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lion dollars annually; dedicating part of the county's real estate tax revenue; extending the Powhite Parkway as a toll road; and hiking cash proffers.

Although supervisors inquired about \$300 million in funding, it's estimated that the county's current road needs actually top \$1 billion.

At the public meeting held on the Virginia State University campus in Ettrick last week, there were only occasional moments of muted anger aimed at the General Assembly—and many Republicans in the House of Delegates in particular—who are controlling the purse strings for transportation funding. All of the Chesterfield board members are also Republicans, and their collective feelings have been expressed to their political brethren. But at the summit, only one member of the Chesterfield

delegation—Delegate Katherine Waddell of the 68th District—attended, and she left at the lunch break.

More than one supervisor called for “not letting the state off the hook” for road funding. Some supervisors have expressed concern about setting a precedence that would indicate the county's willingness to spend its own money if the state won't fund roads. The priorities of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) in order are debt reduction, maintenance and then new construction—if any money is left over.

County Transportation Director John McCracken acknowledged that a number of local governments have discussed a class action lawsuit because they feel VDOT isn't even living up to its responsibility to maintain existing roads. Years ago, as a former VDOT employee, McCracken said roads within communities used to be paved about every eight years. Now, McCracken estimates paving occurs every 15-20 years, leaving local residents to dodge potholes and rough pavement in their own neighborhoods.

“The guys doing the job are doing the best they can with what they have,” he explained. “Roads have a life cycle, and with higher traffic counts and bigger vehicles, the impact is compounded. The guys doing the work need more money.”

In his presentation, Ramsey and his staff focused on nine options that don't require state approval. They are:

1) Using tax revenues over the current BPOL cap of \$15.6 million annually to fund road projects, which could generate \$70-80 million over the next decade.

The business community is already organizing against a BPOL rollback, though Chesterfield's BPOL tax rate is among the lowest in the Richmond metro. How much board members will support this option is questionable. Chairman Dickie King has called BPOL “an unfair tax.” Midlothian Supervisor Don Sowder was skeptical of using BPOL as a solution, saying, “We need to grow our business community,” a platform he ran on earlier this month to win election to the board.

2) Dedicate a portion of the county's revenue from real estate taxes to fund roads. Ramsey recommended a penny per \$100 of assessed value at first, but that could grow to 5 cents, generating \$140-160 million in funding to finance road improvements over 10 years.

After Ramsey assured board members that their pledge to reduce the current tax rate of \$1.04 by two pennies next year remained doable, supervisors seemed supportive of this option. Because of another anticipated significant hike in assessments early next year, Ramsey indicated a reduction of more than two pennies is likely even if road funding was added.

3) Use Transportation Districts to fund local road improvements. Surprisingly, the two examples cited in the report were residential and involved increasing the tax rate on 3,241 parcels in Woodlake and Foxcroft by 15 cents to improve Woolridge Road from Otterdale Road to Genito Road. Typically, the higher rate is for 20 years. The 3.3 mile stretch of road would cost \$32 million and need additional funding.

The staff is also suggesting taxing area residents of Magnolia Green at a 15 cent higher rate to finance \$15 million in road improvements. Because of the low proffers paid on the 1991 rezoning for this large development, several supervisors have indicated they will probably support this option.

Matoaca Supervisor Renny Humphrey, who represents those homeowners most likely to be taxed at the higher rate, wanted to combine the Woolridge Road and Magnolia Green projects. “I'm looking at a larger picture,” she said.

4) Community Development Authorities (CDAs) were endorsed by two speakers: development attorney Will Shewmake, who previously served on the county's planning

commission and Kenneth Powell, managing director of Stone & Youngberg, LLC, who earns a living selling CDAs to investors. They argued that CDAs allow the county to build roads and schools before residents move in. However, CDAs are typically recommended for large projects like when Henrico County used one to build the internal road network at Short Pump Town Center.

Though the county is not liable for CDAs since they are administered by an independent board of directors, Ramsey cautioned that “CDAs are risky bonds that the rating agencies consider” when setting the rate at which Chesterfield can sell its bonds.

5) A proposal by county staff to raise cash proffers from a maximum of \$15,600 to \$22,600 per residence comes back to the board next month. The proffer portion pledged to build roads could be hiked from \$8,942 to \$12,748 per residence.

Main Street Homes President Vernon McClure was pleased to see Chesterfield considering options other than raising proffers. “I'm encouraged that the board is listening to other ideas,” he commented. “The building industry and, I think the residents too, would support giving a penny or two on the tax rate to roads.”

Since proffers aren't collected until a building permit is issued, they are a slow funding source for roads. To date, developers have agreed to pay the county \$138 million in road proffers, but only \$15 million has actually been collected. The total proffer picture, which includes schools and other county services, shows \$215 million pledged and \$38 million collected.

6) The county could implement subdivision road proffers in communities already zoned without proffers (like Magnolia Green) by having the planning department and planning commission not approve a site plan until proffers are agreed to. (Site plans are not reviewed by the board.) This option could generate \$35 million from Magnolia Green alone.

The county estimates that up to 30,000 undeveloped lots remain that were zoned residential before the proffer system was established. Currently, only 35 percent of the homes being built are paying proffers.

7) The county could ask the voters to approve a bond referendum for roads. The most recent \$40 million road referendum passed easily.

8) The Powhite Parkway could be built westward to Route 360 near Grange Hall Elementary School as a toll road. Either Chesterfield or VDOT could ask for bids.

9) Chesterfield could demand higher quality new roads within communities as they are built. Those roads would last longer before maintenance was required, and the higher cost might slow development.

One option not given serious consideration was the hope that Virginia could resume its historical role in transportation. “Even if the state gets construction money,” said Clover Hill Supervisor Art Warren, “it's going primarily to Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads.”

While most observers at the meeting were happy the county was ready to take action, many thought the board was “coming late to the party.” “Let's not forget every supervisor has to stand for reelection next November,” added one attendee who declined to be identified.

A member of the development community was disappointed that the road needs were not prioritized. “It'll take at least \$12 million for an interchange at Meadowville [Technology Park], and that would show commitment for white collar job growth,” he said.

“This information should have been out before the General Assembly's special session on transportation,” complained former Midlothian Supervisor Joan Girone. “Where were state senators and delegates? It was billed as a transportation meeting, but it was a road meeting. There was no mention of a multimodal system, and the word ‘buses’ was not spoken.”

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