

OPINIONS

"...our local government is allowing this deficit to grow astronomically each year..."



Unfunded county pension liability is not being addressed

Dear Editor,
I applaud your efforts in asking all the candidates the same questions and printing their responses. We know that we are having to use bond referendum after referendum to pay for capital expenditures, and we are steadily falling behind.

I would like to ask the candidates a question about what I would consider something that is being just swept under the rug. If you go to the official Chesterfield County Web site and look at the latest financial statement reported (2006), you will note an "unfunded pension liability" of almost \$200 million.

This in itself isn't all that concerning as all of these benefits would not have to be paid at one time, although we will eventually have to make up this deficit. The problem is that our local government is allowing this deficit to grow astronomically each year. This figure can be adjusted very easily by changing the parameters and/or assumptions made by the accounting firm doing the estimates, but this is real [money and is] not something that will go away.

There is a fiduciary responsibility of our supervisors to make sure we do not dig ourselves into a hole we cannot get out of without either reducing benefits or increasing taxes. Do the candidates even know about this problem, and if they do, what would be their solution to correct the problem?

**Sam Shiplett
Midlothian**

In the Aug. 15 edition, the Chesterfield Observer reported (<http://www.chesterfieldobserver.com/news/2007/0815/news/004.html>) the unfunded pension problem to be \$600 million over 30 years. Some reports are estimating the figure to be even higher.
Editor

CRIME WATCH

County police arrested two Chesterfield suspects who allegedly robbed a victim on Oct. 22 while he was walking through a parking lot in the 2900 block of Turner Road at 8:15 p.m. Initially, one suspect asked the victim if he wanted some cigarettes, and the victim replied that he didn't smoke. The suspect asked a second time and grabbed the victim by his sweatshirt. The victim was able to get away, but the suspect allegedly took the victim's hooded sweatshirt which included his MP3 player.

Later that evening, the police took Marquis L. Davis, 19, of the 9300 block of Redburn Road, and Ramon J. Massenburg, 20, of the 10700 block of West Providence Road, into custody. Davis is charged with unlawful purchase or possession of an alcoholic beverage, possession of marijuana, conspiracy to commit a felony and robbery while Massenburg faces robbery and conspiracy to commit robbery charges.

In other crime reports:
Archway Road. Shots were fired into two residences in the 9300 block at 2:04 p.m. on Oct. 20, but no one was hurt.

Bowlin Court. The suspect(s) set the interior of two unlocked vehicles on fire in the 2200 block on Oct. 17.

County should support public transportation

Dear Editor,
Now is the time to "set the record straight" regarding public transit in Chesterfield County. Route 82, [which covers the] Winterpock/360 and Commonwealth 20 [areas], includes passengers from, at a minimum, the following neighborhoods: Foxcroft, Foxfire, Hampton Park, Woodlake, Ashbrook, Summerford, Brandy Oaks, Birkdale, Brandermill, and many others, including areas that are not subdivisions, such as Winterpock/Beaver Bridge Road from Beach Road to Route 360. All of these communities and their residents are in Chesterfield County, [not Powhatan and Amelia counties, as some claim].

Since public transit service was reinstated in Chesterfield County in November 2005, it has been a rousing success. I personally have been providing ridership data from GRTC to members of the current board each month.

Since Route 82 has been fully operational, the ridership has exceeded the service goal established by the [county's] Director of Transportation John McCracken. All members of the board were provided a copy of McCracken's e-mail regarding the service goal and ridership information in a presentation I made to the board in July 2006. The presentation is a matter of public record as are the documents presented to the clerk of the board for each of the board members.

Are there a few users of public transit who reside in Powhatan or Amelia counties? Yes. However, instead of using a handful of users out of over 230 average daily riders as a wedge issue between Chesterfield and other localities, why do we not use it as an opportunity [to] forge a regional partnership with these localities to offer multi-modal means of transportation within the region, focusing more of our efforts on moving people vs. vehicles?

As these localities and Chesterfield con-

tinue to grow, the traffic demands placed on the major arteries that go through Chesterfield County (Route 60 and Route 360, as well as other connector roads) will only increase. It is important that we face the future creatively and look for other, more efficient solutions to our transportation issues.

**Bob Herndon
Chesterfield**

Chesterfield voters need to educate themselves

Dear Editor,

Because the upcoming elections are particularly critical to the future of our county, we believe that the voters should be especially thoughtful regarding choices they make at the ballot box. Unfortunately we also have some residents of Chesterfield who don't vote at all, or who don't think before they vote automatically. However, we, the people, have to live with the decisions made by the supervisors on our behalf, even if only two of them carry the vote, as they did recently for a project of roughly 5,000 new homes! Regardless of the validity of the project, is that the way we want our supervisors to conduct our government?

Each of us should make the effort to be sure our candidate's abilities, interest and dedication to service have been proven over the years. We must learn what we can about each candidate and what they have actually done, instead of simply hearing their rhetoric intended to capture votes. Every voter is responsible [for] growth and improving the quality of life for all Chesterfield residents. Which candidate is? If you find a candidate that fits your criteria, the next step is to support that person in every way you can, including voting on Election Day. Let's all think first, then vote.

**Britt and Faye Ragle
Chesterfield**

Dear Editor,

Ten years ago, we were all striving to help each other. Eight years ago, the Matoaca District supervisor was well-loved for her concern. Local builders could still buy land upon which they were allowed to build. What's up? Why are we in crisis? Is it too late? Who has taken the power from those we elected? Who created the monster out of our democracy? It is NOT true that "a man has the right to do with his own land whatever he wants to do!"

Pay attention. See who the parrots are! We need to grow without suffering. WE cannot stop growth. But we can say no when their plans have flaws. You may begin by voting. Show your concern. They all talk the talk. Who will help us do the walk? Mistaken votes will happen. You have 4 years.

**Ley Diller
Woodlake**

Article helped prompt interest at animal shelter

Dear Editor,

On behalf of the staff and animals at the animal shelter, I would like to thank you for printing the story about the dogs and cats at the shelter. We had citizens come into the shelter Tuesday [Oct. 16] with your paper looking to adopt. Again, thank you for your help.

**Alice Berry
Manager, Chesterfield Animal Shelter**

Letters to the editor can be e-mailed to letters@chesterfieldobserver.com, mailed to P.O. Box 1616, Midlothian, VA 23113, or faxed to 744-3269. Letters should include the writer's phone number and home address, but neither will be printed. All letters may be edited for clarity or space. For complete guidelines, visit www.chesterfieldobserver.com and click on "letters policy."

Police arrest two local men for robbing pedestrian

Courthouse Road. An unexploded pipe bomb was found at the Chesterfield Technical Center at 6:45 p.m. on Oct. 16. There were no damages or injuries.

• Lloyd C. Bird High School was evacuated on the morning of Oct. 22 because of a bomb threat, but none was found.

Gettings Lane. Two motor bikes and two bicycles were stolen from an unlocked shed in the 2500 block earlier this month.

Huguenot Springs Road. The mailbox of Bethel Baptist Church was found destroyed, and police believe it may have been blown up on Oct. 16 by a bottle bomb.

Hull Street Road. A black 1999 Honda was stolen from J&W Auto in the 10500 block on Oct. 15.

• Someone set fire to a vehicle parked in the 11300 block at 2:50 a.m. on Oct. 22.

• At 2:23 a.m. on Oct. 22, two armed suspects entered the 7-Eleven store in the 7000 block and demanded money. They fled after taking cash from the register and employees.

• At 4:13 p.m. on Oct. 19, the suspect drove up next to the victim who was walking through the parking lot of Oxbridge Square Shopping Center and grabbed her purse. The victim refused to give up her purse and was dragged a short distance before the suspect

gave up and drove off.

Jefferson Davis Highway. The victim went to Young's Trailer Park in the 11200 block at 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 20 with items she had bought for the first suspect. A second suspect sexually attacked her, and a struggle ensued when the victim saw a weapon and tried to call the police. She was able to flee and call for help.

Lingstorm Lane. The victim was standing next to his vehicle in the 500 block at 5:50 p.m. on Oct. 19 when the suspect asked him for a cigarette. He returned shortly, armed with a handgun, and demanded money. When the victim said he had no money on him, the suspect struck him and took his cell phone before driving off.

Meadowdale Boulevard. A residence in the 3600 block was reported ransacked on Oct. 11. Money, jewelry and other items were reported taken from the Meadowdale Townhouse residence.

• The pizza delivery person knocked on the door of the residence in the 3400 block on Oct. 16. When no one answered, the victim turned around and was confronted by an armed and masked suspect, who took the victim's money and then ran.

Midlothian Turnpike. A catalytic converter

was reported stolen from a 1992 Ford van on Oct. 18 while it was parked in the 7100 block.

• Someone called in a bomb threat to the Chesterfield Towne Center at 3:50 p.m. on Oct. 20, but no bomb was found.

South Providence Road. Money was taken from a safe and several cash boxes overnight on Oct. 19 and 20. The suspect(s) cut the phone line to disable the alarm system.



Tip Line:
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