

# Spotsy board opposes bypass

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BY JEFF BRANSCOME

The new conservative majority on the Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors is already making an impact.

At their first meeting of the year Tuesday night, Supervisors Ann Heidig, Paul Trampe, Timothy McLaughlin and David Ross—who were elected in November—approved several measures that others on the seven-member board opposed.

They included:

A resolution opposing a proposed toll road connecting Interstate 95 to Gordon Road in Spotsylvania.

A vote in support of a constitutional amendment to curtail government use of eminent domain powers. The amendment passed once already, in the 2011 General Assembly session. Under state law, it would have to pass again in this year's session, and then go to the ballot for voters in November. Spotsylvania supervisors last year approved a resolution opposing the amendment.

An amendment to the county's bylaws saying the board can remove appointees to boards, commissions and committees at any time, with or without cause. Previously, appointees could not be removed until their terms expired.

Supervisor Gary Skinner said he's concerned the amendment will discourage residents from joining committees. "These people have to be at ease knowing they can give an honest opinion without any retribution."

Supervisors Benjamin Pitts and Skinner voted against the toll road and eminent domain resolutions, and Skinner alone voted against the bylaw change. Veteran Supervisor Emmitt Marshall voted with the majority on all three issues.

The Board of Supervisors did unanimously elect Heidig as chairwoman and Trampe as vice chair.

Pitts, who is in his 13th year on the board, said he can't remember a time when newly elected supervisors had served in those posts.

Heidig said she thinks she'll pick it up quickly, noting she's had to run meetings on other boards in the past. As chairwoman, she will preside over meetings and work with the county administrator to set meeting agendas. "Fortunately, I have a good parliamentarian and a good county administrator and I can turn to staff and get help," she said.

Supervisors spent a lot of time at last night's meeting discussing the resolution against the toll road. The \$300 million interchange would bypass heavily congested parts of State Route 3 around Central Park and Spotsylvania Towne Centre.

The supervisors' resolution states that they do not support moving forward on the connector road, but will continue to support the Virginia Department of Transportation in finding other solutions to State Route 3 traffic problems.

County Administrator Doug Barnes said the Commonwealth Transportation Board currently has \$14.7 million allocated for the project. Stafford County Supervisor Cord Sterling, who serves on the CTB, asked Spotsylvania to take a position on the toll road, Barnes said. He said Sterling didn't want to spend more money on the road if the hosting locality doesn't support it.

Pitts called the resolution shortsighted. "I think it will put an end to relieving the traffic congestion on Route 3. I think the [\$14.7 million] that would've gone to address those traffic needs will go somewhere else."

Ross, whose opposition to the toll road was a major part of his election campaign, said the county's resolution will save taxpayer money. Reasons for supervisors' opposition include the roadway's potential impacts on businesses, property owners and the environment, based on the resolution.

In other business, supervisors agreed to seek input from the county's Fire and Rescue Commission on how to provide 24/7 coverage.

Supervisors in November unanimously voted to hire 50 people—and convert two part-time jobs to full time—at a cost of about \$5.5 million. The goal was to provide round-the-clock coverage from fire and rescue stations that sometimes aren't staffed. New supervisors have said there may be less-costly options.

Jeff Branscome: 540/374-5402

[jbranscome@freelancestar.com](mailto:jbranscome@freelancestar.com)