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No proffer increase

By Greg Pearson
STAFF WRITER

The Chesterfield Board of Supervisors decided last week to leave the maximum proffer that a developer would pay for each home built to cover the costs of county services, primarily roads and schools, at \$15,600. Based on a staff study of the actual costs, County Administrator Lane Ramsey proposed an increase to \$22,600 four months ago, but the board deferred action until its Transportation Summit on Nov. 20 to decide the proffer issue.

Supervisors Dickie King, Renny Humphrey and Don Sowder voted for the motion, and Supervisors Kelly Miller and Art Warren were absent.

"I've never been a proponent of proffers, but today they are a necessary evil," said King. He called on the Home Building Association of Richmond (HBAR) to lobby the state legislature for impact fees—essentially proffers that could be levied on all lots regardless of when rezoning was granted. The county estimates that 12,000 to 30,000 lots remain that were rezoned before the proffer system was introduced in Chesterfield over 15 years ago. The wide variance in estimates exists because building on many of those lots may not be possible due to terrain and/or the lack of water and sewer.

Some legislators representing Chesterfield have indicated in the past that local governments could have proffers or impact fees but not both. According to those legislators, local governments that enacted proffers have chosen to stay with them rather than switch to possible unknowns with impact fees.

"Traditionally, we have not supported impact fees," Tyler Craddock, HBAR's director of public and governmental affairs, told this newspaper. His industry wants the cost of services borne by more than homebuilders who have to pass the fee along to new homebuyers.

Two of the options under consideration by the county are transportation districts (for road improvements only) and Community Development Authorities (CDAs) that allow roads and schools to be built before residents move in. CDAs are typically used for very large commercial or residential projects. Both options are paid for by property owners who pay a higher property tax rate—usually

	Approved 10/05	Proposed 12/06
Roads	\$8,942	\$12,748
Schools	\$5,348	\$8,634
Parks	\$604	\$612
Libraries	\$349	\$318
Fire stations	\$405	\$409
TOTAL	\$15,648	\$22,721
Board vote	\$15,600	\$15,600

about 15 cents per \$100 of assessed value for approximately 20 years – to pay off bonds. Presumably, the property purchasers would be advised verbally of the higher rate in advance in addition to the written purchase contract.

By next spring, Chesterfield has said its FY08 budget will provide answers to how the county is going to raise \$300 million over the next 10 years to fund necessary road projects. The county transportation department estimates today that its road needs total \$1 billion.

Last August, Ramsey wanted a much higher proffer because of three factors: state cuts in road funding, road construction inflation of 7.5 percent last year and a higher calculation of students per household. The county has been using a countywide average of .53 students per household, but now the county has increased that factor to .65 students after it found newer homeowners had more children attending county schools.

To arrive at the higher student rate, the budget and management office studied the top 15 fastest growing subdivisions, which represented half of the new homes in Chesterfield last year. The top subdivisions with the most children were Hampton Park (1.17 children per household attending Chesterfield schools) and Summer Lake (1.07) while Charter Colony (.51) and Walnut Grove (.44) had the fewest.

New home sales in the county may have also impacted the board's decision. King noted that building permits from January to November were down 39 percent this year compared to the same period last year. However, 2005 was a banner year for real estate sales.

CCHASM seeks mentors for single mothers

CCHASM is seeking volunteers for its 2007 WINGS (Winning Independence through Nurturing, Guidance and Support) program, which matches single mothers with female mentors to help them discover their own self-

worth. All mentors receive free training and are asked to attend a WINGS group meeting once a week for three months. For more information, visit www.cchasm.org or call 796-2749.

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schools; Manchester and Midlothian middle schools; and Clover Hill and Matoaca high schools—have businesses within 500 feet that sell beer, wine and/or mixed drinks. Those businesses include restaurants, convenience stores, drug stores and grocery stores.

"It's not fair unless it is applied to all schools," declared Dale Planning Commissioner Sherman Litton. "We should tell the board what we think, and let them deal with it."

Earlier this year, the county board approved a special use permit for Dellwood Plantation to serve alcohol even though it is adjacent to Matoaca High School, which was built after 1993. Some commissioners seemed to think that opened the door to future exceptions.

At the request of the commission, the police department investigated and concluded there is no relationship between selling alcohol and crime for those affected schools.

"Have we really identified that there is a

demonstrated harm?" asked Midlothian Planning Commissioner Dan Gecker. "Is there any evidence that an adult who was drinking within 500 feet of a school has harmed a child?"

"This [ordinance] is not about underage drinking," added Clover Hill Planning Commissioner Russ Gulley, who was on the commission when the ordinance first surfaced. "It's about adults buying alcohol [nearby] and going to a school."

Another problem with the ordinance is that a business could allow someone to rent its facilities, get an ABC license and still be within the legal limits. That option was discussed during the Dellwood case.

The ordinance was put in place when Caddy's restaurant in Midlothian, located across the street from Midlothian Middle, expanded in 1993. But by grandfathering existing schools from enforcement, the impact of the ordinance was watered down.

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