

Albemarle Supervisors select Dittmar as chair  
written by Newspark Team | January 9, 2014



Democrat Jane Dittmar has been unanimously selected to serve as chairwoman of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. She succeeds Democrat Supervisor Ann Mallek who has served as chairwoman for the past four years.

Dittmar took office in mid-November after winning a special election to complete the unexpired term of Christopher J. Dumler. Dumler resigned in June after pleading guilty to a sexual battery charge.

"I am so proud that the new board members, as well as the ones with history on the board, wanted me to serve in this capacity," Dittmar said in an interview. "I think it's not because of any depth of knowledge I have, because I am on the same learning curve as the other new supervisors."

Dittmar said she may have been selected because of her professional work as a mediator.

"I think they may have seen some very heady subjects ahead on our agenda this year where possibly a facilitative style that I have was attractive," Dittmar added.

Also joining the board for its first meeting of the year on Wednesday were Democrats Liz Palmer and Brad Sheffield as well as independent Diantha McKeel. McKeel, who just completed four terms as a member of the county school board, was selected as vice chair.

Many of the new members ran on a platform opposing the Western Bypass. Soon after the meeting began, McKeel put the controversial project on the agenda by calling for a public hearing to be held sometime in February. The board will discuss the parameters of such a meeting at their meeting on

Feb. 5.

During the public comment period, representatives of local environmental groups urged the board to increase funding for rural preservation and to take a position on the bypass.

"I want you to put a wooden stake through this road's heart," said Scott van der Pol, a resident of Lambs Road who has frequently spoken out against the project.

Supervisors also made appointments to boards and commissions, including the Albemarle County Planning Commission..

Palmer has selected Karen Firehock to serve as the Samuel Miller District representative on the commission.

Firehock, the director and co-founder of the Green Infrastructure Center, is an environmental planner and adjunct instructor at the University of Virginia's School of Architecture. She also has served on the Charlottesville Planning Commission from 2002 to 2006, including a stint as chair.

"There are many needs to coordinate planning needs between city and county and my experience with the city can only help with that," Firehock said in an email.

McKeel has reappointed Russell "Mac" Lafferty to a second term serve as the Jack Jouett representative on the commission.

Sheffield has named Bruce Dotson to serve as the Rio District member. Dotson has spent the past two years as the commission's at-large member.

Two people applied to serve as the new at-large commissioner. However, Supervisors did not make a selection, so the body will convene on Jan. 14 with only six members.

Richard Randolph continues as the Scottsville District member because Dumler's appointees continue their terms.

Supervisors also named two new members of the Albemarle County Service Authority's Board of Directors. Charles Tolbert will represent the Jack Jouett District and Kimberly Swanson will serve the Rio District.

No appointment was made to fill the ACSA's Samuel Miller District seat formerly held by Palmer before she was elected as Supervisor.

The Board has canceled the meeting scheduled for Jan. 15 and will next convene next on Jan. 30 for a joint meeting with the Albemarle Economic Development Authority.