



EtCetera  
reviews  
Motley  
Crue

PAGE 6

# The Gamecock

Serving the Carolina Community since 1908

89  
73

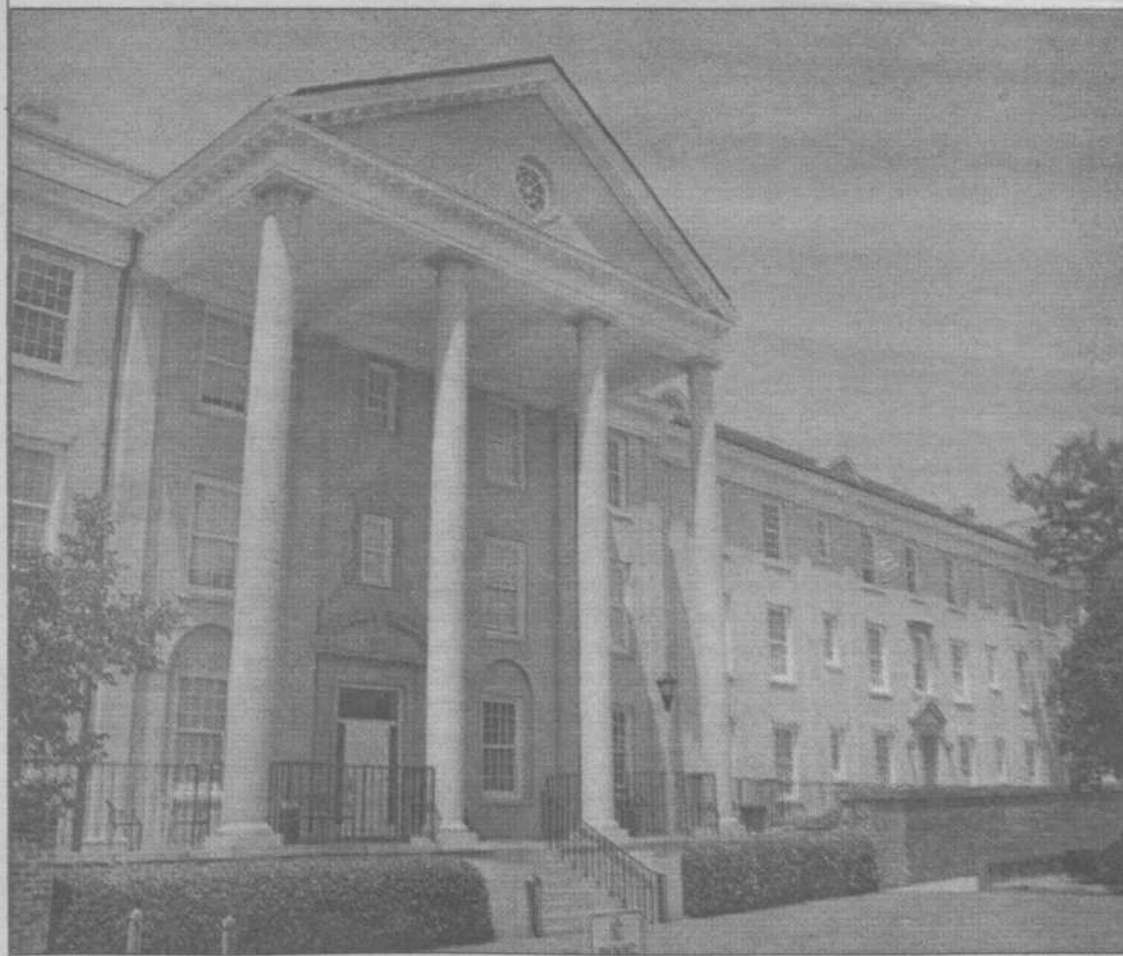
THIS WEEK  
Thunderstorms likely,  
with highs in the the 80s

Vol. 93, No. 96

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

WWW.GAMECOCK.SC.EDU

## Housing contracts present problems



SEAN RAYFORD PHOTO EDITOR

Preston Dorm, on Greene Street, is one of several student housing facilities on campus that students might find hard to leave because of potentially large penalties for breaking a housing contract. Students living in dorms without waiting lists are the only on-campus residents affected by the new housing contracts.

BY JENNIFER CARTER  
STAFF WRITER

Some students who sign contracts with the University's department of housing to live on campus later change their minds and decide they prefer an off-campus apartment or house.

They quickly realize, however, that it is not easy to break their contract with the Department of Housing.

In fact, in some cases, students are paying steep penalties of more than \$1,000 for changing their minds about living in a dorm.

Students say the language in the contract is not clear; therefore, they don't realize how much money they will have to pay if they change their mind.

The department staff says students do not read the contract carefully and that if they did they would find it to be clear.

Confusion arises because the housing contract states that students who wish to be released from their contracts must pay a relatively small fee: \$100 before July 1 and \$200 after July 1, if there are students waiting to receive on-campus housing.

However, if there is not a demand for housing, the student is required to pay half the amount they agreed to pay in the contract. In other words, they must pay for one semester of housing.

Gretchen Koehler of the Depart-

ment of Housing says that by doing this, the University is splitting the cost of the room with the student. She also explained that it is necessary for housing to charge such a fee because they are a not-for-profit organization.

Therefore, if they release a student from his housing contract and do not have another student to take his place, they are losing money.

"We do not have the money to release a student from a housing contract and charge only \$100 if there is no waiting list for housing," Koehler said. "Doing this would cause us to lose money, which would affect the quality of services we are able to provide to students who do fulfill their contracts and live on campus."

Koehler explained that, historically, there has been a waiting list for on-campus housing, but that is not the case this year.

That's because the new East Quad dorm will open this fall, providing space for 440 more students to live on campus.

This is approximately how many students each year decide they want to be released from their housing contracts, and there are usually enough students waiting to take their places in the dorms.

With the new East Quad dorm, all students who originally signed up for

**HOUSING** SEE PAGE 3

## Columbia begins downtown improvements

BY KRISTIN VON  
KAROWSKY  
STAFF WRITER

Motorists driving along Assembly Street in the coming months will be seeing some changes.

The medians along Assembly Street, from Laurel Street to Elmwood Avenue, as well as the adjoining median on Elmwood, are being reconstructed.

A wrought-iron fence will be erected and will run the length of the medians, and flowers, including more than 6,000 daffodils, will be added, as well.

The medians were initially planted seven years ago.

Work on the remodeling project began in mid-July and is expected to be completed by mid-October of this year.

During the course of the reconstruction, one lane of traffic might occasionally be closed between of 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

The groups involved in the renovation efforts are the City of Columbia Forestry and Beautification Division and a local non-profit organization, Columbia Green.

The plan for the fence was approved by the South Carolina Department of Transportation in the spring.

Debbie Price, superintendent of the

City of Columbia Forestry and Beautification Foundation, said that the purposes of the remodeling are beautification and preventing pedestrian traffic across medians.

"The old plants in the medians are not doing well because of foot traffic. They're getting trampled," Price said. "The fencing is being added to protect the plant material and will also serve as a safety precaution for pedestrians."

Price said it's safer for pedestrians to avoid crossing the street from the medians because they could step out into traffic from behind a tree and not be seen by passing motorists.

The City of Columbia will pay the cost of the fencing, and Columbia Green has received a grant to purchase all new plant material.

The overall cost of the project is \$65,000.

The City of Columbia is spending \$40,000 for the fence, and Columbia Green is spending \$25,000 for the new plant material, Price said.

Once the fence is complete, new ornamental grasses, perennials, bulbs and evergreen groundcovers will be planted to furnish year-long interest and color.

In addition to the numerous daffodils they will include Purple Coneflowers;

flowers to be planted include perennial hibiscus, black-eyed susans, caryopteris, maiden grass and Mexican sage. Crape myrtles will also be incorporated into the new plan.

"The additional flowers will be eye-catching and more attractive," Price said.

"A woman called my office once and told me how she was driving to work one day and how much she appreciated seeing flowers and color. She told me it really brightened up her day," Price said.