

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of May 20, 2004
MINUTES

The meeting of FCFCA was held at the Packard Center at 7:30 p.m. (Attendance list is attached.) President Carol Hawn introduced Johnna Gagnon, the Lee District Representative on the Federation Board, and Kathy Simmons, the Emergency Information Officer for Fairfax County.

Program — The subject of the meeting was Emergency Preparedness. The first speaker, Kathy Simmons, introduced the others who appeared.

Kathy Simmons described the role of the Fairfax County Citizen Corps Council, which includes many community representatives, including members from the Federation and the county government. There are 44 citizens councils in Virginia and 1,000 in the United States. They partner with the community for emergency preparedness and response. The Fairfax CCCC coordinates the work of Neighborhood Watch, Volunteers in Police Service, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), and the Medical Reserve Corps. Affiliate organizations include the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and Volunteer Fairfax. The Web address for more information on any of these programs is www.fairfaxcountycitizencorps.org. Kathy Simmons also introduced Kathy Vernon, the District Coordinator for the American Red Cross.

The next speaker was Roy Shrou, an emergency management specialist with the county's emergency management office. The county coordinator for emergency management is Doug Bass and Gary Ball is the deputy coordinator. He addressed the new emphasis on emergency management since September 11 and noted the major emergency in the last year was Hurricane Isabel. He also described the new Emergency Operations Center and plans for a new building, co-located with key state and federal agencies, which the county hopes to open in 2008.

The next speaker was Chief David Rohr of the Fire and Rescue Department. Chief Rohr gave a brief overview of the department's size and operations. The department fields basic and advanced life support as well as paramedic engines and medevac capabilities, using police air transport. Officers cross-train in hazardous materials, technical rescue, swiftwater and marine operations, and urban search and rescue. The urban search and rescue team's most recent international deployment was to Bam, Iran, following the December 2003 earthquake.

Chief Rohr described the new National Incident Command System. Incident command establishes a single commander and clear hierarchy. National incident command will be used for major disasters such as the plane crash at the Pentagon. Chief Rohr also described a recent plane accident drill at Dulles Airport, noted that the department is adding a battalion chief for emergency preparedness, and mentioned the two new fire-and-rescue stations and the new EMS billing (presented in detail at an earlier Federation meeting). He also mentioned the Urban Area Security Initiative, homeland security funding for the metropolitan DC area. The first phase will be large-scale equipment purchases of back-up gear in case of chemical contamination.

The next speaker was Battalion Chief John Caussin, who provided a review of the Hurricane Isabel emergency on September 18 and 19, 2003. He noted that the flooding damage was somewhat limited because it resulted from a storm surge at high tide, rather than more widespread torrential rains. Many homes in the flooded Belleview area of New Alexandria were built on a 100-year flood plain, but constructed before there were formal building requirements. Chief Caussin showed photos of more recently built homes, which were undamaged.

Preparations for the hurricane began Monday, September 15. Chief Caussin attended a homeowner's association meeting in Belleview on September 17. Residents got a mixed message because a long-time resident told them flooding would not occur. Chief Caussin gave this as an example of the effect local leaders can have on community opinion. On September 18, the department staged boats nearby and evacuated New Alexandria and Belleview. By the morning of September 19, the area was flooded and several stranded residents were rescued by boat. The department provided seven days of active assistance, including dealing with immediate hazards, medical emergencies, and injuries (many related to stress or the initial clean-up) and checking on citizens. Since then there has been progress, but much remains to be done. Permits and engineering studies take time for a flood plain. Some houses have been elevated, others relocated.

The next speaker was Derek Rowan, an instructor for the CERT (Community Response Emergency Team) program. CERT teams started in California in the late 1980s and have been in existence in Virginia for four years. The teams consist of 12 to 25 volunteers who go through the training together and respond to emergencies as a unit. The training is especially good in Fairfax County because of the use of fire academy facilities, including live fires, and because it includes CPR and defibrillators in addition to the standard CERT course.

CERT units are intended to respond to local catastrophic emergencies during the period before emergency personnel reach the scene; this can be several days in a major emergency, such as Hurricane Andrew in Florida. In a 32-hour course, they learn incident command, triage and staging, light search and rescue, fire suppression, patient evacuation, disaster first aid, and emergency response. The instruction emphasizes improvisation using ordinary materials and debris. Derek Rowan noted that sponsors are needed, as well as additional volunteer groups.

The next speaker was Michelle Bachus of the Health Department, who spoke on the citizen medical reserve corps. The anthrax attacks put the department in a new, unfamiliar position as a first responder. The medical reserve corps was founded to offer help in this new role. Currently there are 1500 volunteers signed up, including doctors, nurses, and nonmedical volunteers. Nonmedical volunteers will be needed, for example, to help with crowd direction and management and other issues during medication dispensing or vaccinations of large groups. She encouraged Federation members to share information about the medical reserve corps.

The final speaker was Kathy Simmons, who described how the county communicates during emergencies. Methods include press releases to the media, bulletins on the county web site, the county emergency information telephone line (703-817-7771), Channel 16, and the emergency alert system. The county is looking toward a "reverse 911" system, but this is not yet installed. It will be limited to localized emergencies because of phone system capacity -- for example, a hostage barricade situation in a neighborhood. She recommended that citizens keep a battery-operated radio and at least one land-line phone, in case of power outages.

The speakers answered questions on topics such as use of Nextel and radios by first responders, coordination with Virginia Power in emergencies, how households can identify where their water comes from (in case of contaminated supplies), and back-up generators for power plants.

Business Meeting —

- a. The minutes of the April 15, 2004, Membership Meeting were moved, seconded, and approved as published.

- b. Acceptance of the treasurer's report for April (attached) was moved, seconded, and approved.

- c. President Carol Hawn reported that the county budget was approved, with a \$1.13 tax rate.
- d. Flint Webb reported that the county will have a new system for alert days, not only for ozone but also for particulate matter. He noted that an orange alert represents a violation of national ambient air-quality standards; those with asthma and other sensitivities should pay attention to orange, not just red. Stream management workshops continue. Flint was able to help improve the design of the new gas station being installed at the Pan Am shopping center and encouraged Federation members to alert him to similar localized environmental issues.
- e. Art Wells reported the Supervisors met on the 20 year solid-waste plan and decided to form a citizens task force, to which the Federation will nominate a member.
- f. President Carol Hawn yielded the floor to Art Wells to preside over the election of next year's Federation officers. The nominating committee, chaired by Art Wells, included Jeffrey Nolan, Bill Martin, John Swanson, Bill May, and Judy Harbat, who couldn't participate. Art Wells presented the following slate of nominees:

President—Carol A. Hawn
First Vice President—John Jennison
Second Vice President—Jeffrey Nolan
Recording Secretary—Esther Ferington
Corresponding Secretary—Jean Packard
Treasurer—Jeffrey M. Parnes

A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously to elect the nominees en bloc.

- g. Art Wells reported that he has been appointed to a review committee for selection of the new police chief. The committee is headed by County Executive Anthony Griffin. Four candidates will be selected to move to the next phase, interviews by the Supervisors.
- h. Jeffrey Nolan reported on the committee for Students with Disabilities. The group is concerned that special education has been dropped as a reporting requirement.
- i. President Carol Hawn reminded members of the annual membership dues form for associations. Under new business, she noted that the Federation has been asked to testify on May 24, 2004, in support of the EMS Transport Billing and that she will do so.

Next Membership Meeting: Thursday, June 17, 2004: Gerald Connolly, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors. Next Board meeting Thursday, June 24, 2004.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Addenda:

Fire and Rescue presentation, Chief David Rohr

CERT presentation, Derek Rowan

Join the Fairfax County Citizen Corps for Strong, Safe, Ready Fairfax County Communities

About Your Health Department, Fairfax County Health Department

Your Guide to Emergency Preparedness, Northern Virginia Regional Commission

Get Ready for Emergencies and Disasters, Virginia Department of Emergency Management

5 Actions for Emergency Preparedness; Emergency Preparedness Checklist; Adult Lifesaving Steps; and Before Disaster Strikes, American Red Cross