

Under the Dome:

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Perdue's Cabinet positions up for grabs

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Who might Gov.-elect Beverly Perdue appoint to her Cabinet?

The New Bern Democrat has appointed a transition team and chief of staff and said she will put Tom Lambeth in charge of an endowment for gubernatorial campaigns, but she has not yet named anyone to the 10 positions that run state departments.

Based on conversations with Raleigh insiders, a few names have come up:

TRANSPORTATION: State Sen. Clark Jenkins heads the Appropriations committee on transportation. Gene Conti is a former assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation. Lanny Wilson is vice chairman of the N.C. Turnpike Authority.

CRIME CONTROL: Scott Thomas is the district attorney for Carteret, Craven and Pamlico counties and served in the state Senate from 2000 to 2005. Current Secretary Bryan Beatty has served in that position since 2001.

COMMERCE: Crandall Bowles is the former head of Springs Industries and wife of UNC system president Erskine Bowles. Senate Finance Committee chairman David Hoyle is well known as an advocate for business in the legislature.

REVENUE: Former state Sen. Oscar Harris served as Perdue's campaign treasurer.

In addition, National Education Association executive director John Wilson may be under consideration for an advisory role in education, although the state Superintendent of Public Instruction is elected separately from the Cabinet.

Dalton digs up in air

Lt. Gov.-elect Walter Dalton doesn't have a home office yet.

The state's No. 2 now works out of the 127-year-old Hawkins-Hartness house on Blount Street, but those digs, which include a 92-foot veranda, are slated to be turned into a private home. The area around the offices, including several other historic homes, is being renovated into a ritzy neighborhood.

The state Department of Administration has not yet secured a new location for the lieutenant governor's offices, spokeswoman Jill Lucas said.

There may not be a rush. The renovation of the house may not start for several months, giving Dalton some breathing room.

Also unclear is whether Dalton will have prime real estate in the Capitol itself, as former Lt. Gov. Dennis Wicker did from 1993 to 2001.

Patrol eyes wreckers

The state Highway Patrol is tightening the system for calling wreckers to crash scenes after complaints about price-gouging, snarly tow truck drivers and even stolen money.

Highway Patrol officials told the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee last week that motorists complained that tow truck operators, called to accident scenes by troopers, were tacking on a host of added charges, such as a fee for sweeping up taillight glass. Drivers also were treating car owners disrespectfully and, in some cases, stealing items out of cars, the patrol said.

"The public holds the Highway Patrol accountable for what happens at that accident scene," Col. Walter Wilson, the patrol's commander, told the committee.

From now on, patrol officials will require towing companies to submit new bids to be put on the rotation of operators called to accident scenes. The bids must be an all-inclusive price for at least the first hour within an assigned zone.

Palin fans target 2012

Two Asheville residents are pushing Sarah Palin for 2012.

Republican voters Randy Thomas and Richard Bernier have created a Web site -- draftpalinforpresident.com -- to encourage the Alaska governor and former Republican vice presidential nominee to run for president in four years.

Bernier, a medical equipment salesman, told the Asheville Citizen-Times that he's hoping to get an early start on the same kind of "election machine" that helped Barack Obama.

After mention on CNN and MSNBC, the site's membership doubled, but it also received thousands of pieces of electronic "hate mail," Thomas said.

Thomas, who owns a Web hosting service, said he saw Palin speak in Asheville during the campaign.

There is some precedent for this kind of effort. In February of 2007, a blogger named Adam Brickley created the "Draft Sarah Palin for Vice President" Web site.

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