



# Belmont Banner News

Volume 74 • Issue 20 • Wednesday, May 20, 2009

## Parkway opposition organizing

By TARA MANJARRES  
Tara@mybannernews.com

BELMONT—People whose homes are directly affected and those whose houses will become virtually worthless bordering the proposed Garden Parkway turned out at the first community meeting set to harness their opposition.

Dave Murray lives on South Forest Lane and could be one of 328 homeowners who will lose their house to make way for North Carolina's first toll road.

Following the Thursday evening meeting at Belmont Middle School, Murray paid five dollars to buy a yellow yard sign. It reads 'Stop the Toll Road to No Where' in bold black lettering.

The development he lives in with about 60 other residences stands to be impacted.

Murray said, along with his wife, they're going to post the sign and work on getting people to endorse a petition, letting his local, state and federal lawmakers know he is vehemently against the parkway.

"I plan on putting this up in the entrance to my neighborhood," said Murray, who's lived in his house 14 years.

"It makes sense to stop

this thing because it goes nowhere. Realistically those who've made the decisions have not come down here and taken a look at the traffic and I think it's just a waste of money and a wasted effort."

Bill Toole, a Charlotte environmental lawyer who lives in Belmont and whose

### Garden Parkway meetings

June 22

Local officials meeting, 1-2:30 p.m., Gaston County Police Department, Gastonia

Pre-hearing open house, 4-8 p.m., Gaston Adult Recreation Center, Gastonia

June 23

Pre-hearing open house, 2:30-6:30 p.m., Forestview High School, Gastonia

Public hearing, 7 p.m., Forestview High School

June 24

Pre-hearing open house, 2:30-7:30 p.m., South Point High School, Belmont

June 25

Pre-hearing open house, 2:30-6:30 p.m., Olympic High School, Charlotte

Public hearing, 7 p.m., Olympic High School

house will also be affected, presented the organizational meeting, explaining the parkway and recruiting citizen involvement.

This month the N.C. Turnpike Authority released a draft Environmental Impact Study that chose the northern route for the winding four-to-six lane parkway that will destroy local houses, businesses, and is even set to clip new Belmont Optimist fields.

See PARKWAY on Page 2

# Parkway

Continued from Page 1

It comes near downtown and, equally as damaging, is the divisional impact it will have on the city's peninsula area, argue some.

"The problem with the northern route is that it is going to create a physical barrier and it's going to separate all of the South Point Peninsula from the northern part. Just like I-85 separated North Belmont from the town's center when it came through," said Toole.

Hands flew up frequently during the 90-minute meeting. One lady wondered how to bring the issue before Belmont City Council.

Earlier the municipal board endorsed a path known as the canal or middle route, but has not positioned itself since that course was deemed ineligible.

"How do I let Belmont council know that I don't support this? What can we do?" she queried.

Toole suggested people contact each of the board's five members and Mayor Richard Boyce by telephone to express their opposition. He also said it would be helpful if the board adopted a resolution of non-support.

"Now the council needs to be encouraged to tell the

open for traffic in 2014.

The northern route was winnowed down from nearly 100 possibilities, but won't be given the final approval until after a series of public hearings scheduled in June.

Charla Clark stayed for the entire meeting even though her property is not directly affected, but said her best friend's will be. She came in support of her and on behalf on the environment.

"I wanted to get as much information as I could regarding what they're going to do to the community. With the traffic and environment, this toll road to nowhere is going to impact all of us," said Clark, who lives about one-fourth mile from one of the proposed Garden exits. "If nothing else, those of us in the vicinity need to be worried about the environment. We have a beautiful environment down there and there's still a lot of natural area, beautiful vegetation, and animals and we're about to lose all of that for a toll road."

# Relay

Continued from page 1

"They are the best. They're my personal favorite!"

Eric was manning the

Turnpike Authority that we told you the northern route wasn't good for Belmont and we don't want any route if that's the only one you're offering," said Toole.

The TA will not build a road unless there is need and local support for it, added Toole.

"Folks must demonstrate that the toll road is too controversial," he said, noting then the TA could decide not to build the toll road, or change the route to reduce opposition.

The parkway was originally supposed to be an east-west connector between I-85 and I-485. It was also meant to relieve traffic on I-85 by providing another way to get from Gastonia to Charlotte but shortfalls in funding mean it will end at U.S. 321, the initial leg. This is just south of Gastonia's Brookwood and York-Chester neighborhoods and it will not connect to I-85 until later, say officials.

The General Assembly has only approved gap funding for parkway construction between U.S. 321 and I-485. Turnpike officials say they will secure funding to complete the project to I-85. So far, total costs are estimated at \$1.3 billion.

It is anticipated the state will begin buying rights of way for the project as soon as bonds are issued. The financing will be repaid over 30 or 40 years with toll revenue collected from drivers, say leaders.

Plans for the Garden Parkway have been discussed for some 20 years now. Officials with the Turnpike Authority say construction could begin by 2011 and that the parkway could be

Oreo station as part of the Hodgepodge team, which is a mixed group of friends, family, and co-workers.

"We're not really from one organization but we just wanted to do it. I may work here, you may work there but we can all get together to do something for cancer," said Eric, whose dad is a two-year prostate cancer survivor. "It's a good cause. We have a lot of fun."

A pair of South Point students found time in their busy teenage lives to step-up cancer efforts.

Senior Patrick Brindle and Sophomore Zach Lineberger have been coming to Relay for two years. Even though a baseball game was playing in the neighboring field, Brindle said he could support cancer now and catch the game later.

"You've got so many people out here supporting cancer and fighting for it," said Brindle, adding he might watch the game on the county schools' television channel.

Lineberger said he just felt it was a good idea to participate.

"Just to support a good cause and it's fun to be here," he said.

Relay co-chairs Emily Queen, Michelle Hendrix and Teresa Whitesides were handed the baton to oversee the event this year. Whitesides was walking around passing out colorful leis to fellow team members, whose Relay theme was a luau.

"This is great. We worked so hard trying to get it ready. There's always those little snags but in the end it always comes together and this is wonderful."