



"Another two cents decrease in the [property] tax rate in the name of helping our citizens is not supported by the facts..."

# OPINIONS

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## Former Midlothian school board member disagrees with property tax rate reduction

**Dear Editor,**

Houston, we have a problem. While billions of people slept, Apollo 13 was on a journey that was only on course 2 percent of the time. Fortunately, a sharp team of leaders in Houston Space Center was able to target the problems and develop a unique solution for each problem.

Folks, Chesterfield is off course, and the leaders (supervisors) in the control tower have lost sight of their target. The silent majority of citizens in Chesterfield must step up to the plate and voice their concerns. This is a fantastic community! The old mantra "tighten your belt and sharpen your pencil" will not be the total solution if we plan to stand out as a 21st century community. Another two cents decrease in the [property] tax rate in the name of helping our citizens is not supported by the facts, nor is it helping the community.

The two groups that have launched Chesterfield into being selected as one of the top 100 communities are our strong teaching staff and our police officers – i.e. education and safety. They are now on the chopping block as expendable with limited recognition in their compensation package. I don't get it!

Another correction must be made if Chesterfield is to get back on course: the shift of running a campaign, which is all about me, to running a county, which is all about we. The oath taken as an elected official calls for responsible cooperation and respect to move us in our economy, education, safety and life in Chesterfield County. I know the people in the control room have the potential to accomplish this mission. Let's get down to business!

**Jim Schroeder  
Chesterfield**

### Students have seen this language before

**Dear Editor,**

I am a seventh-grade honor roll student at Bailey Bridge Middle School. I have been following the articles about the "mature section" in our school library. Up until eighth-grade, you must have a parental signature to check out one of these books. To the surprise of parents and grandparents, we have already heard these words spoken in the halls of our school, movies [and on] our computers, cell phones and magazines sold on store shelves. In order for us not to hear such language or see explicates is unrealistic. If you want to complain about this material, complain to the authors, not the school! If my parents do not want me to watch rated R movies or read this type of material, they either don't rent them or research the books first. It's called parental control. If you don't want us exposed to language or explicit material – homeschool.

We see and hear it every day whether we are watching the news about the war or another school shooting or reading books such as "The Color Purple." To go against one book with the "F" word is to go against many different things we are exposed to every day. At our age we have had many things shown to us that our parents are unaware of. My point

is we are not blind to the world around us, and books are just a small portion of what we see and hear every day.

**Rachel Taylor Robison  
Bailey Bridge Middle School**

### Apr. 23 letter called for a response

**Dear Editor,**

On rare occasions do I address a specific letter to the editor. However, in this particular instance I find it necessary to do so.

In an Apr. 23rd letter, the writer provided the following comment: "During the past two years...I have documented millions of taxpayer dollars wasted by the county leadership team. We now have invoices showing that \$40,380 was spent at three Richmond clubs over the past two years." Some very salient points are necessary regarding this letter. First, there is a big disconnect between "millions of taxpayer dollars" and "invoices showing \$40,000..."

Second, the current board has been in office approximately 100+ days. To attribute the spending habits of the prior board over the last two years is an inappropriate judgment of the performance of the current board.

Third, while some of these activities, if considered in a vacuum, would appear inappropriate, much more than the mere cost of the services, events, etc. needs to be considered. As noted by the county's director of public affairs, economic development is a competitive marketplace that, at times, requires conversations to be conducted in a less public forum than the eye of a camera lens; and, there are benefits that such club memberships at golf facilities or otherwise afford the county in meeting with prospective businesses. While there are golf and dining facilities in Chesterfield County, the best location for such a membership, if it is to be funded by taxpayer dollars, has to be a judgment based on all of the information available. The board "hires" the county administrator and can and should question such affiliations to ensure the county is getting the most "bang for the buck."

Fourth, current Virginia law does not require even the regularly scheduled meetings of an elected body to be videotaped. Virginia law only requires that minutes of those meetings be taken and made a part of the public record. In the situation cited in the Apr. 23 letter, minutes were recorded and have been available on the county Web site for well over two months.

Finally, as citizens it is important that we get beyond the events of the past and engage our current board on [its] decisions, not those of [its] predecessors. Regarding the meal with legislators, supervisors and county staff, let's put it in its proper perspective. \$1,400 out of a \$1.2 billion budget is .00012% of the Chesterfield County budget. Conversely, because of the swift action by supervisors who had just assumed their leadership positions two weeks earlier, not just millions of dollars but tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions, were saved by delaying action of the Virginia General Assembly on Senator Watkins' impact fee bill.

It is important that we engage our leaders on the "important" issues of the day – issues

of significance and issues over which they have had the ability to exercise some control or influence. Let's not continue debating the 2004 Bond Referendum, the location of a middle school as part of that referendum, or expenditures that occurred two or more years ago.

We cannot move forward while dragging the ball and chain of the past along with us.

**Bob Herndon  
Matoaca District**

### Tomahawk committee did a good job

**Dear Editor,**

As a member of the Tomahawk Creek Middle School redistricting committee, I was shocked and outraged by the statements [Matoaca School Board member] Omarh Rajah made about our committee at a March school board meeting. At the request of several committee members, Mr. Rajah met with us on Apr. 15 to discuss his comments. Everyone had a chance to speak his/her mind, and we heard Mr. Rajah's point of view. Mr. Rajah apologized, saying that he did not mean to offend us. All of us appreciated the opportunity for an open dialogue. I truly believe that Mr. Rajah has the best intentions for the children of this county. And, I also believe he misunderstood some of the statements made during the committee meetings he attended. I also think he was influenced by a group of parents that were critical of the committee process.

In reference to the comment, "They didn't want children with single parents from apartments to attend that school," I was at that meeting, and neither I nor any other committee member with whom I have spoken, heard that comment. The committee discussed the apartments next to Tomahawk Creek. We were questioning whether the number of children the county had given us from that area was accurate and reliable since the number was rather low. One member said that some people who live in apartments may be transitional since she knew of several families who lived in those apartments for a short time while their house was under construction. Another member said that some single parents live in apartments. Was that stereotyping? Maybe. Another member said that we did not have any data to support either statement, and it wasn't part of our criteria. Did anyone say, "I don't want those children attending the school?" Absolutely not. It was an irrelevant point and certainly not worth the press it has received. There are children of single parents and/or students who live in apartments in every school in the county. Does anyone really believe that a volunteer would specifically say they didn't want their children to attend

see **LETTERS**, page 27

### Corrections & Amplifications

**Correction:** In the Apr. 30 issue in a story on proffers, we misidentified the speaker of the House of Delegates. He is Del. Bill Howell. We regret our error. Editor

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