



Chesterfield is planning to buy nearly 100 acres on Otterdale Road that would be the site of a replacement Midlothian Middle School as well as a new elementary school and a police station. (*BizSense file*)

It won't be until the new year that the Chesterfield Board of Supervisors will vote on whether to spend eight figures on land in the western part of the county for two new schools and a police station.

The board decided Wednesday to delay the appropriation of funds needed to purchase 98 acres at 1101 Otterdale Road until its next meeting in January.

Chesterfield is planning to buy the Otterdale site for \$10.5 million from an LLC tied to local development firm East West Communities, according to a county memo.

East West acquired the site for \$1.5 million in 2021, online records show. The land was most recently assessed by the county at \$392,000.

The county said the purchase price was determined based in part on an independently prepared appraisal and comparable sales in the area. The deal's closing depends on the results of in-progress due diligence studies, including an environmental site assessment and wetlands delineation.

The largely undeveloped site is near the Route 288 interchange with Woolridge Road. A county official previously told BizSense the site was desirable because it is in a fast-growing part of the county, where new public facilities are anticipated to be needed in the coming years.

Chesterfield wants to build a replacement Midlothian Middle School, a new elementary school and a police station on the Otterdale property. The current Midlothian Middle School is at 13501 Midlothian Turnpike, about 2 miles from the Otterdale property.

The county estimates that about 65 acres of the site would be needed for the planned facilities. Excess land could be positioned as recreational areas. The property is adjacent to the proposed Woolridge Road extension. County supervisors recently approved a \$42 million contract with Wagman Heavy Civil to build the extension.

Construction costs for a new middle school are partially funded and the police station fully funded, thanks to the county's 2022 bond referendum. The planned elementary school, which would be a new facility and not a replacement for any existing elementary school, hasn't been funded yet, according to the county memo.

County supervisors will need to sign off on the Otterdale property acquisition, but that step will have to wait until next year.

On a motion from Supervisor Mark Miller, the board unanimously voted to defer a vote on the Otterdale Road purchase until its next regular meeting, Jan. 28.

The primary reason for the deferral was recent BizSense reporting about the pending deal, which created confusion among county residents about the project and how it would affect the future of an existing elementary school, Miller said in an interview Thursday. He said that under those circumstances it felt appropriate to allow some time to pass before the matter is taken up again.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: JACK JACOBS

Jack joined BizSense in 2020. He covers local government, retail, healthcare and higher education news. He previously reported for the Virginia Gazette and Tidewater Review after graduating from Christopher Newport University. Reach him at jack@richmondbizsense.com or 804-554-6545.

9 COMMENTS

oldest

Steven Gooch

7 hours ago

More confused about how the value grew from \$1.5M to \$10M in 4 years.

15

Reply

Dan Berlin

3 hours ago

Reply to Steven Gooch

That's government spending 101 – why be thrifty with other people's money

1

Reply

Jay Emory

2 hours ago

Reply to Dan Berlin

If there are limited parcels of the necessary size to purchase and they are all owned by folks who decide whether to sell then what, exactly, is the county supposed to do? If you owned the land you would not sell it for less than you could get for it and the county cannot steal land from landowners. This is what happens when you don't practice smart planning and build schools from the get go that are large enough to hold future children. The county is out of options, they have to have new schools, and there are limited parcels from which to choose.

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Reply

Landon Edwards

1 second ago
Reply to Jay Emory

In this case, the parcel identified for sale is owned by a developer – not by an individual or family. If a school were built, roads and utilities would be brought in at county expense to serve the school. But in doing so the development potential for vacant land in this area would soar, thanks to county largesse. A significant amount of vacant land in the area is already owned by developers. They're just waiting for those improvements. Meanwhile, back at Midlo Middle, the current property at the school's location (21 acres) is sufficient to build a new school on the rear of the property, and relocate the athletic fields to the front. That would avoid a land purchase all together, as well as keep the school where it currently is. BTW, no county anywhere builds schools for the needs of the population 30 – 50 years out. Chesterfield's enrollment is not expected to rise significantly in the next 10 years, and a lot of localities are expected to see shrinking school populations due to migration and birth rates.

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Reply

phil Sido

2 hours ago
Reply to Jay Emory

The present Midlo Middle School site is a bit smaller than the proposed acquisition – But it is paid already owned by the County / Taxpayers. If the new school could be constructed on the back of the property the athletic facilities could then be constructed on the freed up land. I believe there is enough room to accomplish all of this.

This would have avoided paying inflated prices for parcels to developers.

Another consideration is the Midlo Middle School is in the Midlothian District. The proposed site being offered at an extremely high profit to developers sits in Clover Hill District....

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Reply

Bruce Milam

6 hours ago

A recent 20 acre purchase by the County for an elementary school site for \$7M set the value for this site. In fact, it's a bargain at \$10 M. At least one substantial creek crosses it and there is some terrain to master. It would get this price if the County allowed it for housing.

i have more questions why a one mile road is going to cost \$42M to build!

Last edited 6 hours ago by Bruce Milam

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Reply

Tom R Switters

2 hours ago
Reply to Bruce Milam

Bargain basement. Chesterfield just paid \$7.3MM for 32 acres and 1 school site without a fuss and now are paying \$10.5MM for 98 acres and 2 schools plus a police station with a fuss?! Take it and run!

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Reply

Landon Edwards

18 minutes ago
Reply to Tom R Switters

If you're talking about the land for Grange Hall elementary, that was paid to another developer HH Hunt, at the Developer Rate.

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Reply

Stefan Brooks

5 hours ago

I thought there had been interest in a parcel assemblage off Coalfield Road across from the aged Watkins Elementary School but a deal was sidelined by the departure of a School Board member from this district? If these parcels were purchased, that land would back up to Midlothian High School possibly making quite a similar campus of multiple schools. Currently there's still signage indicating at least 27 AC of that land off Coalfield Road is still for sale while there's indications of vacancy for residential homes across from Watkins Elementary leading me to believe those parcels too could be on the market, or soon will be.

Last edited 5 hours ago by Stefan Brooks

1

Reply

Landon Edwards

5 hours ago

According to what I'm hearing, the delay was prompted by voter outcries of disgust at this deal. Mark Miller and the other supervisors got an earful. This so-called deal smacks of considerations, kickbacks, bribes, or whatever you want to call it. If Bruce Milam's opinions on value were valid, this parcel and others like it would've already had development plans. But infrastructure is lacking, so developers are waiting on the county to supply all that before building their homes. God forbid a developer should have to supply water and roads to their homesites! No, this is all about developer influence in Chesterfield. Residents want – and demand – the new middle school be built in the village of Midlothian, as promised by Leslie Haley some years ago.

The plan being considered would have it located in the Clover Hill district. It appears the stupidity of the BOS has now gotten so severe that it's caused voter pushback, and the supervisors are becoming nervous.

Last edited 5 hours ago by Landon Edwards

Reply

4

Stefan Brooks

4 hours ago

Reply to Landon Edwards

This tieback to Leslie Haley was what I recalled. Thanks for filling that gap I had with the background on the Midlothian Village area desires.

Reply

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