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Atlee Manor residents witness groundbreaking for sewer line

By GREG GLASSNER

In 1968, Jim and Jean Diggs bought about the eighth home built in Atlee Manor, a quiet subdivision near Atlee High School. Like many of their neighbors, they have lived there since.



Charlotte and Amos DeJarnette chat with Supervisor Bob Setliff and Rep. Eric Cantor after the groundbreaking.

The developer assured them that wells and septic tanks would serve their needs, given the rural nature of the Hanover County countryside back then.

Times change, however and many of the Atlee Manor residents experienced septic system failures that endangered their drinking water and the ecosystem of the nearby Chickahominy Swamp.

When Bob Setliff was campaigning for supervisor in 2003, he said, about the Atlee Manor problem, "We'll do the best we can if I'm elected."

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Jim Diggs read about that in the paper and called Setliff up and invited him to put a campaign sign on the lawn.

Although Setliff had made no guarantees, he and Diggs recalled that campaign promise four years later at the groundbreaking for a \$1.2 million sewer system to serve Atlee manor's 44 homes.

Through grants secured by Rep. Eric Cantor, the Atlee Manor residents will foot 45 percent of the bill, and the federal government 55 percent. The residents' share will be extended over 20 years through an interest-free state loan program.

The terms were so much better than the previous county offer, where the residents paid it all, that Diggs and others in the Atlee Manor Civic Association had no problem selling their neighbors on it.

"We'd have liked to get 90 percent; we could have gone with 50 percent. Well, they came back with 100 percent," Setliff said.

"This is true teamwork between the county, the citizens, the federal government and even the state government," he added.

"You won't have to worry about floods anymore; you won't have to dread a rain."

Diggs said he and the Atlee Manor residents were very thankful.

"Other politicians promise everything, but they rarely deliver. He [Setliff] did what he said he'd do," Diggs said.

The project will involve 3,600 feet of gravity sewer line and more than 2,500 feet of force main with a pump station. It is scheduled for completion in 2008.

The groundbreaking took place in front of the nicely maintained house Jim and Jean Diggs have occupied for nearly 40 years.

They and neighbors baked cookies and served coffee after the groundbreaking, which had the festive atmosphere of a block party.