ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Hanover retains waste stickers

The supervisors vote 5-2 to keep the regulations the same

BY JEREMY SLAYTON
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Hanover County residents must continue to use a decal or sticker to gain access to the county's solid-waste convenience centers.

The Board of Supervisors voted 5-2 Wednesday night to make no changes to the county's solid-waste regulations.

Cold Harbor District Supervisor Elton J. Wade Sr. and Beaverdam District Supervisor Aubrey M. Stanley cast the no votes.

County staff members recommended keeping the regulations the same.

"We think they're sufficient ... and the most efficient for our staff," said J. Michael Flagg, director of public works.

Stanley said he supported allowing residents the option to show an alternate proof of residency, such as a driver's license, to gain access to the solid-waste centers.

Currently, residents are required to show proof of residency using a Hanover County or Town of Ashland decal; the county also issues a small, round decal that can be used to gain access to the solid-waste centers.

The board this month voted to abolish the permanent county decal affixed to a vehicle's windshield and its associated fee.

Board Chairwoman Deborah B. Winans voted for maintaining the current regulations.

"To be efficient, we can't have our employees taking all the extra time to check folks who just don't want to show stickers," said Winans, who represents Mechanicsville District.

Residents can obtain decals for free from the commissioner of the revenue, the treasurer's office, the department of public works or at solid-waste facilities.

YMCA athletic fields

The board unanimously granted a conditional-use permit to the YMCA of Greater Richmond to allow athletic fields on 2.36 acres on Rutland Center Boulevard, just west of Atlee Road.

"I think it will be good for the area," said Chickahominy District Supervisor Robert R. Setliff. "I'm sure, hopefully, there will be additional growth connected to this."

The permit was approved with several conditions, such as the fields shall not be open to the general public, hours of operation are limited to 7 a.m. to sunset and no temporary or permanent lights installed.

County to acquire property

The board authorized the county to acquire by condemnation navigation easements and runway protection zones at the Hanover County Airport.

By acquiring the easements, the county can clear the obstructions on the land.

John G. Dankos Jr., chairman of the airport's advisory committee, supported the resolution.

"Please move forward on the improvement plans to ensure Hanover remains a destination for visitors from all over," said Dankos, the only speaker.

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Westmoreland budget hearing draws unprecedented crowd

0 Comments

Twenty years ago Westmoreland's Board of Supervisors conducted a budget in the American Legion Building immediately west of Montross. The English Building meeting place had been destroyed by fire in December 1990. Two reporters and one private citizen attended the budget hearing of 1991.

Last Thursday night hundreds of people attended the supervisors' budget hearing in the old A.T. Johnson auditorium. Extra chairs were located and put in place to accommodate the unusually high turnout anticipated by members of the county government.

At issue was the supervisors' unwillingness to fully fund the county school division's budget request. The School Board had asked the county to

provide enough local money to offset state and federal revenue reductions.

In prior budget sessions the supervisors made it clear that they would not raise taxes during a period of soaring food and energy costs. School employees had recently been given a 1.5 percent raise and the school division would receive half a million dollars in additional local funding,

We Want to Know!

Should Westmoreland County raise taxes to fund the school board budget?

- Yes, raise taxes.
- No, don't raise taxes.
- Take funds from reserve funds
- Cut taxes

Vote Results

exceeding the minimum level of local support that state law requires.

Unhappy with the supervisors' unwillingness to impose higher taxes on county residents, the school division used its Reverse 911 phone system to reach every home on the calling list. The automated message instructed every man, woman and child to attend the April 21 public hearing and request additional support for the Westmoreland County schools.

The automated calling system mobilized the school community and attendees challenged the county government to do whatever was necessary to offset state and federal revenue shortfalls. Residents outside the school division's community of interest also had an opportunity to speak. They applauded the supervisors' resolve to impose no additional burden on taxpaying residents.

As positions were presented and assertions introduced, attempts were made to correct disinformation that had been circulated. Board Chairman Woody Hynson was at times challenged to maintain order and was subsequently faulted in some circles for being too abrupt.

Along the way it was acknowledged that the county is holding as much as $8 million in contingency and other accounts. Some of the money is designated for specific purposes and the remainder is held for emergency situations. Past audits of the county government's finances have included language praising Westmoreland's essentially frugal management practices.

At one point in the hearing, the supervisors had been chided for not properly supporting the county's schools. District 5 Supervisor Larry Roberson struck back with criticism of the School Board's decision to give past Division Superintendent Elaine Fogliani $7,000 to take a trip to India.
County Administrator Norm Risavi delivered a comprehensive explanation of how the budget numbers were derived. He accorded special attention to the school division's portion of the 2011-2012 county budget.

Risavi accounted for county government departmental reductions that totaled $1,157,233. The only major budget increases were Central Rappahannock Regional Library's additional $44,186, the extra half million dollars for the county schools and the initial payment of $250,000 to the Chandlers for land where the new high school will be built.

Risavi projected a chart on the wall that tracked the county's 17 percent decline in student enrollment during the most recent 10-year interval. The decline contrasted with neighboring jurisdiction's more stable student populations.

Those numbers were a factor in the administrator's subsequent explanation of the composite index, a formula used in Virginia to determine a local school division's amount of state support. Besides student enrollment numbers, the formula relies on property values and the annual incomes of county residents. The result of the rather convoluted math is the state's determination of what a locality can afford to pay to support the operations of that county's school division. Westmoreland's rating is the 29th highest in the state, making the per capita contribution to local education higher than 107 of the 136 Virginia jurisdictions with local school divisions.

Another set of values detailed Westmoreland County's ranking as 28th among 94 counties in local per pupil expenditures. The local per pupil share in Westmoreland County is $4,316. When state and federal contributions are added to the mix, the county spends $10,396 to educate each child. The local contribution does not take into account maintenance and capital improvement costs such as replacement of the county's high school roof. The ranking in terms of total per pupil cost is 33rd when compared to school divisions in Virginia's 93 other counties.

The general fund revenue in the 2011-2012 budget totals $21,597,428. A stated $8,183,668 will be allocated for specific departments and programs and for contractual commitments and debt service. The balance for appropriation purposes is $13,413,760. The local school contribution of $8,112,578 is measured at 61 percent of Westmoreland County's available general fund revenue, with tax rates remaining at their current level.
The supervisors will reconvene the recessed April meeting at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, April 28 for the purpose of adopting the budget in the form in which it was advertised. The meeting will be held in the A.T. Johnson auditorium.

Betsy Fickin