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# Commission suit dismissed

By Greg Pearson  
STAFF WRITER

A U.S. District Court judge has dismissed a lawsuit against the Chesterfield Planning Commission and two of its commissioners. According to County Attorney Steve Micas, Judge Robert E. Payne "found Planning Commission Chairman Sherman Litton acted within his appropriate capacity as chairman to restore order at the meeting, and the exchange between [Planning Commissioner Dan] Gecker and [Robert] Steinburg was not constitutionally significant."

Steinburg, a former president of the Old Gun Civic Association, filed a \$2.6 million

lawsuit last year, alleging his civil rights were violated when he was declared to be out of order during a public hearing in Oct. 2005.

Steinburg refused to confine his remarks to the deferral of a zoning case and was arrested for disorderly conduct, a Class I misdemeanor. He was handcuffed and taken to a magistrate. At a court hearing in December 2005, the county attorney's office dropped the charge.

During a hearing before Payne last year, Micas insisted "the actions of the [commission] chairman were entirely appropriate, because of a qualified immunity defense." Micas cited case law to support his argument that a chairman can confine the discussion to a specified topic.

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from MEADOWVILLE, page 1

Partnership. Chesterfield has not set aside any monies for upgrades.

There are also problems at Meadowville with Simons Hauling Company, which has a contract to build an access road for Northrop Grumman. "The EDA [Economic Development Authority - a seven-person citizen committee] has concerns about the contractor's completion of the contract," acknowledged McClintic.

A subcontractor working for Simons missed last fall's planting season and is scheduled to do the landscaping this spring. McClintic indicated the rescheduling was caused more by Simons' shortcomings than the subcontractor's.

### Watkins Centre update

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is expected to determine necessary road improvements for the Watkins Centre this week. A study conducted last fall by Wilbur Smith and Associates concluded that there would be enough traffic leaving inside Westchester Commons, the retail portion of the Watkins Centre, to require a flyover of the southbound lanes of Route 288 and connecting to northbound 288. An earlier estimate by VDOT calculated the flyover could cost at least \$14 million.

The flyover was part of a plan approved in 1999 when the Commonwealth Transportation Board determined the road access options for Route 288. The flyover would eliminate the need for those vehicles exiting Westchester Commons to turn left onto Route 60 in order to take the off ramp to head northbound on Route 288.

However, the Watkins Centre's developer submitted a study from Vokert and Associates last month that indicated in the next 20 years more traffic will be coming from the west on Route 60 from Powhatan County than from the north. "People are not going to come to the Watkins Centre and bypass the Short Pump Town Center [in western Henrico County]," said VDOT's Richmond District Administrator Tom Hawthorne.

Critics of the tenant mix scheduled for Westchester Commons have argued there are not enough "market unique stores" to cause residents of Goochland and Henrico counties to shop there. There are currently more than five times the residents in western Henrico and all of Goochland County as compared to Powhatan.

"[Route] 60 needs to be widened within the vicinity of the 288 interchange," added Hawthorne. If the Route 60 bridge over Route 288 needs widening for an extra lane each way, the estimated cost is \$4-\$6 million. "We want to make sure the road infrastructure at 60/288 will support the development," said Hawthorne.

Approval by federal and state agencies for water permits must also be secured for the Watkins Centre.

### Cloverleaf Mall update

County leaders want to increase the

amount of office and retail at the intersection of Midlothian Turnpike and Chippenham Parkway when Cloverleaf Mall comes tumbling down early next year. The amount of mall tax revenue has declined significantly over the past 10 years, but Crosland, LLC, a North Carolina redevelopment specialist, will bring more residential development to the area through its Chippenham Place project. Crosland officials said there could be "in excess of 500 residences" while only 200,000 square of retail and office is planned. An 83,000-square-foot Kroger would anchor Chippenham Place.

"We have some challenges," said Davis, "...but the Cloverleaf Mall site will revitalize what happens across the street at Beaufort Mall and across Chippenham Parkway in the city."

### More on Meadowville

The county's economic development department is seeking a developer to build a speculative 60,000-square-foot office building in Meadowville. Named the Founders' Building, the Class A office building will include some lab space. Any land cost charged to the developer would be part of the bid process.

Northrop Grumman is expected to hold an employee event for its staff and the Virginia Information Technology Agency in late July. Some 600 employees will begin work there in six months.

County officials see Northrop Grumman's site of 29 acres with 195,000 square feet as a lure for high tech manufacturing, life sciences, research and development and pharmaceutical manufacturing. Meadowville was in the running for Eli Lilly until the pharmaceutical giant decided to build in Prince William County in northern Virginia.

"Our businesses are comfortable with us and their profitability," Davis said last week during a media event in downtown Richmond. "We're raising the bar to put industry where it belongs in Chesterfield County."

The Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Richmond Partnership (GRP) brought the economic development departments of Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover and Richmond together last week to discuss targeting existing business growth through a new regional campaign called Business First | Greater Richmond. A Web site ([www.businessfirstrichmond.com](http://www.businessfirstrichmond.com)) has been designed to help reach the more than 25,000 businesses in the region.

The chamber and GRP will also utilize volunteers, who will visit existing businesses to encourage them to expand in metro Richmond. Jim Dunn of the chamber hopes 600 in-person calls will be made over the next year. Brett Sheffield of Peoples Bank of Virginia will chair the volunteer committee in Chesterfield.

Last year, 76 percent of Chesterfield's business growth came from its existing businesses - now 6,653 strong.



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