

# The City FOCUS

A Report to the Citizens of the City of Colonial Heights

## 2005 Year In Review

### City Council Adopts Goals

City Council finalized its long and short term goals during a Planning Retreat held in January. Council created 7 priorities as part of 17 overall goals. These goals will direct the City Manager and staff in the coming months and years. City Council priorities are as follows:

#### Long Term Priorities:

1. Establish a viable business retention and commercial/retail development plan.
2. Change the organizational culture so that the City has team work and motivated, top quality employees capable of doing more.
3. Clean up and maintain City property.

#### Short Term Priorities:

1. Develop a strategy that assures a timely, planned, cost effective, "best value" approach to improving infrastructure repair and capital projects.
2. Develop a system that ensures that there is communication regarding citizen complaint resolution.
3. Sell the property behind Wal-Mart to generate funds for a special project.
4. Pursue additional steps for neighborhood revitalization to include Council members, City staff and citizens.

City Council would like to see these priorities accomplished over the next two years. The Council also has 10 other long and short term goals that address community objectives like Boulevard Revitalization, the advancement of the City's educational facilities, additional green spaces for recreation, beautification and tourism. Staff will be periodically reporting to City Council on the progress in each of these priority areas. Citizens wanting to gain more information on the progress of any of these goals should contact our City Manager, Rick Anzolut, during regular business hours at 520-9265.

### City Receives \$750,000 in Grants During 2005

City staff brought in \$750,000 of outside grant money into the City's budget during 2005. This impressive showing is a result of some very active staff work in the City departments. Headlining this exceptional performance is the Fire Department tapping state and federal sources for almost \$350,000 from the Federal Department of Homeland Security and the State Department of Fire Programs. Fire staff will obtain a great deal of additional training and equipment to assist with the City's response to natural and man-made disasters. Of particular note is the placement of Autopulse units in each of our ambulances that will greatly enhance the lifesaving capabilities of our medical crews.

The City received a Community Development Block Grant for over \$90,000 for housing improvement. The City will use these Federal Block Grant Funds to assist with housing rehabilitation for lower income residents and senior citizens in the Violet Bank and Shepherd Stadium neighborhoods.

The Cameron Foundation was particularly generous to the City of Colonial Heights providing grant funds for the After School Program sponsored by the Office on Youth and to install a fire suppression system at the Violet Bank Museum. The City will be better able to host valuable historical collections and meet its overall tourism objectives through this enhancement to the museum.

Another grant was obtained to assist the Police Department in its emergency response capabilities. The City acquired and outfitted a command center van to enhance our response to critical incidents. The City Sheriff's Office was successful in obtaining additional equipment with other grant funds. Other youth and public maintenance initiatives were also enhanced with grant funding.

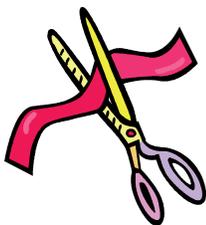
City staff remains committed to pursuing grant opportunities. If any citizen becomes aware of such an opportunity, please do not hesitate to contact the City Manager's Office.

## **City Moves on Capital Improvements**

During 2005, the City completed or initiated some major capital projects to benefit all of our citizens. In May, members of City Council cut the ribbon on the Pickwick Avenue Improvement Project. This streetscape project revitalized an historic commercial center of our City and greatly beautified some valuable commercial space. During the year, the City also completed the Library Expansion Project greatly increasing the size of this very popular facility. The public is invited to the grand reopening ceremony on Sunday, March 5th, at 2:00 p.m. Colonial Heights has one of the busiest libraries in the State demonstrating the value of its services.

City Council also formally initiated what is called the Bruce Avenue Storm Drainage Project. This \$3.5 million project will fix a large number of drainage problems in the southwest quadrant of our City. This project will not only improve these neighborhoods, but it is expected to have a significant effect on property values. New streets, curb and gutter will also be included. The Council also initiated yet another Fifth Lane Improvement Project at the north end of the Boulevard. The City will receive \$150,000 of transportation revenue sharing funds toward adding the center turn lane on the north end of the Boulevard just inside the City limits. This \$450,000 project will greatly improve safety for the residents and businesses in the area.

City staff also completed a number of smaller capital improvements throughout the City. Lynchburg Avenue was completely reconstructed at both ends to improve safety and traffic flows around the middle school. The City replaced 7,300 feet of water line costing over \$500,000 in 2005 improving water volumes and eliminating leaks throughout our City. If any citizens have questions on these capital improvement projects, please contact Mike Nannery in the City Engineer's Office at 520-9334.



## **Planning for the City's Future**

During 2005, City Council initiated several significant planning programs that will lead to greater health and economic stability in the City of Colonial Heights. The Council adopted a Neighborhood Improvement Strategy that divides the City into nine neighborhoods for planning and improvement programs. City staff is now directed on how to approach each neighborhood in an effort to improve the vitality and quality of life for our residents. As part of this strategy, City Council conducted two "walkabouts" in the Violet Bank and Shepherd Stadium neighborhoods to familiarize themselves with the housing and property maintenance issues, as well as capital and neighborhood improvement needs. The City also adopted Boulevard Overlay District Guidelines to assist with the revitalization and increased commercial appeal along the Boulevard. The roadway is now divided into six sub-areas, each with their own unique characteristics. The purpose of the district is to make the Boulevard a more appealing place to shop and work.

## **City Buys C.H. Baptist Church**

Of major importance for the future of our City was the acquisition of the Colonial Heights Baptist Church. City Council considers this five-acre parcel to be very important to the economic viability of the southern end of the City. While no decisions on the property's reuse have been made yet, the City now controls the future of the property and can make decisions based on what is determined by our City to be best. The public will be invited to participate in these reuse decisions. It is anticipated that those planning efforts will not begin until 2007 since the congregation has a 30-month lease to continue to use the property for worship services and other programs. If any citizen is interested in commenting on the City's future plans, please contact George Schanzenbacher in the City Planning Office at 520-9275.



## **Small Things Make Our City Better**

The City did a number of things that may not make the headlines, but show our efforts to improve the quality of life in Colonial Heights. City Council is particularly proud of its efforts to improve handicap accessibility to our City's buildings and functions. In 2005, all public buildings were made handicap accessible through the installation of automatic doors. This matter was presented to the City by a group of school children, and City Council responded to the need. The City also performed a number of concrete improvements, especially at the City Courthouse, to make wheelchair accessibility easier. The Council also established an Ambulance Fare Care Program for individual senior citizens to reduce the cost for ambulance services.

City Council also looked toward certain nuisance items in the taxation and billing of our citizens in an attempt to improve those areas. The Council has created a permanent City sticker for the windshield to make the annual renewal easier. Citizens will no longer need to remove this sticker on a yearly basis and replace it with a new one. In addition, Council eliminated the small nuisance bills for personal property taxes. If the vehicle value is so low that its personal property bill is \$5.00 or less, the owner no longer receives that bill.

The City has also leased space on a water tower to a cellular telephone operator generating an additional \$23,000 in rent per year. In that same arena, City staff identified a new state contract for telephone services that is expected to save the City almost \$50,000 per year. These two communication related initiatives go a long way toward increasing revenue to cover increased costs in the City's operations without asking for new tax dollars. If any citizen has suggestions on improving City operations, please contact our City Manager, Rick Anzolut, in his office at 520-9265.



## **Schools Keep High Standards**

The City of Colonial Heights is very proud of its school system and commends the School Board and the Superintendent of Schools for maintaining our high educational standards. In 2005, all of our City schools were reaccredited. This process assures that our teaching methods and the accomplishments of our students maintain the highest state standards. In addition, each of our City schools attained the required Average Yearly Performance which is now a federal mandate in the No Child Left Behind Program. Colonial Heights was the only school system in the regional area to attain this standard in all of its schools. The School Board also completed planning for the expansion of our elementary schools so our children have adequate space in which to learn. The School Board and City Council are now discussing a capital improvement plan to make these school expansions a reality. The Colonials also enjoyed numerous successes in athletics and extra-curricular activities. Our school system continues to be the strongest in our region. The Superintendent of Schools welcomes comments from citizens on the future of education in our City.

## **Boulevard Improvement Grants Awarded**

City Council's commitment to revitalization and improvement of the Boulevard made substantial progress in 2005. Ten projects were completed from Phase I, and almost \$48,000 was awarded to the participating businesses. The City initiated Phase II of the grant program and has approved over \$76,000 in grant funds. George Schanzenbacher is currently working with businesses that want to apply for our Phase III Program. Anyone interested should contact him in the Planning Office at 520-9275.

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### **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 with soy ink.*



## New City Attorney

City Council completed the recruitment of a City Attorney in 2005. Hugh P. Fisher, III, known as "Chip", started work for the City recently. Mr. Fisher comes to Colonial Heights after 18 years with Stafford County near Fredericksburg. He is an experienced local government attorney that will greatly enhance the performance of City staff. Mr. Fisher will be involved in numerous activities including neighborhood property maintenance enforcement and the establishment of ordinances and policies that will make our City better. Citizens are invited to meet Mr. Fisher in City Hall during regular business hours.



## Upcoming Events

Formal Dedication Ceremony of the newly expanded Colonial Heights Public Library  
Sunday, March 5, 2006, at 2:00 p.m.

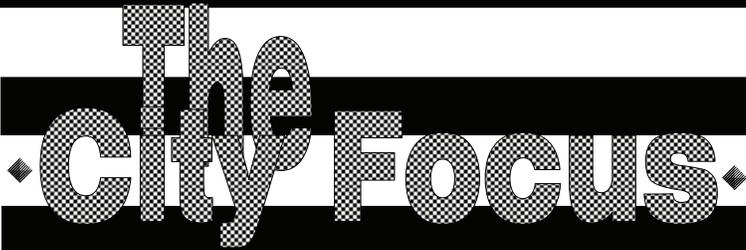
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City Manager's FY 07 Budget Presentation  
Tuesday, March 28, 2006, at 5:30 p.m. in City Council Chambers.

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Annual Fort Clifton Arts and Crafts Festival  
(Mother's Day Weekend) Saturday, May 13, from 10:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. and on Sunday, May 14, from 12:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m.

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