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— When —

Tuesday, February 27th at 7:00 PM

— Where —

Alicia's Salon and Day Spa
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— Who —

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FAMILY



School budget draws little interest from public

By Donna C. Gregory

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Even with more than half a billion dollars in spending at stake, only four people spoke during a public hearing last week on the FY08 budget for Chesterfield County Public Schools.

And, most of those speakers and their messages could have been predicted by school board members. The roster included Lois Stanton, president of the Chesterfield Education Association, and county critics Brenda Stewart and Shelly Schuetz. All three regularly speak before the school board during public comment sessions.

The fourth speaker was county resident Fred Dumay, who complained about the school system's proposed nine percent increase in spending and how the additional funding is likely to help drive up the county's property tax rate again this year. The increase is "three and a half times the rate of inflation," criticized Dumay before asking the school board to consider scaling back its funding request.

Stewart agreed. "We cannot sustain such growth rates," she said, alleging the salary for the school superintendent has grown by 30 percent over the last two years

"It may seem like a lot of dollars," responded Dianne Pettitt, school board vice chair, later in the meeting, "but we are trying to be very diligent of taxpayer dollars."

Dumay also complained that about 60 percent of county households don't have children in the school system and are helping to foot the bill for those who do by paying higher property taxes.

In contrast, Stanton maintained that some critical school needs are still under- or unfunded, including efforts to lower teacher-student ratios and to retain high-quality teachers.

Schuetz talked mainly about ways the county could deal with overcrowded classrooms, asking school board members to consider kindergarten houses and a voucher system.

Overall, the proposed FY08 budget totals more than \$566.5 million, an increase of \$46.3 million over FY07. Of that, Chesterfield's contribution would be \$246.2 million, an increase of \$19.4 million over last year. The balance comes from federal and state sources.

The school board is expected to vote on the budget on Feb. 27. For more information, visit www.chesterfield.k12.va.us and click on "Proposed Budget."

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100 days



Page Dowdy/Chesterfield Observer

Bon Air Elementary School recently celebrated the 100th day of school. During the celebration, Principal Bruce Tetlow (right) and other school staff dressed in turn-of-the-century clothing or changed their appearance so they looked 100 years old.

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