

FAIRFAX COUNTY FEDERATION OF CITIZENS ASSOCIATIONS
BOARD MINUTES
May 22, 2003 DRAFT

ATTENDEES PRESENT Art Wells, Dolores Moseke, Jean Packard, Wade Smith, George Smith , Jeffrey Parnes, Bill Hanks, Mike Tobias, Ray Steele, and Carol Hawn ABSENT: Merrily Pierce, Sally Ormsby, Mike Thompson, Jim Kitchim, John Fee, Johna Gagnon, Peter Brintzer,

Speaker: Frank Blechman, Northern Virginia Representative for the Virginia Organizing Project. The VOP is a statewide grassroots organization dedicated to challenging injustice by empowering people in local communities to address issues that affect the quality of their lives. By building relationships with individuals and groups throughout the state, VOP strives to get them to work together, democratically and non-violently, for change. Their website is www.virginia.organizing.org.

Mr. Blechman has been involved with a variety of community building endeavors over the years. He taught conflict resolution at George Mason University. One of the organizations he has supported for the past five years is the Virginia Organizing Project. It is based in Charlottesville and has provided technical assistance to community organizations mainly in the rural and small towns of Virginia. They have expanded into the Tidewater area, Richmond and Roanoke in recent years. They have begun to do some statewide campaigns and about a year ago began working on finance reform.

Virginia has this very peculiar relationship with its local governments. It is very restrictive in how they allow local governments to manage their own finances. It is a system that has three distinctive sets of problems.

1. It is antique. It was designed 100 years ago to tax the agricultural economy that was in existence at that time. Land, goods and to a small degree income is taxed.
2. It is inadequate. Twenty years ago sales of goods was 65% of the economy; now it is down to only 40% and shrinking fast. When the highest tax rate is \$17,000 and the state is not taxing a service economy and when there are loopholes for evading significant amounts of taxes, the state does not have enough to pay the bills. Virginia is not a conservative state; it is a libertarian state. Virginians want as little government as possible. But even if the economy returns to historical levels, there will not be enough revenue to meet the basic constitutional requirements.
3. It is unfair. In Fairfax it is unfair in certain categories like education. For every \$1.00 Fairfax sends to Richmond, it receives only 18 cents. Overall, Fairfax only receives 38 cents on the dollar. As a wealthy district, citizens understand that they must help the poorer parts of the state but 18 cents is not fair. When bills are introduced to raise taxes, citizens are reluctant to vote for them when they perceive that they will not get any benefit for the tax increase. The calibrations for who receives what are clearly not fair to the counties. This goes back to the Constitution of 1926 that did not find counties urban areas. In addition, we have a system where the bottom 20 percent of taxpayers pay a proportionately higher tax rate than the top 20 percent.

State leaders in both parties have recognized the need for comprehensive reform. The finance committee leaders have said that we must fix not only how we raise money but how we allocate money. Some of the finance committee leaders are being challenged in the primaries from the right so there will not be hearings until after the June 10 primary. However, if they survive, we can hopefully see some reform.

Who should we have at the June 19, 2003 Membership meeting? After discussing options on social issues, transportation and rail, it was settled that air quality should be the topic because of its impact on federal funding for transportation. Approach COG for a speaker.

Treasurer's report was given at last weeks meeting.

C. Hawn went over The Federation calendar Some potential speakers:

- The new Director of the Park Authority
- Fairfax County has a very vibrant faith and action community
Sharon Bulova is the political person involved with that and Sandy Chisholm has a good presentation
- Delegate Callahan, Legislative update
- Hear one last time from Chairman Kate Hanley and perhaps the new chairman of the Board
- Emergency preparedness
- Bob Chase from the Transportation Alliance – Will look at this on June 26, 2003 Board Meeting
- New fire chief

Procedures Manual will be reviewed on June 26, 2003 and finally voted on. Ground rules are that the manual has to be read ahead of time. Cannot go over it page by page and the full amount of time can only be 20 minutes.

Committee Reports:

None

New business:

Laurel Hill hearings: May 27 Braddock District Supervisor's Office 7:00-9:00 p.m.
 May 29 Government Center, Rooms 9 and 10 7:00-9:00 p.m.

C. Hawn would like to meet with all of the umbrella groups in the county and she would like a list of when they meet.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Addendum:

Who Pays and Who Benefits? A VA Tax Workshop
Virginia..organizing newsletter
Proposed Meeting Dates Calendar for June 2003 through December 2004