

ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Hanover considers scrapping vehicle, landfill decals

Supervisors will hold public hearing on repealing part of code

BY KATHERINE CALOS
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Car decals and landfill-access stickers — and the fees that go with them — might be on the way out in Hanover County.

On Wednesday, the Board of Supervisors approved a public hearing April 13 on repealing the section of the county code that requires vehicle decals and fees.

County decals currently cost \$10 and are good for the lifetime of the vehicle. County residents must have a county decal or a solid-waste sticker (also \$10) to access the county's solid-waste

convenience centers.

The county receives about \$120,000 a year in decal revenue and has about \$5,000 in costs for the program, said Joe Casey, deputy county administrator.



Stanley

proposed scenario.

Board Vice Chairman Aubrey M. Stanley suggested that people also be allowed to access solid-waste convenience centers without a sticker by proving residency.

"I agree that we need the process to be citizen-friendly,"

said Supervisor John E. Gordon Jr., who initiated the discussion last month. "We can provide some tax relief and some process relief."

The loss of revenue would be split evenly between the school system and county government.

The proposed budget for fiscal 2012 has a net gain of \$1.772 million from changes in the state budget, according to a presentation by Kathleen T. Seay, director of finance.

Schools will be the big beneficiary, with \$1 million in increased revenue and \$790,000 in reduced expenses for the Virginia Retirement System.

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Tax revenue climbs in March

12.4 percent jump from last year continues Va.'s growth streak

BY TYLER WHITLEY

Richmond Times-Dispatch

State tax revenues continued their upward movement in March, jumping 12.4 percent over the March 2010 totals,

Gov. Bob McDonnell reported Thursday. They have risen in 12 of the past 13 months, he said.

McDonnell cautioned that March is not a significant month for revenue collections and noted that more than 250,000 Virginians are lacking "good-paying jobs."

But he said revenues rose more than 9 percent for the fifth month in a row, "clearly in-

dicating that Virginia's economy is on the path toward recovery. We have made significant progress in providing a positive, pro-business environment in Virginia."

Secretary of Finance Richard "Ric" Brown noted that revised Virginia Employment Commission data show that Virginia lost 15,000 jobs in calendar year 2010, compared with the previ-

ously reported loss of 5,200 jobs.

In March, sales-tax collections were 8.5 percent ahead of the year earlier total, while withholding taxes were up 0.6 percent, Brown said.

Year to date, total revenue collections rose 4.9 percent, ahead of projections of 4 percent. Adjusted for the accelerated sales-tax program, state reve-

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Revenue

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nues have grown 6.7 percent, again ahead of the forecast of 5.6 percent. The higher revenues

likely mean that the state can up its revenue forecasts when it adopts a revised budget next year.

Brown noted that April and May are significant collection months. Fourth-quarter collec-

tions must total about \$4.6 billion to meet the forecast, he said. They were up \$4.5 billion in the fourth quarter of last year.

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Disabled vets eligible for tax break

Richmond-area localities preparing to implement the real estate tax exemption

BY LUZ LAZO

Richmond Times-Dispatch

Hundreds of disabled veterans could qualify for a real estate tax exemption that localities are required to provide as a result of recently enacted legislation.

Legislation signed by Gov. Bob McDonnell this month mandates Virginia localities to grant a real estate tax

exemption for the principal residence of a veteran, or his or her surviving spouse, if the veteran has a 100 percent, service-connected, permanent and total disability.

Richmond-area localities say they have been preparing to implement the measure and encourage qualified veterans to claim the exemption, which is retroactive to Jan. 1.

According to the Virginia Department of Veteran Services, there are about 7,500 100 percent, permanent and total, service-connected disabled veterans in Virginia.

In Henrico County, officials said there are nearly 260 disabled veterans and are estimating, based on average assessments, a maximum impact on the county's tax collection of \$510,198. With estimated real estate revenue this year of \$283 million, that represents about 0.18 percent.

Because that includes those in assisted-living facilities, renting homes, or those already enrolled in other real estate tax exemption programs, the county expects a smaller number to claim the benefit.

"It really is so small that it won't have

an impact on revenue estimates," Henrico Finance Director John A. Vithoulkas said.

Hanover County anticipates having about 88 qualified taxpayers, representing a loss of \$125,000 in revenue in fiscal 2012, or 0.13 percent of the total real estate tax collection, county spokesman Tom Harris said.

In Chesterfield County, there could be about 400 eligible veterans for a loss in revenue of \$500,000 to \$700,000, or roughly 0.25 percent of the total collection, said Commissioner of the Revenue

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Who qualifies?

Veterans must have a 100 percent, permanent and total, service-connected disability.

The surviving spouse of a veteran is eligible for the exemption if the veteran died on or after Jan. 1, 2011.

The spouse will lose the exemption if he or she remarries or does not occupy the property as his or her primary residence. Spouses are not eligible if the veteran died before Jan. 1.

Localities will supply forms for veterans to use to claim the exemption. The veteran will be required to:

- ♦ include his or her name;
 - ♦ provide name of spouse (if appropriate);
 - ♦ state whether the property is jointly owned by the husband and wife; and
 - ♦ certify the property is occupied as the veteran's principal residence.
- ♦ Veterans also must provide documentation from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs certifying that the veteran has a 100 percent, permanent and total, service-connected disability.
- ♦ Surviving spouses claiming the exemption must provide documentation that the veteran died on or after Jan. 1.

Veterans may call the VA at (800) 827-1000 to request documentation certifying they have a qualifying disability.

Veterans will not be required to refile their information unless their principal place of residence changes.

For additional information, veterans should contact the office responsible for real estate tax collection in their locality.

Source: Virginia Department of Veterans Services

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Joseph A. Horbal, who noted those are estimates.

Richmond spokesman Michael Wallace could not provide any estimates. He said it is too early to speculate on how many homeowners will qualify for the exemption in the city.

Horbal said Chesterfield already has created application forms

and mailed them to veterans who have requested them. He said they have received some applications back.

Henrico Revenue Division Director Edward W. Trice said the county is working with the Virginia Veteran Services to get the word out.

Some localities have to approve local ordinances before their staff can start providing the service.

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