

4th District Update



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Dear Neighbors,

As we start a New Year, and I start a third term on City Council, please accept my thanks for all your support and encouragement over the past four years. Whatever success we have enjoyed has been because of your best wishes, advice and hard work for our city.

The New Year is going to bring new and serious challenges. Our economy, globally, nationally and locally, is suffering through some serious times, and it has a direct effect on our ability to deliver services in a careful, prudent manner.

The tight budget hits especially hard at some vulnerable members of our community. Many who have savings and investment accounts have seen the value of those accounts shrink. While that is bad news, it may open opportunities for more applicants to qualify for real estate tax exemptions. Please see the article inside for more information.

In addition, we are going to have to look hard at our tax rate this year. We have been fortunate over the past several years to lower our rate every year. We will be looking closely at Mayor Dwight Jones' first budget, but a rate cut this year may not be possible. State government cuts will put additional strain on local government services, especially schools. We are going to have to be creative to meet those needs.

In a different vein, we are planning for our second annual South of the James Market at Forest Hill Park. The 2009 market is scheduled for opening on May 2nd, a Saturday. Last year more than 35,000 came to the market, and it was judged successful by vendors and shoppers alike. (See article inside for details).

Finally, as we turn to a new year and a new beginning, I look forward to working with Mayor Jones and his team. As you may know, I have been honored by my colleagues by being selected as president of council for the next two years. I think we have a good team in place to provide careful financial oversight, safer streets and better schools. I know that all of us are tired of all the "drama" over the past years and look forward to getting down to work. I am especially gratified that Mayor Jones supports a strong role for regionalism. That is an area where I want to see Richmond take the lead, in planning and providing for enhanced transportation, public safety and public education.

I will continue to maintain my office in the Fourth District, because I believe it's important to the service we provide. Please feel free to contact me whenever I can help.

Thanks for all your help.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy".

Paid for by Kathy Graziano for City Council

Councilwoman Graziano

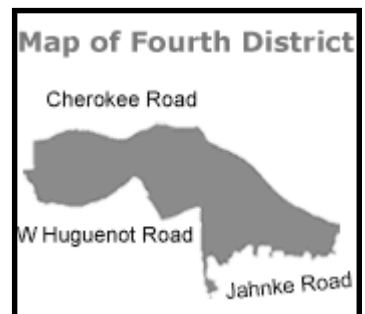


MARK YOUR CALENDAR NEXT DISTRICT MEETING

**Real Estate Assessments
and Tax Relief**

**February 11, 7:00 pm
St Luke Lutheran Church
7757 Chippenham Pkwy.**

*Please see back cover for
more information.*



THE SCOTT RPS REPORT

Happy New Year Fourth District!

First, an enormous thank you to all for providing me with the opportunity to serve you as the Richmond Public School Board's 4th District representative. The newly elected School Board began its 4-year journey on January 5th with a relatively smooth transition.

Some quick statistics on your newly seated board: of the nine members, we have eight women and one male serving; five members are newly elected to the board, with four returning incumbents; our newly elected members represent Districts 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8; our Chair is incumbent, Chandra Smith of the 6th District; our Vice-Chair is newcomer, Kimberly Gray of the 2nd District.

Since elections we have been preparing ourselves to handle the upcoming budget issues. In addition, we are moving the process along and are committed to hiring the very best superintendent talent to lead our public schools.

An update on the Open Enrollment process, an issue that carried over from the last board administration: The enrollment process will be conducted by lottery for new students. There will be preference given to families with siblings that are enrolled simultaneously at the same school. Students zoned for their neighborhood school will not have to enter the lottery.

Information on deadlines and additional details on the entire policy will be available shortly on the RPS website: www.richmond.k12.va.us or you can contact Marcia Hathaway, Pupil Personnel Services at (804) 780-7811. Applications are available through the schools, the school administration website above, or through the office of Council President Kathy Graziano.

And a special thanks to Kathy who has given me space in her newsletters for a quarterly update on our schools.

Until next issue,

Adria Graham Scott

PS: Don't forget that all our Fourth District schools are collecting and recycling newspaper and other papers. There's a collection site at each school.

2009 SOUTH OF THE JAMES MARKET

Preparations are well under way for a second successful season of the South of the James Market at Forest Hill Park. Market Manager Karen Atkinson plans even more of an emphasis on farm-raised or produced goods, organics and produce. She already has a solid list of vendors scheduled and is working on more.

Last year more than 35,000 people came to the market; most were from the city, but we had customers from all over the greater Richmond area. And vendors came from as far away as the Peninsula and Southside Virginia. It was THE place to go on Saturday mornings.

The first 2009 market day is scheduled for May 2, from 8-noon.

For information, Karen can be reached at 513-3100, or www.themarketumbrella@msn.com.

FOREST HILL STREET CLEANING

We all owe a debt of thanks to Sheriff C. T. Woody for his help in getting trash cleaned up along Forest Hill Avenue near Chippenham Parkway.

A cleanup crew of inmate workers was detailed by Sheriff Woody to clean up the trash and debris thrown out by thoughtless motorists. The workers did a great job; we look forward to seeing them on other streets in the neighborhood.

SIDEWALK EXTENSION COMPLETED

It only took about five or six years, but the long-awaited sidewalk extension on Evansway Road has finally been completed. The extension was first requested by former Councilman Rob Jones, supported by the late Pete Grimm, and by Council Member Kathy Graziano as it worked its way through the city's capital improvement budget process.

It reaches from Domino Road around the curve to Stony Point Parkway, and provides a much needed improvement in safety for walkers. The next step will be an extension all the way around to the shopping center.

RIVERSIDE DRIVE CONTINUES JOURNEY TO SCENIC BYWAY DESIGNATION

At its January 12 meeting, City Council voted to designate Riverside Drive from Cowardin Avenue to Huguenot Road as a scenic byway. Following are excerpts from a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* article published on December 30, 2008.

“Rivers run through or alongside numerous cities. Richmond enjoys a difference. The typical urban waterway moves as stately as a royal procession. Because Richmond straddles a fall line, the James retains the aura of the untamed. Few cities possess similar opportunities for recreational and competitive whitewater sports, for instance.

The new Downtown Master Plan anticipates wonderful things for the river, and properly includes South Richmond neighborhoods in its vision. The James boasts a network of parks with vistas vast and compelling.

City Councilwoman Kathy Graziano and other friends of the James support designating Riverside Drive a ‘Richmond Scenic Byway.’ If the James is unique to Richmond, then the designation would be unique as well. Virginia’s scenic and historic byways are found in the countryside, not in the typical metropolis. Identifying Riverside as a Scenic Byway would affirm the city’s commitment to the James and its ambience. The goal should be to utilize the James as a spur to development without eroding the very factors that make the river so attractive. A Riverside Drive Scenic Byway would help to strike an appropriate balance. Richmond must not squander its rediscovered river riches.”

Kathy and other Council members take oath of office as first City Council elected for a four-year term.

[From Left: Connors (9th); Trammell (8th); McQuinn (7th); Robertson (6th); Jewell (5th); Kathy (4th); Hilbert (3rd); Samuels (2nd); Tyler (1st).



2009 REAL ESTATE TAX RELIEF

We have been successful in building a tax relief program that has offered assistance to seniors and the disabled to allow them to remain in their homes. This year, the downturn in the economy will provide both greater challenges and greater opportunities for those who qualify.

Essentially the program is open to those who are permanently and totally disabled, or who are over the age of 65 and who are homeowners. If the homeowners income is less than \$50,000 in gross income, and if total assets are less than \$200,000, not counting the home, they may be eligible for relief.

Where the opportunity comes is in the total asset column. Since many people have seen losses in the value of their investments, they may well qualify this year, when in years past the level of assets would have exceeded the \$200,000 level.

Our District Meeting scheduled for February 11th will discuss this issue, and other subjects relating to taxes and assessments.

DISTRICT MEETING ON REAL ESTATE TAXES

At our February meeting we will focus on real estate assessments and tax relief.

Representatives of the City Attorney's Office will discuss some new wrinkles in the tax relief program and provide information for homeowners who might want to take advantage of the program.

We also expect to have some information about the 2009 real estate assessments, always a topic of interest.

The meeting is scheduled for
Wednesday, February 11, 2009

7:00 pm

St. Luke Lutheran Church,
7757 Chippenham Parkway

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