards on Sunday sharply criticized Sen. John Kerry as too wedded to Washington.

Phipps awaits penalty

Former Agriculture Commissioner Meg Scott Phipps will receive her federal prison sentence on Tuesday.

Licensing dogs a hairy task for local agencies

A dog census in the Triangle's main cities reveals that a vast majority of the animals are outlaws.


Tourney draws eyes to Triangle

Location has been an advantage for the area CIAA schools in the five years Raleigh has hosted the tournament.

No denying Tar Heels

Playing with a sense of urgency, Rashad McCants lifts UNC past N.C. State.


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Duke ends jinx at FSU

Devils close in on regular-season title.

Brightleaf to shine again

Last month, the owners of Durham's Brightleaf Square began the project's largest ever renovation.

Steve Cannon: Doing better elsewhere

Sluggish job growth in the Triangle will probably mean more time working elsewhere for developer Andy Andrews.

territorial jurisdiction] to cover property already designated as part of our urban services area. ETJ helps Cary ensure the state's policies on urban planning and development are carried out by giving Cary the authority to regulate where and how future development occurs. Becoming part of ETJ also gives affected residents a voice in the community's future via a seat on the Planning and Zoning Board. And contrary to what the article presents, ETJ extension has never equaled annexation in Cary.

What I fail to understand is why The N&O felt it necessary to fan the flames on this issue by misleading readers in what was printed and what was omitted when it came to Cary. The lack of care with which this article was prepared is sure to lead only to increased misunderstandings based on inaccurate information.

William B. Coleman Jr.

Cary town manager

The length limit was waived to permit a fuller response.

Enough already

As residents of the Orchard Knoll subdivision, we moved to the county from Cary 12 years ago to get away from small residential lots, traffic and overcrowding. We are pleased with our current level of services from the county.

Higher density development should be contained near the town centers. Bringing city water and sewer lines farther into the few remaining rural areas of Wake County will continue the sprawling development that pushed our family out of Cary. Traffic is already out of control during rush hours and before and after school hours along Ten-Ten Road. Further high-density development will continue to aggravate this issue.

If Cary is allowed ETJ over the Middle Creek area, residents will have no voice in development decisions. Middle Creek residents vote for county officials, not for the Cary Council. Cary does invite citizens to serve on advisory level boards, but the recommendations of these boards mean little once proposals reach the Town Council. The council is free to disregard the "input" of the advisory boards, thus making this a moot effort.

Property owners, at minimum, should vote on annexation.

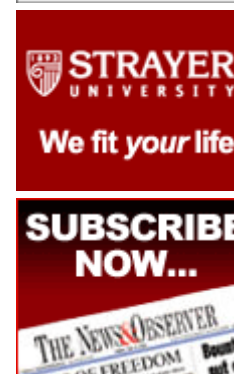
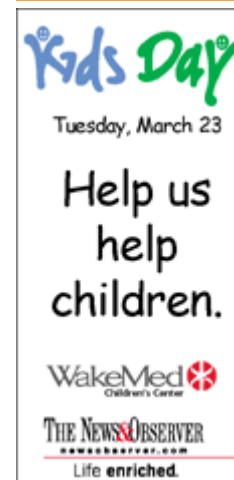
William A.

and Melissa G. Griffin

Apex

A campaign issue

We are opposed to the current annexation policy where property owners are not involved in the decision. The law needs to be changed, and the next time our government representatives are up for election, this is going to be an issue they will need to address.



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Karen and Ron Kalooky

Raleigh

Make the cities pay

I live in Medfield Estates, which has been on Cary's list of neighborhoods to annex for the past several years. [Your] discussion centered on how people in areas to be annexed would not vote to increase their own taxes. I, for one, have encouraged my legislators to increase taxes on many occasions for services that I felt were needed and wanted. The point is that the great majority of us in forced annex areas don't want or need the services being offered. And we have no legislators to write to about it.

Also missing from the discussion was the initial cost of "hooking up" to the unwanted and un-needed city services. We were told in Medfield that each property owner would have to pay from \$8,000 to \$25,000 upfront in addition to the added yearly city taxes. If we are being forced to take on services that we don't need, why should we have to pay to have them installed? The least the laws of the state can do is to require the cities who are forcing annexation to pay for the costs of annexation.

Rick Miller-Haraway

Raleigh

Relief from tyranny

There was a time in this country when only property owners had the right to vote. For the moment, let's put aside the negative application of this, which denied many spouses that right for too long. Property ownership was considered by the Founding Fathers to indicate the owner had an investment in this country and in the proper governance of it. Property taxes have already eroded this concept by rendering all property provisionally owned at the caprice of state or local officials. The only thing that helps slow this erosion is the right of voters to at least have a say, through vote, about which politicians will hold sway over their most cherished investment, their home. Now Cary is trying to deny homeowners even this relief against tyranny.

Should property owners have a right to vote on the future of their investment and home? How can the answer be anything but yes?

Jim Koob

Apex

Can't afford it

I am totally against the entire idea of annexation and feel that homeowners should have the choice to vote. We moved to an area outside Cary so we could afford a home and so my husband could be close enough to get to work. He is a firefighter for the town of Cary. We cannot afford our home if we are annexed.

Rachael Sorensen

Apex

All fired up

One statement that caught my eye in the second paragraph of "Border Wars" was that Ron Thoreson enjoys his right to burn trash since he lives outside Cary's limits. Thoreson should know that burning trash of any sort is illegal in North Carolina. The Division of Air Quality can levy fines up to \$10,000 for offenders.

If I were Thoreson, I would be more worried about that than Cary's taxes.

Ashley Wooten

Marion

A Swift Creek plea

I bought a home in the county in order to keep poultry and more than two dogs, and I cannot afford to move. I am sickened that Cary can forcibly take my property into its borders against my will, then ruin my life by forcing its restrictions on stock and pets on me, and I have no legal protection against this rapacious and self-aggrandizing act.

Once annexed, when Cary decides to bring water and sewer to my neighborhood, I will be forced to pay the price it sets, however unfair or unreasonable that may be. Even if I don't intend to use the services, I will be forced to pay for them, both to be brought in and in a monthly payment. If I cannot pay their price for hooking up, I could lose my home, which is my primary possession and only security.

If urbanization is what is so important, allow the residents of Swift Creek to incorporate as Swift Creek and manage the resources we have long cared for.

Laurie Adams

Apex

Redistrict by computer

In Topic Two, Lynn Bonner offered an "independent commission" as the solution to the ongoing wrangling in the legislature about redistricting. The article also avoided any mention of the true solution to gerrymandering.

This proposed commission has even more potential for harmful gerrymandering than the legislature fiascos. The only noticeable change will be that the result will take a shorter time, and the legislators won't be as embarrassed.

The nine-member commission would be appointed by four people, and so the results can be predictably based on the inclinations of those four people. Those four are the chief justice, the Senate leader, the House speaker and the last,

with three appointees, is the governor. With the governor being allowed to choose two people from his party, whereas the other three appointers must choose one member from each of the two parties, there is a guarantee that the governor's party dominates. The Senate leader and the House speaker only have to be careful that they don't choose traitors from their own parties.

The best solution is a software solution in which all of the voting laws are firmly incorporated, and the optimization rules are clearly defined. Legislators do not wish these concepts to be public, even though this solution is the most responsible way in which they could serve us. Please call me at my listed number in order to receive a more complete description of the advantages and mechanics of this computer-aided process.

William T. Lynch

Apex

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Even better with a vote

I read with interest the comments about the advantages of cities being able to annex adjoining areas. Even if those statements are true, the idea of forced annexation is fundamentally repugnant to a democratic society.

We fought a Revolutionary War for the idea that there should be no "taxation without representation." And that is exactly what forced annexation is. Citizens choose where to live, and part of that choice is the services they wish to receive from government and the tax burden they are willing to accept in return for those services.

Cary has requested the authority to plan and eventually annex 7,000 acres to its southeast. As president of the Langston Property Owners Association, I wish to let your readers know that our homeowners would be faced with almost a doubling of our property taxes, plus having to pay for the installation of the infrastructure above and beyond the tax burden in order to receive the major benefit that Cary could bestow: city water and sewer. The only other service that Cary could provide is garbage pickup.

It would be an entirely different picture if the citizens who will bear that tax burden have a say, by way of a vote, not just a hearing, to make their concerns known. So if annexation is a good policy, it will be an even better one if the citizens to be annexed have the right to vote on that decision.

Jim Wetterau

Apex

A huge disservice

Property owners should definitely be allowed to vote on annexation. The process should, however, start long before this point. Cities should not be allowed to invest in sewer-line expansion or any of the pre-expansion projects unless they

are 100 percent sure those living in the target areas want these things.

Those living in the cities do not have the right to impose what they want on others living outside their borders. The half-truths being told about how those living outside cities are not paying for city conveniences are vicious in their attempt to sway public opinion and are a disservice to the democratic process.

Edward K. Sammons

Raleigh

Cause for revolt

My forefathers fought against taxation without representation. When people are no longer properly represented, revolutions happen. History repeats itself. We are supposed to be a nation "of the people by the people." Am I not "people"? Aren't you? I can think for myself, thank you.

Robert Fitzgerald

Apex

A burdensome law

I am well aware of what it would be like to be annexed because I live in one of the neighborhoods that Cary has considered involuntarily annexing. I moved into my home eight years ago for what it and this neighborhood offered me. It is a beautiful, slightly secluded area with very little traffic and very few street lights. It is an older neighborhood with lots of wooded and natural areas.

All of that will change if this neighborhood is annexed by Cary. I know how much I will have to pay to be connected to Cary's sewer system because I was given a quote several years ago. The quote was for \$10,000 to \$15,000. I believe that most people on a fixed income would not appreciate the additional bills and taxes that would accompany involuntary annexation.

I know that there will be a financial burden placed on me and that my chosen way of life will change if my neighborhood is involuntarily annexed. For that reason, I believe that I should have the right to be part of that decision.

Pat Gottlieb

Raleigh

Where's the logic?

I don't think there is any question that folks should have the right to vote on annexation. Annexation is common enough. If a municipality has a valid method of improving the lives of the folks in the county, which is what they always claim, then let them convince us and give us the chance to vote. Do I have the right to plant trees in my neighbor's yard and then claim I

did it to improve his property? No. Then why should any municipality use the same logic?

Richard C. Kirkland Jr.

Apex

It's un-American

There should be no such thing as involuntary annexation of personal property in America. I can't even believe we are having this struggle in the land of the free.

Yes, property owners should get a vote on what happens to their homes. Yes, property owners should get a vote on issues that affect their families, their money and debt situations, and disrupt their personal priorities. There is no way someone is going to tell me to pay my hard-earned money for things I don't need or want. There is no debating that. My priority is to use my hard-earned money on my family, my home, taking care of my elderly parents -- not on some useless politician's illogical suggestions.

Smita Mulder

Apex

Change state law

It is a crying shame that property owners in North Carolina do not have a vote on annexation of their property. Cary's attempted crab-like reach from Chatham County in the west to near Highway 401 in the east is an excellent example of a town annexing property far from its center with no regard for the opinions of the property owners.

Towns go into areas against the will of property owners, make infrastructure investments, then say they are annexing to protect their investments -- even if the local property owners protested the addition of the infrastructure to begin with.

Rarely are those who are making these decisions elected by the property owners whose land they are proposing to annex. In addition, major new taxes and fees can be charged to those who are annexed -- again, after vehemently protesting annexation to begin with.

As a resident of Middle Creek/Swift Creek, I am all too familiar with this process since we have been battling with Cary for well over a year as Cary and Holly Springs decide how to divide our area between them.

I call on the state legislature to pass laws limiting the rights of municipalities to annex property and strengthening the rights of property owners to vote on what happens to their own homes and farms. The sooner the better!

Lorraine Johnson

Apex

Let me vote

I am very concerned that Cary and other municipalities have the constitutional right to annex any property simply because they desire more property to feed their land-starved developers. I oppose annexation unless those property owners to be affected have approved such annexation via a majority vote. I have lived happily on Campbell Road for 20 years. I am planning to move outside Cary's long arms of annexation.

Michael C. Mullins

Raleigh

A different take

Try this take on annexation: Cities make themselves so attractive because of the quality of their services and environment that people clamor to be annexed.

Artie Rawls

Washington

Fiscally irresponsible

The affected citizens should be able to vote. This is the only situation that immediately comes to mind where the affected citizens have no vote in their own citizenship until after they have been taxed, billed for services not provided and punished for failure to voluntarily enter a city they usually specifically avoided when choosing a housing area.

In this case, Cary's plan for annexation includes taxing the new citizens immediately, charging \$8,000 to \$10,000 for water and sewer hookups (when the individuals don't need it or want it), not improving any roadways until it receives funds from the state for roadway improvements and contracting with the current volunteer fire departments to provide service for the homes to which they already provide service. It's all written in its own annexation plan.

All in all, the city offers nothing the areas do not already have but adds additional tax revenue for the town to support its own selfish agenda, fiscal irresponsibility.

Chris Johnson Apex



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