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Coalition of Neighbors Near Campus

January 12, 2004

Petition to the Town Council

I am Elaine Barney representing CNC, the Coalition of Neighbors Near Campus.

Recently it has come to our attention that the University of North Carolina has assigned high ranking administrative staff members to meet regularly with individual Town Council members. It is our belief that these meetings, while technically permitted, are nonetheless improper, especially given the importance to our community of issues that might be discussed.

As Senator John McCain has often said when discussing the national campaign finance problem, "access is influence." The leaders of the University of North Carolina seem to believe in this principle.

We therefore request that the Town Council take the following steps:

- o One: recognize that these meetings are lobbying efforts and are a de facto end run around the open meetings law;
- o Two: cease all such meetings until the Council can adopt a policy dealing with such concerted efforts by developers to attempt to influence the Council outside the public process; and
- o Three: recognize that those UNC officials participating in this effort are acting as paid lobbyists and that the town should adopt a regulation requiring registration of lobbyists and the disclosure of their activity similar to that of Madison, WI. We offer the case of Madison, also home to a flagship university, only as an example but as one that appears to be well constructed with clear objectives and appropriate exemptions.

CNC appreciates your consideration of action on this item. We recognize that the Council may have no binding authority over what may be construed as social activities of its members. However, the Council can establish ethical guidelines. We believe that this is a case that disturbs many citizens and that deserves your attention.

While we understand that it is your custom to receive and refer petitions, we urge you to agree informally to place a moratorium on private meetings with UNC administrators until you have had an opportunity to address our concerns.

Thank you very much.

Information on the Madison ordinance can be found at:
<http://www.ci.madison.wi.us/clerk/>