



Manassas and Prince William County are planning to expand their wastewater capacity at the Upper Occoquan Service Authority.

PROVIDED

Wastewater capacity expansion could cost \$100M

County, Manassas planning for future needs, upgrades

» BY JARED FORETEK
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Manassas and Prince William County are jointly hoping to keep the water running, planning a wastewater capacity expansion that could cost upwards of \$100 million between the two jurisdictions.

For Manassas, the expansion is needed in large part due to Micron, as the city plans to meet the future demand of a potential second expansion for the massive memory chip maker.

In order to do so, the city is planning to sign an amended joint agreement with Prince William, Manassas Park and Fairfax County. The four jurisdictions use the Upper Occoquan Service Authority for part or all of their wastewater treatment, and Manassas and Prince William could soon be bumping up on their assigned caps. For the city, the allotted capacity is 9.19 million gallons per day, which Manassas Utilities Director Tony Dawood said would likely become an issue by 2030 without any additional capacity.

“We are expected to exceed our capacity based on the [comprehensive] plan and all analysis and homework we did, in the fairly near future,” Dawood told Manassas

City Council on Monday evening, “but it depends on Micron. Micron is a big player, and it depends on their second expansion. So when that happens we’ll have to make a determination on when to pull the trigger.”

Micron, the biggest user of water in Manassas, expects its water usage to grow by 1.3 million gallons a day once its \$1.3 billion expansion is completed, according to a 2018 city press release. The facility uses the bulk of its water to clean and cool its manufacturing equipment. Shortly after the expansion was announced, Manassas agreed to \$28 million in new water and sewer projects, more than \$10 million of which was funded by Micron.

CAPACITY LIMIT CONCERNS

But between further Micron expansion in the city and other increases in uses, Dawood said the city could soon be bumping up against its limits. According to the previous joint services agreement, if a jurisdiction surpasses 95% of its allotted capacity over a 30-day rolling average, a moratorium can be imposed on future development. Dawood said it was a limit that the city nearly breached at times and was one particularly rainy period away from hitting.

Now, under the revised agreement that the City Council is expected to approve at its next meeting, it’ll take more to put a halt to city or county growth. The new agreement stipulates that a jurisdiction would need to surpass 95% usage for three consecutive months to face the same penalties.

“So it really reduces the risk for us to be put in a moratorium,” he told the council Monday night. “You could have a rain event ... but three months in a row, to exceed it would be really something unusual.”

STATE REGULATORS’ INVOLVEMENT

To address the long-term needs, the city will eventually need additional capacity, 3 million gallons per day to be exact. In the Upper Occoquan Service Authority’s long-range master plan, 6 million more is in the offing.

Manassas Park and Fairfax, which uses the service authority only for a portion of its southwestern properties, have enough capacity for the time being, but Prince William is also eyeing an expansion and, according to Dawood, is prepared to take the other 3 million. The ultimate price tag, though, will depend on a decision from state regulators. The service authority is hoping to use some of its existing infra-

structure to facilitate the expansion, but that will require an OK from the state.

“The plant is very conservative in its design, and we’ve asked the state and we asked a consultant to look at ... how we could maybe, possibly rerate. That means look at some of the existing infrastructure that’s used for redundancy, for safety factors, to incorporate that into the expansion,” Dawood said.

If the plant has to build out entirely new capacity, Dawood said, the cost could be as high as \$17 million per additional million gallons, or \$51 million for the city and county each. If the state cooperates, he said, the cost could fall to \$15 million per million gallons. As of now, the authority plans to start design work on its expansion in 2025.

Manassas City Council member Mark Wofle said that either way, the cost to the city would be below market rate.

“The key ... is the rerating. I think that would be, without being an expert in the field, a fairly significant likelihood that the state will actually approve a rerating that will significantly make this easier,” Wofle said. “But if it doesn’t, then we are securing sewer capacity, which is our No. 1 limiting infrastructure need for the entire city, for the foreseeable future at less than market prices.”

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 ...ing said although the judicial center added a seventh judge last year, it already needs another. The old space is running out and causing problems for jurors who can’t find parking.
 “The existing building is not func-

tioning in the way we need it to function. ... We are absolutely in dire need around the courthouse,” she said. “To hold this back until we have \$300 million is to do the citizens of the county a disservice ... We’re out

of space.”
 The master plan proposes seven phases, but would in total cost more than \$488 million.
 The board did not allocate any funding during Tuesday’s work session.

“We know we need a new courthouse system,” said Board Chair Ann Wheeler. “I’m just a little concerned it’s a little over \$400 million and we don’t have that in our [Capital Improvement Program].”

School Board, council quarrel over administrative building

Manassas governing bodies blame one another for delay

» BY JARED FORETEK
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A possible deadline in the Manassas school system's effort to buy its headquarters building is fast approaching, and the School Board is blaming the City Council for delays.

But council leaders say it's actually the school division that's holding up the process by not sharing updated estimates for the cost of a new Jennie Dean Elementary School.

Earlier this month, the School Board sent a formal letter to the council requesting a vote on a funding package for the purchase after more than seven months of back-and-forth between the bodies on the proposal. According to the letter, sent Feb. 8 and signed by Manassas School Board Chair Suzanne Seaberg, the owner of the school division's current headquarters at 8700 Centreville Road is looking for a "final determination" on a possible sale by Feb. 28.

"In good faith, we have considered alternate options and stand firm in our decision that the purchase of the Property is in the best interest of Manassas City Public Schools AND the Citizenry," the letter reads.

"Since the Council has made no public effort to take this matter to a vote, and you have not presented us with adequate reasoning of a better solution, please consider this our formal request for City Council to take this matter to the table for a vote. We respectfully request that you appropriate \$10.75 million to the Manassas City School Board's fund balance to purchase the discussed Property located at 8700 Centreville Road."

JENNIE DEAN CONSIDERATIONS

In previous joint discussions, council members have been skeptical of the plan to outright purchase, maintain and ultimately make some renovations to the current office building on Centreville Road, saying that they first need a firmer understanding of the full cost for a new Jennie Dean Elementary School, scheduled in the city's capital improvement plan for construction by 2026.

In a response letter sent Feb. 14, Mayor Michelle Davis-Younger reiterated that sentiment from the council, saying that the School Board could always revert to its original plan: to renovate and move into the old police headquarters at 9518 Fairview Ave.

Councilmembers have raised concerns that the cost of Dean – originally projected at \$62 billion – could balloon, saying that the School Board should first lay out a clear plan for the new school before making another big purchase.

"It appeared to me that both Boards had agreed that the replacement of Dean School has been and remains the number one school facility priority.



"We respectfully request that you appropriate \$10.75 million to the Manassas City School Board's fund balance to purchase the discussed Property located at 8700 Centreville Road."

— MANASSAS SCHOOL BOARD
TO MANASSAS CITY COUNCIL

During the joint meeting in November, Council asked for specific information on the schedule, size and scope of the Dean School replacement project," Davis-Younger wrote.

"Changing market conditions for construction and the final design of the school will be major determinants of the actual replacement costs for this facility," she added. "As a result of these factors, City Council is not prepared to allocate or spend additional reserve funds until the questions surrounding the priority need of replacing Dean School have been addressed."

Davis-Younger could not be reached by InsideNoVa for comment.

The School Board passed its own resolution approving the purchase of the building last summer, contending that the purchase would ultimately make more financial sense in the long run than moving administrative offices into the police building.

The idea was that the school division would take on the existing leases – which generate more than \$1 million in rental income – in the office building before ultimately being able to use some of the spaces for career and technical education, child care, night school or other services.

COST CONCERNS

In unison, the School Board and school division senior staff – including Superintendent Kevin Newman – told the council in a November joint meeting that buying the current headquarters building would be the most financially sound and best course of action for meeting the division's future needs.

But council members said that paying for maintenance on it could cost more than anticipated. And Councilmember

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Theresa Coates Ellis said she didn't want to see the property – assessed last year at a value of \$5 million – come off the city's tax roll.

Last month, Seaberg told InsideNoVa that the building's owner was growing increasingly impatient and could soon start searching for alternate buyers. She said the School Board was hopeful the council would come back from its early February retreat with a course of action, but so far the council has not included the issue in any of its February meeting agendas.

Councilmember Mark Wolfe told InsideNoVa that the council will need an update on Jennie Dean Elementary first. The two bodies settled on a funding agreement for the new school – to replace the nearly 65-year old school building on Prince William Street – in 2021, adding it to the city's CIP with an over \$62 million price tag. Since then, though, prices have risen dramatically on materials and labor.

"I can't speak for the council, but what I'm looking for is a definition of 'here's what we want to build and here's what it's going to cost,'" Wolfe told InsideNoVa "With that, then I can go back and say, all right, maybe it only costs \$63 million. In which case we just say, 'Thank you very much,' and life is good. If it's more than that then it's, 'OK we have a financial plan that's built on normal circumstances.' But what's happened the last three years, as we all know, has not been normal."

A location for the school still hasn't been selected, and the division hasn't officially determined what the building will need to include. All that, combined with inflation,



The Manassas School Board is looking to purchase the system's current administrative headquarters building at 8700 Centreville Road, pictured above.

means that the ultimate cost is still very much up in the air, Wolfe said.

"I personally do not want to make a decision for the

administrative building until I have the full information about Dean, because that, to me, is the No. 1 priority," he

said.



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KISS OF SUCCESS



Siya Sampath, a 9-year-old J.W. Alvey Elementary School student, is showered with love and praise from her mother and sister after winning the 45th annual Prince William Regional Spelling Bee at Gar-Field High School in Woodbridge Tuesday. TAVAN SMITH | FOR INSIDENOVA

See story and photos, Pages 8-9

Race for county chair heats up

Lawson goes on the attack against incumbent Wheeler

» BY TREVOR BARATKO
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This year's race for Prince William Board of County Supervisors chair is shaping up to be a bitter battle.

Brentsville District Supervisor Jeanine Lawson, a Republican, announced Monday she is throwing her hat in the ring, and she quickly served up sharp words against current Chair Ann Wheeler.

"Under the failed leadership of our current Chair, Prince William County has

been quickly moving in the wrong direction," Lawson said in her announcement. "In three short years under her iron-fisted reign, we've watched her lead with extreme and reckless policies, while putting her political agenda first and Prince William families last. We deserve better."

Lawson, who was first elected to the board in 2014, said the average release estate tax bill in Prince William County has risen by over \$1,400 in the past three years

and homicides have jumped by 150%. She said she's advocating for lower taxes, support for law enforcement and managed growth.

"Enough is enough. Our local taxes are through the roof. Unchecked development is rampant while conservation and concerns about our local environment have been tossed aside. Crime in every corner of the county is skyrocketing," Lawson



ANN WHEELER



JEANINE LAWSON

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Supervisors keep quiet on pay hikes

Proposal would boost board pay nearly 70%

» BY JARED FORETEK
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With opposition mounting to a proposed pay raise for county elected officials, many on the Prince William Board of County Supervisors are staying quiet.

On Tuesday night, a public hearing on the county's proposed fiscal 2024 budget brought out several opponents to a plan that would increase supervisor pay by 67% for the next four years and raise the board chair's pay by 70%.

Currently, supervisor pay in Prince William is the lowest among all the county governing bodies in Northern Virginia, with supervisors earning \$43,422 annually and the chair earning \$49,452. The proposed budget, drafted by County Executive Chris Shorter and county staff, would raise the chair's salary to \$84,739 and

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Sentara Healthcare drops mask requirement

Sentara Healthcare, which operates Sentara Northern Virginia Medical Center in Woodbridge, is no longer requiring masking in health care facilities.

"The Sentara COVID-19 Task Force has closely monitored COVID-19 activity for the past three years across our communities, using scientific data and the highest safety standards to guide our decisions throughout the pandemic," the company said in a news release Monday.

Health systems across the country are seeing a steady decrease in COVID-19, RSV and flu patients – the three respiratory viruses that triggered a surge in emergency department visits and hospitalizations last fall, the release said.

"After much consideration, we believe it is safe and appropriate to relax masking requirements across our health care facilities," the release said.

Effective Tuesday, patients, visitors and team members were no longer required to wear a mask at all times within Sentara

health care facilities, with some exceptions:

- Patients seeking treatment for a viral illness such as COVID-19 or the flu should continue to wear a mask to prevent spreading the virus to others.

- Health care workers treating patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 must still wear the appropriate level of personal protective equipment (PPE) required.

- All health care professionals will continue to follow infection prevention protocols. Health systems will continue to monitor respiratory illness activity within our communities.

Masks will still be available to patients and visitors, and health care professionals can still wear a mask if they choose to do so.

"We are grateful to our healthcare colleagues, patients, and visitors for their cooperation in following important public health measures during the pandemic to protect one another," the release said.



GRACE WILLAMINA BOCKES

Grace Willamina Bockes was born April 20, 1928, in Syracuse, NY and passed away at her home in Savannah, GA on Sunday, March 19, 2023. Her parents were Robert Ray Selleck and Ethel Maloney Selleck. She graduated from East Syracuse High School.

After dating for eight years, she was married to her high school sweetheart, Olin Duane Bockes, on May 30, 1951. Four months after they were married, they moved to Virginia where they had a son, David. Immediately afterwards they moved to Missoula, MT where they bore a daughter, Diane, and another son, Richard. In the fall of 1958, they moved back to northern Virginia for her husband's job with the US Department of Agriculture. In 1971 they left Woodbridge after purchasing a tree farm in Manassas and built a home from a two-story log cabin. Grace and Olin remained there until moving to Savannah, GA in January of 2011. For the past 12 years they have lived with their daughter and son-in-law, Dr. Byron Boyd.

Grace served actively in the Methodist Church and various civic and volunteer organizations throughout her life. She spent significant time as a leader of the Federation of Women's Club and working with both ACTS and Salvation Army in Prince William County, VA. Her hobbies included making ceramics and painting. She also enjoyed traveling with her family and visited most of the United States.

Olin Bockes, her husband of 73 years, survives her along with three children: David Bockes of Wytheville, VA, Richard (Rick) Bockes of Woodbridge, VA, and Diane Boyd of Savannah, GA. Grace is also survived by five grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and many friends.

Wesley Monumental Methodist Church will hold visitation in the fellowship hall from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Friday, March 24, 2023. The funeral service will be held immediately afterwards in the church sanctuary.

Occoquan Peep Week returns April 4-8

Occoquan's popular Peep Week returns this year April 4-8 at locations throughout the historic town.

"Stroll through the historic district and vote for your favorite Peeps dioramas, made by and displayed at Occoquan businesses," states a news release. "Cast your vote and enter to win the grand prize of \$100 in Occoquan gift cards! Forms are available at participating business locations and at Town Hall."

The community is invited to participate and submit dioramas by April 3. You can build your own Peeps diorama and enter

to win a \$50 prize in your category. Enter in one of the four: Individual; Family/Team; Youth (ages 12-16); and Kids (12 and under).

Entries should be dropped off by 4 p.m. on April 3 at Town Hall, 314 Mill St. Voters will vote on the public submissions and the businesses made dioramas throughout Peep Week. Participation is free, but entries go to the community portion of the contest. Register. More information is available at www.occocoquanva.gov/2023/02/27/peep-week.

The following historic district businesses are participating: Anderson's Country Store; Ballywhack shack; Bar-J Chili Parlor; Earth Addictions; Gift & Gather; Glory Be, LLC; Grind N Crepe; Hitchcock Paper Co.; Jerry's Occoquan Jewelers; Leaf & Petal; Local Colour Old Town, LLC; Madigan's Waterfront, Inc.; Man Overboard; Marin Woodturning; Patriot Scuba; Puzzle Palooza Etc.; So Bohemian Inc.; The Loft Gallery; and Third Base Pizza.

For more information about Peep Week activities or other Occoquan events, see [visitoccoquanva.com](http://www.visitoccoquanva.com).

The following historic district busi-

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supervisor pay to \$74,282 starting Jan. 1 of next year, when a new board takes office.

In Fairfax County, by contrast, supervisors make \$95,000 and the chair makes \$100,000, although the board voted this week to raise those amounts to about \$123,000 and \$128,000, respectively.

Last year, Arlington's board voted to raise the salaries for supervisors and the chair to \$77,648 annually and \$83,413, respectively. Loudoun pays its chair \$81,1000 and supervisors \$66,826.

In Prince William, supervisor salaries have gone unchanged since 2011. In its budget proposal, county staff recommended the salaries be raised to the median of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Alexandria salaries.

But several public commenters Tuesday night objected.

"The most cynical and disturbing proposition ... is a 70% increase in pay for the board chair and a 67% increase for all other district supervisors," county resident Paige Kenyon-Page told the board during Tuesday's public hearing. "Not an increase in pay for our teachers, not to our EMTs, not to our firefighters, not even to our police force."

County teachers, police and fire and rescue workers are, in fact, all set to see pay raises in the upcoming fiscal year, but none will receive bumps nearing the 60% mark.

"Holy moly, do you really ... want to do that when you're coming up for election?" Mary Lauren, a resident of Yates Ford Road, said Tuesday. "Why shouldn't teachers be getting that much? If anybody gets a raise, teachers are the ones who should be getting a raise, and certainly not the board."

The timing of the raise proposal, with all eight board seats up for election in the fall, is no coincidence. Supervisors can vote

only to increase salaries for future boards, meaning pay raises can occur only every four years.

While technically considered part-time employees, supervisors in the past have spoken about the demands of the job, which include lengthy board and committee meetings, work sessions, community events and constituent service. Last year, Neabsco Supervisor Victor Angry said at a board meeting that serving on the board is a full-time job and makes taking on full-time work in the private sector impossible. Some studies have shown that increasing elected official pay to be more competitive with the private sector can increase competition and, as a result, accountability.

But many supervisors are staying mum on the proposal. Chair Ann Wheeler and Woodbridge Supervisor Margaret Franklin, both Democrats, told InsideNoVa that they had no comment on the plan. A representative for Occoquan Supervisor Kenny Boddye said he had not taken a position on the increase.

Angry, a Democrat, and Republican Brentsville Supervisor Jeanine Lawson have said they could be open to the idea but have not committed to supporting the raises. They could not be reached for comment on this story.

So far, Coles District Supervisor Yesli Vega, a Republican, has been the only member of the board to take a firm position on the proposal, telling the Prince William Times that she opposed the raises earlier this month.

The proposal has yet to come up in a work session. Because the \$1.61 billion proposed budget is a substantial document with other county matters under consideration, it's possible the raises could go through without seeing a direct up-or-down vote.