

*The following article was submitted to the Caroline Progress for its January 6 edition by Caroline Chairman Maxie Rozell.*

The new year provides an opportunity to reflect back on the accomplishments and challenges of the past twelve months. Like most localities, Caroline County faced difficult times in 2010 as the stagnant economy placed significant stress on our budget. Given the circumstances, perhaps the County's most significant accomplishment in 2010 was to balance its budget without a tax increase.

Despite the constraints, however, I believe the County achieved some significant accomplishments during 2010.

### **Economic Development & Tourism**

2010 was a landmark year with the announcement that healthcare services and information technology giant McKesson is coming to Caroline. The recruitment represents the largest private investment by square footage announced in Virginia in 2010 based on Virginia Economic Development Partnership criteria. The Fortune 14 company will invest \$150 million in Caroline, hire at least 150 new employees and generate approximately \$500,000 in new revenue for the County annually. Construction of the 340,000 distribution center in Carmel Church is underway with a 2012 opening planned.

The Caroline County Visitor Center welcomed its 20,000<sup>th</sup> visitor in December, a little over two years after opening its doors.

### **Schools**

Additional capital projects were approved for the school system in 2010 using remaining funds from previous borrowings. Funds were provided for security improvements to Bowling Green Elementary, Bowling Green Primary, Madison Elementary, Caroline Middle and Caroline High School, roof and HVAC replacement at the Bowling Green Elementary Annex and exterior door replacements at Caroline High.

In calendar year 2010, Caroline County contributed a total of \$14.6 million to the schools in operational funding and debt service payments.

### **Planning**

The County completed the development of a Geographic Information System (GIS) in 2010. The system, which will be available in early 2011, contains a number of geographic data layers (such as roads, buildings, topography, tax parcel boundaries, etc.) derived from aerial photography.

In August, a mixed use, transit oriented development was approved in Carmel Church that will include a train station, retail/commercial development, recreational uses, light industry, parks and many types of residential

development. The Carmel Church Station Project holds the promise of many exciting economic development opportunities for the County for years to come. With the completion of the 2010 census, the Board is forming a citizen's committee to make recommendations for a federally mandated redistricting in 2011.

### **Fire & Rescue**

In 2010 the County was able to significantly bolster its fire & rescue career staffing by securing a SAFER grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. SAFER grant funding enabled the County to fill six previously frozen full-time Firefighter/Medic and Firefighter/EMT positions. This translates to better service to the public by increasing staffing levels and coverage throughout the County. The additional staffing provides 24/7 coverage at Bowling Green Rescue, Ladysmith Rescue and Frog Level Fire/Rescue.

To promote the recruitment and retention of fire & rescue volunteers, the Board advanced a 50% reduction in the personal property tax assessment for one vehicle per active volunteer. A public hearing on this proposal will be held in January.

### **Public Works**

In September, the Board approved funding for a new Dawn library branch on Route 301 near the intersection with Route 30. The new state of the art building will open in 2011.

Construction on the Washington Rochambeau Victory Park in Bowling Green is expected to begin in early 2011. The partnership between the County and the Town of Bowling Green, funded in large part by federal TEA 21 money, will improve the area between the old and new courthouses for pedestrians.

### **Utilities**

In October, the Board approved a \$16.3 million expansion to the County's wastewater treatment plant to provide needed capacity for residential and commercial growth. The expansion, which will increase capacity to 1.5 million gallons per day, is expected to take up to two years to complete.

The Board also approved extending a County waterline along Route 652 to Caroline Pines. The existing 381 households in the subdivision will become new County customers. Caroline Pines residents will receive badly needed potable water and the County's utility fund will get a revenue boost from the expanded customer base.

The County has applied for \$250,000 in WQIF funds from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation for a second phase of the Dawn Wastewater Project. If successful, grant proceeds will be combined with

\$300,000 in federal STAG dollars to connect 35 to 50 additional homes to the Dawn wastewater treatment plant.

**Permanent County Sticker**

The Board amended the County Code last year to allow the Treasurer to begin selling permanent decals ("County stickers") in 2011. Once permanent decals have been sold for all vehicles for calendar year 2011, no additional decal will be required unless a new or used vehicle is purchased. A license registration fee will be assessed annually on all motor vehicles with a situs of Caroline County thereafter by the Commissioner of the Revenue to replace the revenue from the decals.

Thank you again for the opportunity to reflect on the successes of the County in 2010 on behalf of the Board of Supervisors. I am confident that Caroline will continue to prosper in 2011 as we work together to overcome the challenges that face us.

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Chairman  
Caroline County Board of Supervisors