

## **Board to get I-73 request**

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Martinsville Bulletin

The Commonwealth Transportation Board is expected to receive a resolution next week asking that it consider moving the route of Interstate 73 in Henry County.

Richard Eanes, governmental affairs vice chairman of the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce, told the chamber board Thursday that the CTB will be presented with the resolution approved in November by the Henry County Board of Supervisors. The CTB will meet June 18-19 in Richmond.

The resolution asks the CTB and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to reopen consideration of the route. It also asks them to incorporate a proposed Patriot Centre connector road, which would connect the Patriot Centre industrial park to the U.S. 58/U.S. 220 Bypass, into I-73 and change the I-73 route to provide better access to the Martinsville Speedway and Martinsville Industrial Park.

However, Eanes said after the meeting, he expects “nothing to be acted on — study or otherwise — until the lawsuit is settled.”

Virginians for Appropriate Roads, an activist group, filed suit in federal court in Richmond in October, claiming “significant, irreversible and adverse effects on natural, scenic, and ecological resources” will occur if I-73 is built. VDOT officials have said they do not know when the suit will be resolved, but no work on I-73 will be done until then.

Eanes reported on the National I-73/74 Corridor Association rally he attended recently in Greensboro. That association includes representatives of the states that will be affected by the construction of the interstate, including Virginia, West Virginia and North and South Carolina.

South Carolina has obtained a record of decision for the project from the Federal Highway Administration, and funding is the top priority on the state’s transportation agenda, Eanes said.

North Carolina has made “substantial progress” on the highway, completing a segment between Asheboro and Rockingham, working on a segment off I-40 in Greensboro and acquiring rights of way for a northern sector that would connect at the Virginia border and bisect N.C. 68 and U.S. 220 to the west of Summerfield, he said.

West Virginia has been successful getting federal construction funds, thanks to the influence of West Virginia Sen. Robert Byrd Byrd, Eanes said.

And Virginia is “in a holding pattern because of the lawsuit,” he added.

In other action at Thursday’s meeting:

- Outgoing board members were recognized. They are Vern Berry, Natalie Harder, Lance Heater, Melissa Holland, Charlie Mattox, Barry Nelson and Phil Solomon. New board members approved were John Engel, Phil Gardner, Kim Spencer, Eddie White and Creed Taylor.
- A slate of officers was approved. Chosen were Jay Edelen, chairman; Eanes, vice chairman of organizational improvement/chair elect; Paul Ashbrook, vice chairman of membership services; Barry Dorsey, vice chairman of economic development; Gardner, vice chairman of governmental affairs; Marsha Frith, secretary/treasurer; John Parkinson, immediate past chairman.
- Changes in the bylaws were approved, including board membership of 14 to 22 members, each serving three-year terms.
- Chamber President Amanda Witt said a directors’ newsletter will be distributed quarterly, outlining activities of the organization’s various committees and subcommittees.
- New members approved were Aaron’s Sale & Lease; BNI of Southwestern Virginia; Comfort Foods LLC; Community Storehouse; El Norteno Mexican Restaurant; Mark A. Crabtree DDS; McCall Insurance Agency; Parkway PC’s Inc.; and Summit Building and Landscaping.

Those dropped from membership were Brad Parker — Nationwide Insurance; Carilion Surgical Care; Ebb Williams III; Garland & Garland CPAs; Jason Dove Insurance; Gregory Gendron DDS; Pieces; Stanley Welch Clothiers; Stone & Co.; and Wilson and Tohler Electric. Total chamber membership stands at 614.

- Dorsey reported that the Chamber’s Education Foundation is “alive and well” and contributions are being sought. Donations will go to Partnership-In-Excellence Grants, which award teachers up to \$500 for classroom activities; three \$1,000 Youth Leadership Development Scholarships; and the new faculty breakfast.

James Rountree is president of the foundation, Dorsey added.

The chamber board approved a \$5,000 contribution to the foundation.

- Witt reported that 230 people attended the chamber’s annual meeting and 125 attended the business appreciation luncheon.
- It was announced that the chamber would host two appreciation nights, June 19 and July 12, with the Martinsville Mustangs.

- Witt also said the chamber is sponsoring an economic development “boot camp” for the Fayette Area Historical Initiative on June 27.