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August 26, 2009

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District improvement funds

Learn how the supervisors spent your district's dollars
By Richard Foster CONTRIBUTING WRITER



Lisa Billings/Chesterfield Observer Uncle Sam, aka Tommy Sammons, plays the harmonica during the Bensley community's centennial celebration last weekend. District improvement funds helped pay for the event.

program is that because we do not have to pay for those things ourselves, the money we bring in we can give right back to local charities like the YMCA, the YWCA, Richmond Friends of the Homeless and the Chesterfield Christmas Mother."

Under the district improvement program, each county supervisor is allocated \$48,500 per year for his or her district, and what doesn't get spent carries over into the next year. However, there's discussion about reducing the annual allocation because of the amount left over each year, according to Midlothian Supervisor Dan Gecker and Allan Carmody, the county's budget and management director. It's also possible that previously unallocated funds could go to the general fund instead of carrying over year to year.

Out of a pool of \$535,482 in available district improvement funds, county supervisors spent just \$90,573 last fiscal year, leaving nearly \$445,000 to carry over into FY10. The amount spent last year went largely to adding streetlights in county neighborhoods and funding events such as after-prom parties for high school students and community fairs.

If you're a county taxpayer who attends the 28th Annual Midlothian Village Day Festival and Craft Fair on Oct. 17, you can thank yourself for helping to put on the event.

Run by the Midlothian Junior Women's Club, the popular fall festival at Midlothian Middle School will be underwritten by a \$4,525 grant from the county's district improvement program, which funds community projects and events like the festival. The county money will pay for everything from the stage for the festival's entertainers to the moon bounce for the kiddies, not to mention the dumpsters, the rented tables and chairs for the food vendors and the off-duty police officers to work security.

"We could not run the festival without it," Mary Eovino, the event chairperson, says of the county district improvement program. "It's a great thing. And what is so great about this



Gecker

"I can't think of anybody who has called me in the last year looking for district improvement funds," says Gecker. But he believes that's not because groups in the county aren't aware of the funds - he just thinks groups tend to contact the county administration rather than their supervisors.

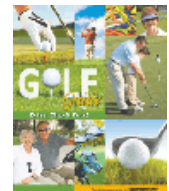
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Jaeckle

The district improvement program funds community projects in five categories: eligible public events such as community festivals and parades; funding for public school and university programs; public improvements to public land; the purchase of property or equipment for the county government; and contributions to organizations to which the county may legally make donations.

Groups interested in applying for district improvement funds fill out a brief application. Generally, once an application is reviewed and approved by county staff, it is forwarded to the board of supervisors. Board members usually approve district fund expenditures as part of the consent agenda during their business meetings. (Unlike district funds in other localities, the funds are not discretionary; any expenditures require majority approval from the board.)

At least one recipient thinks the county should do a better job of letting community groups know that the money is out there, though. And she also says that the county should spend district improvement funds as intended, rather than keeping the funds in the bank or rolling them into the general fund.

"It's really important that people know the money is out there [and available]. I know [county] money has to be allocated for lots of other things, but to give people a sense of community is very important," says Angie McDaniel, chairperson of the annual Chester Kiwanis Christmas Parade, which is always held on the second Sunday of December and usually draws around 5,000 people. About 70 community groups, from local scout troops and school marching bands to local businesses, big and small, usually participate in the parade.

Last year, due to budget cutbacks at the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Chesterfield Police Department, the Chester Kiwanis were faced with having to pay a bill of around \$5,000 for road closures and traffic safety, and that would probably have meant the end of the parade, McDaniel says. But after making a successful application to the district improvement fund with the help of county Supervisor Dorothy Jaeckle, the parade went on as planned with full funding.

"This is one of the few free events that the Chester community can still count on, but we wouldn't be able to do it if the county didn't help out," McDaniel says. "Without that money, it would put a real end to what we're doing. The Kiwanis, we raise funds to provide scholarships, and to put something on like this parade for the community, we would have to take money out of the money we raised [for scholarships]."

In addition to public events like the Chester Christmas parade or Midlothian Village Day, the district improvement program has also funded necessary countywide infrastructure improvements. For instance, in Gecker's district, the Ramsgate neighborhood received \$2,420 to correct a problem with excess algae in a pond. ("They say the pond is clear now," Gecker reports happily.) And collectively, the five supervisors approved more than \$36,000 for adding strategically placed streetlights in neighborhoods that applied countywide.

The River's Bend neighborhood in the Bermuda District was one of those that received streetlights. "We had some elderly folks who were quite concerned about the fact that it was so dark over there, and we have some issues periodically where people are breaking into cars out in the driveways," says Nancy Huntington, who applied for the lights when she was community property manager for River's Bend. "The people over there are thrilled to have the lights."

Huntington was surprised to hear the supervisors had much more money to spend on district improvements than they used. If she had known that, she said, she would have also applied for additional streetlights that are still needed in her neighborhood. She had assumed after talking to county employees about the tight budget that the funds weren't there, so she hadn't tried to get everything her neighborhood needed. After all, one of the streetlights in her community cost more than \$1,750 to install because of needing to run new underground electrical lines to

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a distant power supply.

"Trust me," she says. "I'm going to be calling down to the county environmental department and asking them to start the project back up."

District improvement fund balances

District	FY09 beginning balance	FY09 ending balance*
Bermuda	\$64,711	\$41,120
Clover Hill	\$203,243	\$195,011
Dale	\$70,747	\$47,762
Matoaca	\$74,935	\$52,500
Midlothian	\$121,845	\$108,513

*As of June 30, 2009

FY09 district improvement fund expenditures*

Bermuda	
Description	Amount
Streetlight installation: Winfree/West Hundred Road.....	\$164.45
Streetlight installation: Villas Drive in River's Bend.....	\$1,763.40
Streetlight installation: Villas Court in River's Bend.....	\$131.44
Streetlight installation: Rycliff Avenue in Rayon Park.....	\$1,834.28
Streetlight installation: Reymet Road.....	\$293.28
Streetlight installation: Old Happy Hill Road.....	\$270.96
Streetlight installation: Morrisdale subdivision.....	\$30.43
Streetlight installation: Kingston Avenue.....	\$854.59
Streetlight installation: Kingsland Road.....	\$221.71
Streetlight installation: Hillandale subdivision.....	\$225.76
Streetlight installation: Fan Court subdivision.....	\$496.64
Streetlight installation: Falling Creek Hills subdivision.....	\$23.14
Streetlight installation: Dodomeade/Winfree.....	\$555.19
Streetlight installation: Crooked Branch Terrace.....	\$974.63
Streetlight installation: Crescent Park.....	\$429.32
Streetlight installation: Brynmore Drive.....	\$974.63
Post-prom celebrations.....	\$1,800.00
Elizabeth Scott Elementary School press box and scoreboard.....	
	\$4,200.00
Chesterfield TRIAD Seniors program.....	
	\$255.00
Chester Kiwanis Club parade traffic control.....	
	\$4,822.00
Bensley Village 100th anniversary publicity, rental and staffing	

costs.....	\$3,000.00
Bensley Community Building rental for Veteran's Day ceremony at Bensley Park	\$270.00
Total	
Bermuda.....	
\$23,590.85	
Clover Hill	
Description Amount	
Streetlight installation: Southport Business Park.....	\$68.06
Streetlight installation: Providence subdivision entrance.....	\$79.67
Streetlight installation: Penn Acres.....	\$54.91
Streetlight installation: Harbour Mill subdivision entrance.....	\$4,973.67
Post-prom celebrations.....	\$2,800.00
Chesterfield TRIAD Seniors program.....	\$255.00
Total Clover Hill.....	\$8,231.31
Dale	
Description Amount	
Streetlight installation: North Lake Hills subdivision.....	\$39.47
Streetlight installation: Kings Grove subdivision.....	\$1,431.27
Streetlight installation: Jessup Road/Jessup Drive.....	\$79.83
Streetlight installation: Jessup Road/Jessup Drive.....	\$1,502.64
Streetlight installation: Jessup Meadows subdivision.....	\$1,434.96
Streetlight installation: Jessup Farms subdivision.....	\$386.35
Streetlight installation: Drewry's Bluff subdivision.....	\$293.32
Streetlight installation: Drewry's Bluff subdivision.....	\$258.15
Streetlight installation: Drewry's Bluff subdivision.....	\$706.55
Streetlight installation: Dalebrook Drive.....	\$589.08
Streetlight installation: Conifer/Old Hopkins.....	\$1,259.83
Streetlight installation: Belfair subdivision.....	\$442.28
Streetlight installation: Bluffside Drive/Conifer Road intersection.....	\$688.10
Beulah Elementary School laptop and accessories.....	\$2,718.00
Post-prom celebrations.....	\$1,800.00
Portrait for Meadowdale Library.....	\$1,100.00
O.B. Gates Elementary School electronic equipment.....	\$6,000.00
L.C. Bird High School electronic equipment.....	\$2,000.00
Chesterfield TRIAD Seniors program.....	\$255.00
Total	

Dale.....	
\$22,984.83	
Matoaca	
Description Amount	
Streetlight installation:19711 Genito	
Road.....	\$576.60
Streetlight installation: Stonewood Manor	
subdivision.....	\$2,393.89
Streetlight installation: Shadowbrook Heights/Woodpecker	
Road.....	\$632.78
Streetlight installation: Shadowbrook Heights	
(Roselane).....	\$64.24
Streetlight installation: River Road	
Estates.....	\$129.33
Streetlight installation: Hickory Hill	
Estates.....	\$692.58
Streetlight installation: Genito	
Road.....	\$441.81
Streetlight installation: Forest View	
subdivision.....	\$760.40
Streetlight installation: Eagle Cove	
subdivision.....	\$1,733.33
Streetlight installation: Eagle Cove	
subdivision.....	\$1,278.45
Streetlight installation: Brandy Oaks	
subdivision.....	\$2,009.75
Streetlight installation: Augustus Wright	
tract.....	\$222.24
Streetlight installation: 4312 River	
Road.....	\$476.53
Virginia State University scholarship	
program.....	\$2,000.00
Post-prom	
celebrations.....	\$2,800.00
Matoaca High School varsity baseball field press	
box.....	\$2,000.00
Ettrick Elementary School Foster Grandparent	
program.....	\$2,766.00
Ettrick clean-up day refuse	
collection.....	\$450.00
Chesterfield TRIAD Seniors	
program.....	\$255.00
Alberta Smith Elementary School dedication	
plaque.....	\$752.00
Total	
Matoaca.....	
\$22,434.93	
Midlothian	
Description Amount	
Streetlight installation: Providence Green	
subdivision.....	\$549.91
Streetlight installation: Providence Court	
subdivision.....	\$549.91
Streetlight installation: Crestwood Farms	
subdivision.....	\$201.02
Streetlight installation: Crestwood Farms	
subdivision.....	\$396.84
Streetlight installation: Allecingie/Huguenot	
roads.....	\$134.33
Ramsgate storm-water pond vegetation	
control.....	\$2,420.00
Post-prom	
celebrations.....	\$2,300.00

Midlothian Village Day
Festival.....\$4,525.00
Greenfield Elementary School books for students at different reading
levels.....\$2,000.00
Chesterfield TRIAD Seniors
program.....\$255.00
Total
Midlothian.....
\$13,332.01
Total all
districts.....
\$90,573.93
**Expenditures made between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009*