

# Swift Creek plan proceeds without quantifiable data

By Greg Pearson  
STAFF WRITER

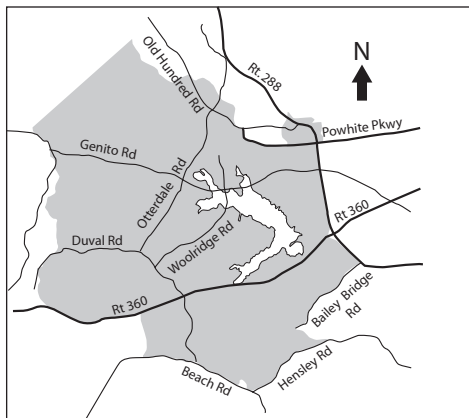
The Upper Swift Creek Plan (USCP) will go to the Chesterfield Board of Supervisors on June 9 without sufficient data needed to back up its recommendations for how to protect the Swift Creek Reservoir as a source of drinking water. The commission plan that reaches the board in July after more study will also lack data that quantifies how much phosphorous runoff the measures will prevent.

Last year in commission work sessions, the Environmental Engineering Department estimated that when build-out of already approved zoning occurs, there will be 400 to 4,000 pounds more phosphorous flowing into the reservoir annually than the recommended amount of 25,000 pounds. In recent months, staff presentations have not included phosphorous data, which were lamented in April by commission Chairman Russ Gulley and Vice Chairman Wayne Bass.

The measures included in the new USCP will reduce runoff, but may not be enough to offset the effects of already approved development and new rezonings to come. The county will also be challenged to meet lowered state mandated levels for phosphorous.

After almost five years of study, the plan appears headed to the board with components for water quality, land use and transportation. But at a public meeting held last week at Clover Hill High School by the planning commission, several from the development community and citizen Brenda Stewart, who owns property outside of the 57-square-mile plan area, expressed concerns about levels of service (LOS) in the USCP that are expected to be the model countywide.

"[LOS countywide]," cautioned Stewart, "could effectively destroy the market values



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The Upper Swift Creek Plan area encompasses 57 square miles, starting at the intersection of routes 288/360 and going north and west.

of our property."

LOS will allow the county board to deny a residential rezoning if the roads nearby are inadequate to handle the increased traffic or a school in the district is over 120 percent capacity. The plan also recommends LOS standards for response times for the county fire/EMS department – 90 percent of the calls should be met within six minutes. LOS standards countywide are also expected to address other county services such as police, libraries and parks.

Developer/engineer Dave Anderson wants LOS to be countywide first and focus on water quality.

But other citizens support LOS in this plan, including Cathy Kirk. "The citizens want

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reads the report. Referrals can earn officers a \$500 bonus.

Compared to Henrico, Chesterfield's turnover rate is higher, though the comparison is not apples-to-apples. Last year, 9.41 percent of Chesterfield's officers left the force, a higher rate than in the three previous years. Since 2001, 214 officers have moved on, most of them (136) of their own decision, including 41 to work in other law enforcement jobs. The remainder left because of retirement (48), death (5) or termination/involuntary separation (27).

Henrico's most recent data is for July 1, 2006-June 30, 2007, showing that officer turnover was 6.7 percent and 5.3 percent excluding retirements. That's better than Henrico's overall turnover rate of 8.6 percent and 7.1 percent when retirements are excluded for all of that county's departments.

"We're very competitive," said Henrico's Director of Human Resources George Cauble. "We're one of the leading police departments in the state in terms of pay, benefits and reputation. We have the best health care package in the Richmond area at the lowest premium for employees."

Chesterfield's department currently has about 30 officer vacancies. The department can use the money, which would have funded those positions, to pay for overtime. Officers are paid time and a half, and overtime is sometimes mandatory. For the year that ended last June 30, overtime cost the county \$1.27 million, but this year's overtime pay is outpacing that. From July 1 last year to the end of January, it was \$822,800.

Overtime is necessary in part because the county has fewer police officers covering

twice the area of Henrico. The report says Chesterfield has 1.63 police officers for every 1,000 citizens. The national average for Chesterfield's population grouping is 2.5.

While many citizens criticized the board for recently cutting the property tax rate by two cents, pay for police, fire/EMS and teachers was not affected. The monetary impact was made in adjustments to capital projects. The budget provides a 4 percent merit pay increase and another 1.25 percent for jobs where Chesterfield has to be more competitive, which includes the police department.

The new board – with four new members serving just 100 days before the budget was approved – has expressed support for the department.

"Some board members want to help but feel it will take more than one budget cycle," explained Kevin Carroll, who heads the Fraternal Order of Police. "To retain officers, they're going to have to address the pay issue. The officers are grateful for the 4 percent raise, but more has to be done to get us to parity."

Because residential revaluations of existing homes went up an average of 11 percent last January, there was a source of new revenue for a higher county budget and more school spending. But the Real Estate Assessor's Office is projecting flat assessments for this year, meaning salary increases may be difficult to fund next year. Members of the Budget and Audit Committee, which includes two supervisors, have discussed the property tax rate and haven't ruled out recommending raising it for FY10.

To view the police retention report, visit [www.chesterfieldobserver.com](http://www.chesterfieldobserver.com), and click on "special" in the left-hand menu.

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