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Page: 1

Topics:  
Index Terms:  
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Feuds With Everyone

Fiscally Irresponsible

**Parking dispute heats up; owner cuts off 54 spaces**  
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Article Text:

CHAPEL HILL -- A parking dispute riddled with failed negotiations and bad feelings has hit a wall. Or more accurately, an improvised barrier made of yellow "caution" tape, piles of gravel, telephone poles bolted to pavement and a pair of empty vehicles blocking entry.

Local property owner P.H. Craig closed access Sunday to the approximately 54 spaces that he owns in a lot adjoining parking for The Courtyard mini-shopping center on West Franklin Street. Craig said in a statement that he had maintained a rental agreement with several owners of The Courtyard for 26 years until Spencer Young bought the property in 2005.

The last agreement ran out in January 2006, and Craig and Young have never been able to come to terms.

"I cannot afford to have the spaces used for free given the amount of taxes paid, lighting, maintenance and that they represent an investment for income," Craig said in February.

At that time, the Chapel Hill Inspections Department was investigating a complaint from Craig that a construction crew hired by Young to do renovations was using the lot as a staging area for trash bins and building materials.

E-mail records show that Young dismissed the complaint and a town stop-work order, telling his contractor to continue renovations.

Not waiting anymore

Lousy Landlord

The decision to close the lot was just a matter of taking action now rather than later, Craig said.

"There has not been any negotiation," Craig said Monday. "The last attempt was by a third party, and I thought I made a real good offer, and it was turned down flat." He said he couldn't remember when that offer was made.

Young refused to speak to a reporter seeking comment Monday and did not return a later message.

Young's dealings with his tenants have been tumultuous in the past. In March, the owner of 3 Cups coffee shop in The Courtyard told Chapel Hill police that his landlord, Young, had threatened him with physical violence in relation to a construction dispute.

Lex Alexander received an e-mail from Young in which the property owner threatened to break his tenant's "nose in a manner that is so devastating, you will be reminded of your incorrigibility every time you look in the mirror."

A representative of 3 Cups declined to comment on how closure of the parking lot would affect business. Other Courtyard tenants did not return messages.

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Feuds With Everyone