

Southern Maryland **EXTRA** Maryland

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PHOTOS BY JAMES A. PARCELL FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Frances Somerville, 9, left, Ingrid Braun, 12, Samantha Jones, 10, and Emma Jacobs, 10, attempt to launch kites at Chapman State Park.

With a Bit of a Breeze Above Fields of Green, Scouts Soar



The Indian Head park was the scene of a festival Sunday, sponsored by the Wings Over Washington Kite Club. Mike Mosman, above, participated in the flying, and Girl Scouts Frances Somerville, left, and Samantha Jones made their own kites.



Commissioners Irked by State's Cost-Cutting Acts

By CHRISTY GOODMAN
Washington Post Staff Writer

Calvert is facing a budget gap of more than \$7.5 million and has fewer ways to close it, partly because the Maryland General Assembly cut funding to the county to deal with the state's financial woes.

The most significant hit will come in a \$3 million reduction in funds that are used to pave and maintain local roads, Terry Shannon, the county's director of finance, said after the commissioners' meeting Tuesday.

"We may have to forgo paving a few miles this year," she said. "We are already behind the curve a little bit, not paving the number of miles in the number of years our Public Works Department feels we should have to keep our roads in good condition."

The county, which has received roughly \$5.8 million in highway user funds during the past three fiscal years, will get about \$2.7 million in fiscal 2010. And there will be more cuts in state road money in future years, Shannon said.

The state also reduced its funding for housing inmates in the county's detention center by \$479,000 and cut park money by \$5,000, Shannon said.

Frustrating the commissioners even more, the state legislature decided to extend the use of the instant bingo machines in Chesapeake Beach, but lawmakers blocked the county's attempt to raise permit fees on the machines.

The legislation passed by the General Assembly allows the Rod 'n' Reel Restaurant, Trader's Seafood, Steak and Ale and Abner's Crab House to operate their machines for two years with a 30 percent state tax. Chesapeake Beach also levies an admissions and amusement tax on the income from the machines.

The commissioners wanted to increase the county's \$5,000 flat permit fee on the machines to as much as \$10,000 per machine. But the legislature passed a measure prohibiting the county from imposing new fees.

"I've never seen legislation where the local government is blocked," said Commissioner Wilson H. Parran (D-Huntingtown), the board's president. He called the legislation "unprecedented" and said that although three county businesses will reap the benefits, the county will get only \$15,000 in permit fees.

Commissioner Linda L. Kelley (R-At Large) called the state action "good ol' boy politics" and said it was a "prime example of who you know and not what you know."

The commissioners also had sharp words for the state for using \$360 million of income taxes normally returned to the counties to help close the state's budget gap.

"They stole the county's money," said Commissioner Susan Shaw (R-Huntingtown).

The commissioners also approved about \$18.5 million in bond sales during Tuesday's meeting to continue work on Calvert Middle School, the aquatic center and on several road projects.