

For release 9 a.m. Monday July 4, 2011  
Contact: Jim Ellis  
804-263-8936  
jimellisbos@comcast.net

Jim Ellis, 50, plans to run as an independent candidate for the Chickahominy District seat on the Hanover County Board of Supervisors. "We enjoy many advantages here in Hanover including a strong fiscal rating and dedicated county staff," Ellis said. "Tremendous opportunities exist here, but we have to change the attitude at the top to keep our quality of life while we reap the benefits of development. I've been involved as a citizen with local issues since 2005. We need advocacy for regular folks, not politically connected folks."

Ellis said his main goals as supervisor are to maintain strong education and public safety services; reconnect citizens with government; achieve high-quality growth by incorporating citizen input in the designs of larger developments; strengthen the county's approach to green infrastructure and parks; televise or webcast meetings of the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission; and place greater emphasis in the county's economic planning on agriculture, locally-owned businesses, tourism and better access to high-speed Internet.

As a political novice in 2007, Ellis ran as an independent in the race for the Chickahominy seat against Bob Setliff, whose retirement leaves the seat open in 2011. Ellis received 42% of the vote. "I have great respect for Bob Setliff and I've learned a lot from my interactions with him," said Ellis. "We agree on some things and disagree on others, but I think we always keep it civil and honest."

Ellis became interested in local civic issues when his Craney Island Farms neighborhood was recommended for redistricting to a different elementary school in 2005. "It was a surprise to us. The more we looked at the enrollment data, the less justification we saw for it," said Ellis. "We started out being very emotional, but we learned from a neighbor about how to approach it better. The main thing I learned was how constrained the process is for citizens to talk to their own representatives. But I think the School Board and the administration really tried to listen." The neighborhood ended up staying at Cool Spring Elementary.

Ellis began attending many of the citizen meetings about the county Comprehensive Plan update in 2006 and 2007. "The Comp Plan process was ultimately very disappointing," Ellis recounted. "A couple of local real estate folks literally got to sit down and draw the result that they wanted. This was weeks before the county even advertised for a consultant to come in and ask what citizens wanted. So I thought someone needed to challenge for the Board, and people said if I felt so strongly about it, why didn't I do it? My family, friends and neighbors were incredibly helpful. Going door to door was quite a learning experience. There are some great ideas out there if you seek out a variety of citizens and listen."

A frequent telecommuter, Ellis served on the citizens' ad hoc committee for high-speed Internet service in 2010. He was appointed in 2011 by Setliff as one of two representatives for Chickahominy on the new High-Speed Internet Committee. Ellis graduated from the Hanover Citizens Planning Academy in 2008. He is on the boards of the Atlee Recreation Association and the Coalition for Hanover's Future. He resigned from the Hanover Democratic Committee to run as an independent. He is a member of the Hanover County Historical Society and a Watch D.O.G.S. volunteer.

Ellis and his wife of 20 years, Lisa, have four children, all schooled in Hanover County public schools: Jamie (19), Christopher (13), Sean (11) and Lucy (8). The Ellis family belongs to Our Lady of Lourdes Church. Ellis has lived in Central Virginia for more than 30 years. He has a bachelor's degree from U.Va. and master's degrees from VCU and the University of Maryland. He expects to defend his doctoral dissertation at VCU this fall. He is a member of the general faculty at U.Va., where he works as a public opinion researcher.