

# Supervisors Nix Inspection Program for Rentals

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On a unanimous vote last week, the Chesterfield Board of Supervisors voted not to set a public hearing on a proposed rental inspection program, effectively killing the proposal.

Board Chairman Art Warren and Bermuda Supervisor Dorothy Jaeckle opposed the idea, saying they didn't think the county should be inspecting the interiors of homes. A letter to the county from the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union said it was an infringement of rights on both renters and landlords. The County Attorney's Office opined it was legal, saying Richmond, Colonial Heights and Petersburg already have similar programs. The proposal, which previously had some board support, fizzled.

However, proactive inspections – visual inspections from the curbside of front and side yards of single-family homes – will continue. Last summer, the department began placing notices on front door knobs two weeks before inspections. Bill Dupler, director of building inspections, said about 8,000 homes will be proactively inspected each year. Previously, the county only inspected homes when there was a complaint filed – often because there was an unkempt yard, abandoned vehicle or rotting wood.

According to Dupler, because of the advance notice, 54 percent of potential problems are rectified before inspection. The proactive enforcement is part of the board's increased emphasis on the revitalization of older neighborhoods.

The county's funding for rental inspections could have been channeled to more curbside inspections, but for budgetary reasons, Midlothian Supervisor Dan Gecker and Dale Supervisor Jim Holland advised against it. "I wouldn't favor that because of the associated cost," said Holland.

The board remanded proposed amendments to the Chesterfield Planning Commission that would have permitted windmills to generate energy on lots of five acres or more on residential, conservation and agriculturally zoned land. The proposal, previously recommended unanimously by the commission, set the maximum height at 50 feet for residential and 150 feet for agricultural.

According to Planning Administrator Joe Feest, a residential tower "would produce enough energy for a 1,600-square-foot house." Just one citizen is waiting to act on the amendments – probably since the county is "rated poor" for generating energy because local winds are not strong enough. Gecker wanted more analysis on the proposed ordinance since he sees similarities between cell towers and wind towers. If approved, wind towers would not require a conditional-use permit as cell towers do. "These towers will look like cell towers but be more obtrusive," Gecker said.

Under the proposed ordinance, the noise level for wind towers couldn't be louder than 50 decibels, and guy wires and lattice towers are prohibited. There was also board discussion of limiting them only to backyards.