

The City FOCUS

A Report to the Citizens of the City of Colonial Heights

2007 Year In Review



2007 SEES COMMERCIAL EXPANSION



Last year saw four major commercial property developments greatly expanding the City's sales, lodging and meals tax base. The Holiday Inn Millennium and Hampton Inn projects both broke ground in 2007 doubling the number of hotel rooms in the City. This should add significant real estate and lodging tax revenue to the City's future budgets. It will also help address the need for lodging to support the new training classes coming to Fort Lee. The City also saw the opening of the new Regal 16 Cinema that greatly expands the City's entertainment offerings. Finally, one of the highlights of the past several years was the construction of the new Olive Garden on Southpark Boulevard at South Avenue. The former MBCI site was redeveloped last year, removing the old industrial building to make way for a three site restaurant and retail park, now including the Olive Garden. Additional announcements on tenants for the remaining 2 sites are expected in the near future.

TELEPHONE OUTREACH SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTS PUBLIC SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

The City initiated its new Outbound Notification System in 2007. This automated phone system gives City staff a new tool for notifying residents of emergency and other time-sensitive information. It gives telephone and email alerts to multiple locations of your choosing. Residents and businesses are encouraged to log on to the City's website at www.colonial-heights.com and click on the Connect CTY button to add contact telephone numbers and email accounts or call 520-9387. The system has been used for weather emergency, water main break and other public safety notifications.

The public safety functions of the City offered two new programs for senior citizens in 2007. The Police Department initiated Project Lifesaver with State grant funds to assist with those suffering with Alzheimer's. This electronic notification system has been used to locate one lost senior citizen so far. The police and City Sheriff also led the program to create TRIAD in our City. This partnership of public safety agencies in the City and State assist senior citizens in crime prevention and public safety matters. With the growing number of seniors in our City, our public safety agencies continue to pursue new initiatives and levels of service for them.



COMMERCIAL PARKING CHANGE YIELDS TWO EXPANSIONS



City Council reduced the commercial parking requirements for business zoning to enhance commercial site development. This really assisted two large retail expansions. Target and Sam's Club now have approved plans to expand their existing buildings while maintaining more than sufficient parking. The commercial parking ordinance amendment adopted in 2007 provides a 30% reduction in the parking requirements for new construction or expansion. This change is expected to maximize development potential in the Southpark and Boulevard commercial areas.

THE BOULEVARD KEEPS GETTING BETTER

The new commercial parking ordinance also assisted the redevelopment of two parcels on the Boulevard. Plans were approved for two older buildings to be demolished making way for two new professional buildings. The City is pleased to see Landmark Realty and the Ariya Family Chiropractic Center redeveloping their new offices in-line with the Boulevard Design Guidelines. 2007 also saw the approval of a plan for the new Walgreens and the new Boulevard Shops next to WaWa on the Boulevard at Dupuy Avenue. The southern end of the Boulevard has experienced a significant growth in commercial traffic between Temple and Dupuy Avenues. The Walgreens Corporation acquired five older buildings to assemble the new retail site.

2007 also saw two new phases of the Boulevard Revitalization Grant Program. In the Spring of 2007, the City awarded 12 grants for commercial property improvements along the Boulevard. City Council also funded Phase V of the program and expects to award up to 18 new grants in early 2008. To-date, 67 projects have been undertaken on the Boulevard generating over a million dollars in private investment for numerous enhancements to Boulevard business properties. Through the first four phases of the grants, the City has seen a 5-1 return on its grant investment. City Council thanks the businesses who have participated in the program. The redevelopment of Boulevard commercial property is clearly beginning to show.

2007 Year In Review

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS EVERYWHERE

The City staff continued its aggressive Capital Program in 2007. City Council approved over \$8 million in facility expansions and many broke ground last year. The highlight of the Program was clearly the ground breaking and construction of the Tussing Elementary School Expansion Project. This is the first of a series of school improvements to assure the City's goals for quality education and excellent educational facilities are attained. The City's Public Works and Engineering Department also completed Phase I of the Bruce Avenue Regional Drainage Project during the construction season of 2007. This \$1 million drainage project is part of a \$4 million capital project covering a large area in the southeastern portion of the City. City staff expects to begin work on the second phase of the project in 2008. City Council also funded large rehabilitation projects for storm drainage outfalls in the Yacht Basin Drive and Lexington Avenue drainage systems. Over \$500,000 in capital repairs were designed for these two projects last year.

City staff also initiated the Safe Routes to Schools Program last year. We are scheduled to use grant funds for sidewalk construction around the Colonial Heights Middle School. We also had two new grants awarded in 2007 to fund design and engineering on the new Colonial Heights Appomattox River Trail System. The City's Greenway Committee and Planning Department are planning the new system of trails along the river leading from the Appamatuck Park site on Archer Avenue around the southwest quarter of the City limits to the Roslyn Landing Park behind the City's Animal Shelter. The Colonial Heights Foundation is assisting with fundraising for the new trail. Capital projects were also initiated in the City's park system during 2007. Playground equipment was replaced in White Bank Park. Restroom improvements at White Bank were also funded last year. The capital upgrades also provided new walking paths in Fort Clifton Park. Upgrades to the amphitheater area were also funded in 2008.

KNOW YOUR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Rick Anzolut - City Manager	520-9265
Kim Rollinson - City Clerk	520-9360
Chip Fisher - City Attorney	520-9316
Jeff Faries - Police Chief	520-9311
A.G. Moore - Fire Chief	520-9387
Chuck Henley - Public Works & Engineering	520-9334
Sean Gleason - Parks & Recreation	520-9224
George Schanzenbacher - Development	520-9297
Eileen Brown - Human Services	520-9286
Bill Johnson - Finance	520-9332
Bruce Hansen - Library & IT	520-9384
Jennifer Carpenter - Human Resources	524-8749



NUMEROUS TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS STARTED



Everyone noticed the construction of the new northbound Interstate 95 ramp at Temple Avenue. This \$7 million Surface Transportation Program Project was funded through a regional initiative. City Council invested \$580,000 in this new ramp to improve safety and reduce congestion at the intersection of I-95 and Temple Avenue. A new southbound Interstate 95 exit ramp for Temple Avenue was also included in the State's 6 Year Plan for the first time. The Mayor and City Council are greatly concerned about State funding for the southbound ramp in future years. The rising cost of highway construction and the many other projects in the State threaten current plans for the new ramp. City staff will do its best to assure the continued accumulation of funds for the new ramp so it can begin construction as scheduled in 2010.

In order to improve timeliness, City Council took actions in 2007 to bring local control and administration of our street construction projects under the Department of Public Works and Engineering rather than the VDOT Richmond Office. Plans were completed and preparations were initiated in 2007 for the new Boulevard Expansion Project to add a fifth lane on the northern section. City Council also provided local funding to match limited State funding so the Boulevard could be expanded between Westover Avenue and Dupuy Avenue. City Council allocated a million dollars in local funding to match two million in State Congestion Mitigation and Revenue Sharing Funds. These three Boulevard expansions should greatly improve traffic flows on both ends of the Boulevard. The City will also begin preliminary activities toward the expansion of the intersection of Boulevard and Dupuy Avenue. This \$7,000,000 Urban Construction Project will take a few years to complete.

Finally, City Council approved local administration of another Congestion Mitigation Project from the State. A Signal Coordination Project was approved along the Boulevard between Temple Avenue and Sherwood Drive. These State funds will upgrade the traffic signal controllers on this section so they can communicate with each other. This signal coordination greatly improves traffic flows and turning movements, especially at peak hours.



The City Focus

The City Focus is a newsletter mailed to residents of the City of Colonial Heights, published by the Office of the City Manager, to inform residents of government actions and events of interest in the City.

This newsletter is printed on recycled paper.

**CELEBRATE CITY'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY AT
FORT CLIFTON FESTIVAL**

The City of Colonial Heights was chartered as an independent City in 1948. That makes 2008 the 60th Anniversary of the City. A few activities are being planned for this year to commemorate the anniversary. This year's Fort Clifton Festival will have the unveiling of commemorative artwork for the 60th Anniversary. Local artist Henry Kidd is preparing an original painting commissioned by City Council. The "Colonials on the Heights" will also be available in limited edition prints later this year. Everyone is encouraged to attend this year's Fort Clifton Festival and celebrate our 60th Anniversary.

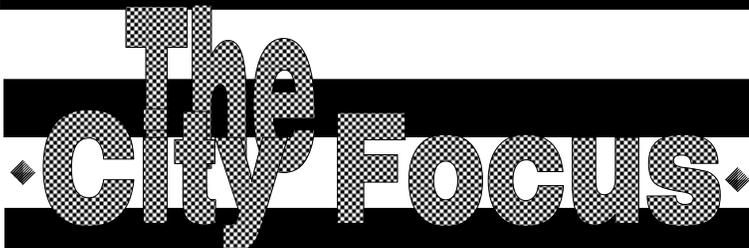
CITY CLEAN-UP DAY
(and Adopt-A-Highway)

When: April 26th
Where: Senior Center
Time: 8:00 A.M.



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City Council Cuts Real Estate Tax Rate – TWICE

In response to rising real estate tax assessments, City Council voted to cut the real estate tax rate an additional 8¢ for the 2008 tax year. The real estate tax rate falls to \$1.10 for 2008, as compared to the \$1.18 we paid in 2007. Council is responding to the average 20.5% increase in overall real estate tax assessments over the 2006 levels. The City reassesses real estate property values every two years. Stronger demand for property in Colonial Heights and climbing sale prices have increased our real estate tax assessments over the past two years, even though the market has slowed recently.

The new tax rate of a \$1.10 per \$100 of assessed value shows an overall 10¢ tax rate reduction over levels paid in 2006. While the increased tax assessments could result in a higher real estate tax bill in 2008, City Council believes it has done its best to offset additional costs to property owners while maintaining its commitment to quality City services.

A number of citizens are concerned about their 2008 tax assessments. Any property owners who need to discuss assessment increases should contact the City Assessor at 520-9272. City Council will also be considering changes to the Tax Relief for the Elderly Program to offer tax relief to more of our senior citizens.

City to Further Cut Losses by Closing Trash Convenience Center

The City established a charge for the disposal of trash, junk and other solid waste at the City's Convenience Center behind Wal-Mart in July of 2007. This charge was established so those who dumped trash and other junk at the Convenience Center would pay for it. Before the charge was established, the City's tax revenues subsidized the free dumping. Unfortunately, the volume of junk dumped at the Convenience Center does not pay the cost of operating the Center. Once charges were established, waste volumes dropped over 65% at the Convenience Center. City Council recently transferred \$180,000 of general tax revenue to the Convenience Center to subsidize its operations.

In order to reduce losses, the City will be closing the Convenience Center to trash, junk and other solid waste in June of this year. Many residents have found that most household junk will be removed by the City's trash contractors if it is placed on the curb on Wednesdays. The City will continue to take tree trimmings, brush and other yard waste materials at the Convenience Center for free. The City will also take household hazardous waste at the Center without a charge. Residents are encouraged to perform yard maintenance and tree trimming by offering this free disposal service. Residents are also encouraged to dispose of old oil based paint, solvents, thinners and other household chemicals for free at the Convenience Center.

City Reducing Maintenance on Remote Properties

The City of Colonial Heights owns and maintains a very large amount of real estate scattered all over the City. The City cuts grass, weeds and other vegetation in easements, rights-of-way, vacant lots, alleys and along roadways. The labor required to cut this vegetation is beginning to cost more than the City can afford. As a result, City Council has approved the reduction or elimination of maintenance to a number of properties, alleys and easements. City crews will be reducing or eliminating work in areas less visible to the general public. The City will be focusing on the corridors and properties that are more visible to all residents and visitors.

The City will be notifying a large number of property owners who reside next to rights-of-way, alleys, easements and other City property scheduled for this reduction in maintenance. If you live next to City owned property that is less visible to the general public, you may be affected by this reduction in service. The City will be encouraging adjacent property owners to accept that certain remote parcels will no longer be maintained by the City. Property owners are encouraged to cut this property themselves or allow it to return to its natural state.

The City is reducing service to these less visible areas in an effort to control costs and keep our labor committed to City property that benefits the City, as a whole. If you receive a letter regarding City property adjacent to your property and have any questions, please contact the Department of Public Works at 520-9372 if you need further information.



City Faces Large Cost Increases for Stormwater

The City of Colonial Heights is forced to add new programming and maintenance services to address stormwater management mandates from the Federal and State Governments. All jurisdictions in Virginia are addressing these unfunded mandates with Stormwater Management Plans. Failure to address these requirements could result in fines and other penalties to the City and its taxpayers. The City will be initiating public information campaigns and other educational programs to assist residents and businesses with their responsibilities under the new requirements. The City will be adding personnel and equipment to clean the streets of debris more regularly. We will also need to regularly clean our storm drainage systems. The City will also initiate large construction jobs to repair some of the storm drain system. These new costs could exceed \$500,000 per year beginning in 2008.

In the coming budget, general tax revenues will need to pay to get the program started. City staff will be investigating a stormwater management charge to property owners in the coming year. Properties with more rooftop and pavement area would pay a greater proportional share of the costs than many residential properties with yards where rainwater can be absorbed into the ground. If a property generates more run-off, it would pay a proportionately higher share than a property with less run-off. As mentioned, City staff will be exploring the best way to pay these new expenses in the coming year.

Further information will be provided as it becomes available. For now, the City Manager is preparing the upcoming City budget anticipating \$300,000 in new stormwater management costs. It is likely that this figure grows to \$500,000 by Fiscal Year 2010. Questions about stormwater management issues are best directed to the Public Works and Engineering Department at 520-9334.

City to Sell Playgrounds to Generate Funds

The City and the School Division developed a Master Plan for park and athletic facilities in 2005-06. The Master Plan identified over \$10 million in facility upgrades, replacements and improvements. While the City's Capital Improvement Program and budget have begun to address some of these needs, additional revenue beyond the budget could help to improve many of our recreational facilities. City Council recently decided to consolidate these improvement efforts on the larger, more used facilities. In an effort to generate funds, City Council will be taking proposals to purchase less used playgrounds for redevelopment as residential lots.

The City is proposing to sell the Floral Avenue Playground, the Wakefield Avenue Playground and the Edinborough Playground for residential development. City staff has also identified vacant City property known as Court Street near the intersection of West Ellerslie and Lake Avenues. These four properties will be offered for sale to the general public in the Spring of 2008. Funds from the sale of these properties will be used to upgrade park equipment and facilities in other locations. Some of the funds will be used for our new Appamatuck Park and Flora Hill Park in the southern neighborhoods and White Bank Park and Fort Clifton Park in the northern neighborhoods. While City Council would rather not eliminate the playgrounds from the City's operating inventory, the large costs to upgrade and repair these and our other facilities necessitate the property sales. Even with the sale of these properties, additional funding in our budgets will also need to be identified to meet other upgrade needs in our existing parks.

For information about the Master Plan or any of our parks and recreation facilities, please contact the Department of Recreation and Parks at 520-9224.

Legacy Garden Dedication this Arbor Day

The City of Colonial Heights and the Colonial Heights Beautification Committee have been developing a Legacy Garden and City Welcome Site at the corner of Washington Avenue and the Boulevard. The Beautification Committee sold commemorative bricks as part of the Legacy Garden project. The overall project will be dedicated this Arbor Day, Friday, April 25th at 10:00 a.m. on the site. Everyone is encouraged to celebrate the planting of the Arbor Day Tree and the dedication of the City's Legacy Garden Entrance Site. A reception will follow the ceremony on the grounds of the City's Violet Bank Museum.

Special thanks go to members of the Colonial Heights Foundation, the City's Beautification Committee and all residents and businesses that bought bricks as part of the Legacy Garden Memorial.