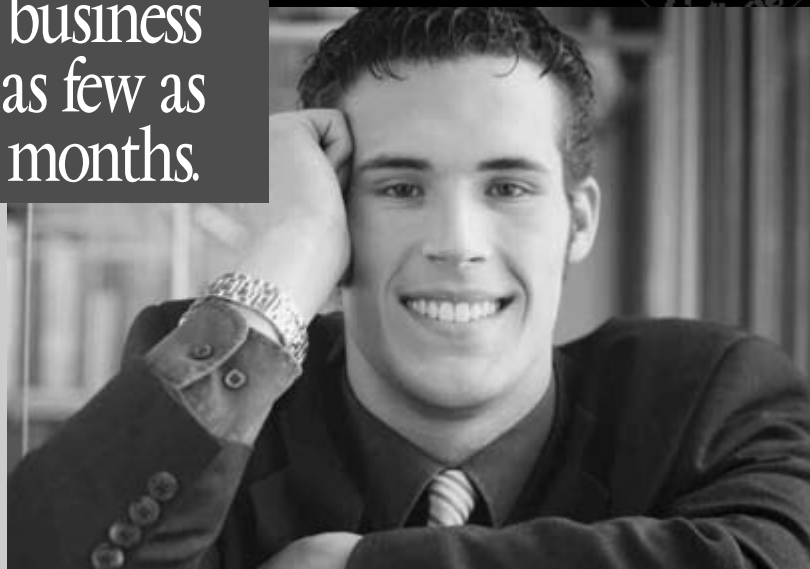


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# Another deadline for the Upper Swift Creek Plan

## Supervisors split on necessity of action



Page Dowdy/Chesterfield Observer

The 1,700-acre Swift Creek Reservoir provides about 25 percent of Chesterfield's drinking water.

By Greg Pearson  
STAFF WRITER

On a narrow 3-2 vote, the Chesterfield Board of Supervisors told its planning commission last week to revise the Upper Swift Creek Plan (USCP) and send it back to the board by June 9. According to Planning Director Kirk Turner, the commission needs more time, and a commission-initiated plan is scheduled to be to the board in July.

Matoaca Supervisor Marleen Durfee made the motion asking that the plan be sent to the board within 60 days, and Clover Hill Supervisor Art Warren and Dale Supervisor Jim Holland joined her for the board majority. "Staff has completed the work" and needs to get it back faster to the board, reasoned Durfee.

Last January, Durfee wanted the plan sent back to the commission and returned in 60 days. It was, but the commission said the plan wasn't completed and recommended the board take no action. The commission then initiated its own study. Later, county officials said the plan came back unfinished because of "an administrative oversight" when instructions sent from the board to the commission didn't specify a date for it to be returned. Without a specific date, state law requires the plan to be returned to the board within 60 days.

Midlothian Supervisor Dan Gecker, who served eight years on the commission before being elected supervisor, disagreed with the motion. He has said earlier that with three new commissioners, the commission needs more time. Turner has cautioned county leaders that his staff is working overtime, and that is impacting employee morale.

"There is no useful purpose...for a parallel plan to the planning commission," said a frustrated Gecker. "It's an exercise in futility." Bermuda Supervisor Dorothy Jaekle dissented with Gecker in the vote.

"I have no idea from a legal perspective about what the mandate is because the commission has initiated its own study," said Planning Commission Chair Russ Gully.

The commission has scheduled a community meeting on its plan for 7 p.m. on Apr. 29 at Clover Hill High School.

A majority of supervisors don't believe the current plan, which was approved by the 2007 board, properly protects the Swift Creek Reservoir as a source of drinking water. All

supervisors seem to want levels of service (LOS) for roads and schools incorporated into the plan, which could allow the board to deny residential rezonings when schools are too overcrowded or nearby roads aren't up to standards.

The plan will include more emphasis on public safety, economic development, water quality and land use. Developers and some Chesterfield business people are concerned about lowering the phosphorous runoff rate, which will help protect the reservoir but likely reduce the amount of commercial development allowed in the watershed. With more impervious surfaces like rooftops and paved parking lots, businesses create more runoff.

LOS would allow the supervisors to deny a residential rezoning in the USCP area if the proposed development would tax nearby schools, roads and other services. The USCP area encompasses 57 square miles, starting at the intersection of routes 288/360 and going north and west. LOS will provide additional legal justification for denying a rezoning and give the development community a better idea of the emerging new standards.

Developers are fearful that water quality standards will be so strict that it will effectively become a moratorium on growth. Last year, the commission considered the .16 pounds per acre per year limit for phosphorous runoff – the same amount forested land without any development generates naturally. Even county leaders acknowledge new business growth in the plan area won't be able to meet the .16 standard. Matoaca Planning Commissioner Wayne Bass has said he has "new insight on the water quality issue," adding earlier that "we don't want to shut down the whole upper Swift Creek watershed."

**Business growth**

Greg Wingfield, president/CEO of the Greater Richmond Partnership, briefed the board last week on efforts to recruit new businesses to metro Richmond in general and the county in particular, but he did not reveal any current prospects. In the FY08 budget, Chesterfield contributes \$390,000 to the multi-jurisdictional effort.

"You got a definite upgrade when you hired Will Davis," Wingfield told the board. "He's a closer."

Davis became Chesterfield's economic development director in January 2006. He replaced Jim Dunn, who is now retired.