

THE HIGH POINT ENTERPRISE

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'Don't Park On Me'

The few city dwellers who were in attendance at a discussion of the Triad Park at Colfax School Tuesday night got quite a civics lesson.

The meeting of the Rural-Suburban Community Council allowed Colfax residents to air their gripes concerning the proposed 2,000-acre state park which could be placed in their neighborhood.

The first surprise was the number of people that turned out. Those of us who have lived in cities all our lives are not used to seeing large crowds at public hearings, no matter how controversial. One of the most frustrating things for city officials is the familiar cry of "Why didn't you tell us?" long after public hearings and discussions have been held about a controversial subject. Despite the after-the-fact concern, these hearings rarely draw very many citizens.

But over 300 Colfax people, convinced their land and homes were being threatened by the proposed park, turned out and were very vocal in their opposition.

They listened politely while three of the people involved in the planning of the park offered reasons — which in our point of view remain valid — for the developing of a Triad Park in the Colfax area. But when the time for questions and comments came, they cut loose with both barrels.

And the message that came through loud and clear was that these people see their community going the way of many other small towns and rural areas which have bowed to "progress." They see a Triad Park Task Force — which includes primarily persons from Greensboro,

High Point and Winston-Salem — making decisions which will affect their future. And they see their own tax dollars being used to develop a park they strongly oppose.

It is hard not to sympathize with their concern, to understand their feelings. The stories of towns which have lost the battle against "progress" would fill more than one book. Just this week, the Associated Press carried a report of a Louisiana town, built on an island swamp, which has all but been pushed aside to make way for a highway.

But just before agreeing with the people of Colfax, one has to stop and remember that it is not highways which are being discussed, but a largely undeveloped state park. The idea is not to change the area, but to preserve it. Unless some effort is made to do just that, before long Colfax will be just another suburb of Greensboro...or maybe Winston-Salem...or maybe High Point.

The people of this largely rural region certainly deserve a voice in determining their own future. They should not be made to feel the state or the urban residents of Guilford and Forsyth Counties are dictating the future of their homeland.

Right now, the bill which would appropriate state money for the park does not appear to have the necessary votes to pass the General Assembly, and in some ways this may be a blessing in disguise.

With some time for tempers to cool, and for arrangements to be made for more citizen input for the park area being considered, a solution more suitable to all concerned could be devised.