

The City Focus

A Report to the Citizens of the City of Colonial Heights

2006 Year In Review



CITY COUNCIL ENDORSES MISSION, VISION AND VALUES STATEMENT



City Council re-adopted the City's Mission Statement recently:

"It shall be the intent of City Council to meet the needs of the citizens, ensure public safety, enhance recreational and cultural activities, support the school system, strengthen our commercial base to help ensure the future viability of the City, and strive for the highest quality of life for all of our citizens."

In January 2005 and 2006, planning retreats were held to further develop goals, objectives and the vision for our City. In February 2007, City Council revised these elements further and adopted Resolution Number 07-7 formalizing its commitments:

We are committed to eight central themes; quality education, thriving neighborhoods, maintenance of the "small town feeling", adequate infrastructure for current and future growth needs, continued safety, prosperous economic base, efficient and exemplary customer service from City departments, and a more pleasant aesthetic appearance of the City.

To review the whole Mission, Vision & Values Statement, please visit our website at www.colonialheights.com/CouncilsMission.htm.



HORTICULTURE PROGRAM STARTED



The Horticulture Division in the Department of Recreation and Parks was created this past year to maintain the 32 plots of land owned by the City of Colonial Heights. The City hired Wyatt Brooks as the Horticulturist on March 1, 2006. With input from the Mayor's Beautification Committee, the Horticulture Division has improved all 32 sites within a 9-month period. The City has also designed a Jamestown 2007 Anniversary Garden to be installed at Washington & Boulevard with native Virginia plants. A new entrance sign is also planned for this gateway to our City.



A YEAR OF NEW BEGINNINGS FOR THE COLONIAL HEIGHTS POLICE DEPARTMENT



The 2006 New Year ushered in many changes for the Colonial Heights Police Department, beginning with the retirement of its former chief in January. Jeffrey W. Faries was selected as the new Chief of Police from a nationwide pool of applicants. His 17 years of experience at various levels with the Colonial Heights Police Department, combined with his education and training at the FBI National Academy, contributed to his selection. City Manager Rick Anzolut was particularly impressed with Faries' handling of the department during the months he served as Interim Chief. "Jeff Faries showed the community, showed the department and showed me that he is the right man for the job," Anzolut said.

The department has experienced many positive changes in 2006. The total crime rate decreased by 8% when compared with statistics from 2005. Overall arrests increased by 30%, with DUI's increasing by 172% and drug arrests increasing 23%. Calls for service increased by 18% overall, with officers responding to in excess of 46,000 calls, a figure which reflects the growing demands on our police officers. Our dedicated and hard working officers are meeting those demands.

UPCOMING EVENTS IN OUR CITY

- ★ Daylight Savings Time Begins Early - March 11th
- ★ City Manager's Budget Presentation - March 27th in City Council Chambers - 5:30 p.m.
- ★ Annual Arbor Day Celebration - April 27th Colonial Heights City Courthouse - 10:00 a.m.
- ★ City Clean-up Day - April 28th Meet at the Senior Center - 8:00 a.m.
- ★ Fort Clifton Arts and Crafts Festival Mothers Day Weekend - May 12th & 13th

RENTAL INSPECTIONS AND HOUSING GRANTS IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOODS



In 2006, the City Council approved an ordinance authorizing a Rental Inspection Program in the Shepherd Stadium and Violet Bank-Flora Hill neighborhoods. This program will allow the City to detect interior and exterior housing deficiencies and seek corrective measures from the landlord. The first step in the process is for owners of rental property to register properties in the two districts with the City's Building Inspections Office.

The actual inspection process requires that the inspectors arrange a time to meet at the property to carry out the inspection. A checklist has been prepared to ensure a consistent, systematic inspection of each rental property. Properties that pass the inspection will be given a four-year certificate. Properties that have deficiencies will be required to repair those deficiencies before a certificate is issued. It is expected that it will take most of 2007 to complete the nearly 800 initial inspections. We hope this will assist in the City's overall neighborhood improvement activities.

2006 was the second year that the City has received the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The 2006 entitlement was \$90,409. The full amount is being used to continue the Emergency Home Repair Program in the Violet Bank-Flora Hill and Shepherd Stadium neighborhoods.

To-date, sixteen households have been served with the 2006 allocation. Completed repairs include plumbing (4); electrical (4); roofing (6); heating and cooling (4); accessibility improvements (3); and carpentry (1). Nine additional carpentry jobs have been awarded.

By the end of June 2007, another eight low to moderate income households with structural and accessibility issues will have been served with 2006 funds. The City is expected to receive the CDBG grant again in 2007. The amount of the 2007 allocation has yet to be released by HUD.



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.

NEW LIBRARY OPENS



The newly renovated and expanded Colonial Heights Public Library has been serving over 4,000 residents each week, and circulating an average of 26,000 titles each month since opening in March 2006.

"Circulation has increased 19%, and if these figures continue, the library will continue to be one of the top five busiest public libraries among Virginia's 93 library systems," according to Bruce Hansen, the library's director.

The new facility has a state-of-the art computer center used by an average of 2,873 residents each month. It also has a wireless network that supports high-speed access to the internet from anywhere in the library, including its meeting rooms and the Quiet Room.

The library's three meeting rooms are being used by over 70 groups each month. Residents interested in learning more about the availability of these rooms for non-profit purposes may contact Barbara Woods at 520-9384.

"The library has something to offer any resident walking through its doors. We certainly have books, but we also have thousands of movies, audio books and educational software packages," Hansen said.

"We also take a great deal of pride in how fast we can respond to a resident's book request, and our goal is to deliver a title in less than two weeks of the request." Residents can submit their requests for new titles at the library or online at www.colonial-heights.com/Library.htm.



COOPERATION ON NEW WING AT TUSSING ELEMENTARY



City Council and the School Board expanded its long standing funding agreement last year to provide for capital improvements in our schools. As many citizens know, the School Board has studied its effective square footage and determined the need for additional space at each of the City's three elementary schools. City Council and the School Board agreed to a new capital funding agreement in 2006. The City provided seed money to pay some of the bond issue expenses, and the School Board identified some of its funds toward the rest of the bond issue. This partnership will produce the ability to pay for \$7.5 million in bonds to add a new wing at Tussing, the City's largest and most crowded elementary school. The School Board has plans to identify additional moneys in its local funding and request a City Council match in 2009 to expand both the North and Lakeview elementary schools.



CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS MOVE FORWARD



The new northbound I-95 Ramp off westbound Temple Avenue begins construction in March. This project will be administered by the VDOT and should be completed in late Spring 2008. The \$7,300,000 project has \$560,000 of City money assisting in its funding. This project should reduce 60% of the left turn volume at the existing Temple Avenue entrance ramps.

The City completed the design of the Chesterfield Approach Fifth Lane Widening Project which adds a center turn lane from Ash to Moore Avenues on the Boulevard. This project will improve the safety of turning motorists along this stretch of the Boulevard and assist residents and businesses with access. All of the proposed widening is slated to take place along the western side of the Boulevard affecting only those properties. Accompanying this project will be the extension of the storm drainage system, the addition of sidewalks, and installation of ornamental lighting similar to that on the south end of the Boulevard. Many thanks go out to the property owners adjacent to the construction for their cooperation in granting easements for the improvements. Once the VDOT grants its approval and the utility poles are moved, the project will be advertised for construction. The City qualified for a \$158,000 grant from VDOT as part of the project funding.

The long awaited Phase I of the Bruce Avenue Regional Drainage and Road Improvement Project was also completed and advertised for construction bids. Richard Crowder Construction was awarded the \$947,000 contract. This project will involve construction of new storm drainage and replacement of existing storm drainage pipe and inlets, replacement of existing sanitary sewer mains and laterals, relocation of water mains, replacement of existing curb and gutter, driveway entrances, and new asphalt pavement. The project will begin on Roanoke Avenue, cross the Priority Car Center site, head west along Wright Avenue, south down Battery Place, and finally back eastward on Windsor Avenue. The Phase II portion of the project should be bid later this year.

City Council and the School Board also took final delivery of the Recreation and Athletic Facilities Master Plan last year. This comprehensive document will serve as a road map to upgrade and expand parks, playgrounds and athletic facilities for the next 20 years. City Council allocated \$200,000 as a first step toward capital upgrades, mostly for the White Bank and Fort Clifton parks. Council is also considering funds for new baseball and soccer fields.

NEW ORGANIZATIONS FORMED IN 2006

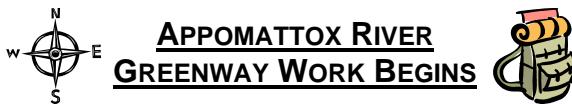
Two new organizations started last year that should help our City in many ways. The Colonial Heights Foundation was formed to advance appearance initiatives and meet the needs of the City's youth through charitable contributions. The non-profit Foundation will be headed by former Mayor Chris Kollman, who is well known for his commitment toward beautifying our City and for addressing the needs of our young people. The Foundation will offer expanded opportunities for charitable donations and bequests from our citizens and businesses. City-wide beautification projects and youth programs are the Foundation's objectives. Members of the Foundation include Chris Kollman, JoAn Jones, Lloyd Goddard, Joe Tyler, Tom Agee, Phil Heartwell and David Duda.

The Petersburg Area Regional Tourism Corporation was also formed in 2006. This regional initiative brings six localities together to expand tourism programs and improve economic activity in the regional area. Tourist dollars are expected to go a long way toward improving local revenues thereby helping to stabilize tax rates. Colonial Heights, Hopewell and Petersburg along with the Counties of Chesterfield, Dinwiddie and Prince George have members on the Corporation's Board of Directors. Our City Manager, Rick Anzolut, is serving as the non-profit corporation's first President.

TAX RATES CUT AND STICKERS ELIMINATED

City Council is proud of its efforts to reduce tax rates and save citizens the nuisance of removing City license stickers from their windshields. In 2006, Council cut the real estate tax rate from \$1.20 to \$1.18 in an effort to offset some of the rising tax assessments in our City. Colonial Heights is fortunate to have a solid real estate market with increasing property values. Council is interested in keeping our City programs and services moving forward while controlling the financial demands on property owners. The City also eliminated the need to replace the City windshield sticker on your car every year. In 2006, we sold our first "permanent" decal that does not need to be scraped-off this year. Vehicle owners will need to renew the sticker this year to legally operate a vehicle on our streets, but the nuisance of replacing it each year is gone. Council determined that displaying a sticker has other advantages for our trash convenience center and our schools, so the sticker itself must still be displayed.

In another "tax-payer friendly" move, City Council expanded the program of real estate tax relief to the elderly and disabled last year. The senior members of our City are able to defer more of their real estate tax, allowing many of them to keep up with inflation on a fixed income. If you want more information on this program, contact the Commissioner of Revenue at 520-9280.



The Appomattox River Greenway Steering Committee was formed last year. They completed the development of a plan that was accepted by City Council in November. The plan proposes the creation of a paved, ten foot wide trail as part of an overall greenway for a section of the Appomattox River from the Animal Shelter south to the western City line (a two-mile corridor). The Greenway Plan has many amenities, including a river trail, boat launch, fishing pier, recreation facilities and other elements that would both protect the area and allow residents to fully enjoy walking, bicycling or jogging along the river or launching a small boat or canoe.

To begin the implementation process, City staff has completed two grant applications and has met with private property owners and secured commitments for easements and financial assistance for the project. The Committee will be providing residents and businesses with additional information on the plan and how you can assist in its implementation. For more information on how you can help, call the Planning Office at 520-9297.

BOULEVARD REVITALIZATION CONTINUES

In September, the City Council appropriated an additional \$50,000 for matching funds grants to continue with Phase IV of the program. The Boulevard Revitalization Steering Committee reviewed the new applications and recommended that 15 be approved. The City Council accepted the recommendation of the Committee and authorized the City Manager to enter into contracts with those approved.

The Boulevard Matching Funds Grant Program to-date has funded 38 projects with \$163,771 in City funds. Another six are still being completed. Total public and private investment on the completed projects is \$432,096.

Implementation of the new projects for 2007 will raise the total approved projects to 59 in just over two years. The City will have invested approximately \$240,000. The total private investment is expected to exceed this by more than three times. Projects include new signage, building improvements, driveways and parking areas and new landscaping. We are really beginning to see a difference in the appearance along the Boulevard.



**City of Colonial Heights
Office of the City Manager
Post Office Box 3401
Colonial Heights, Virginia 23834-9001
www.colonial-heights.com**

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Inside This Issue:

- City Council Endorses Mission, Vision & Values Statement
- Horticulture Program Started
- A Year of New Beginnings for the Colonial Heights Police Department
- Upcoming Events in Our City
- Rental Inspections & Housing Grants Improve Neighborhoods
- New Library Opens
- Cooperation on New Wing at Tussing Elementary
- Capital Improvement Projects Move Forward
- New Organizations Formed in 2006
- Tax Rates Cut and Stickers Eliminated
- Appomattox River Greenway Work Begins
- Boulevard Revitalization Continues