

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of November 17, 2005
MINUTES

This month's FCFCA meeting was devoted to one subject: the local and countywide impact of the large staffing increases at Fort Belvoir due to BRAC. The meeting was held at the Walt Whitman Middle School in the Mount Vernon District and was co-sponsored by the Mount Vernon Council. (Attendance list is attached.) Other customary business, such as approval of the minutes and the Treasurer's Report, was deferred to the December membership meeting. The meeting began at 7:30.

Program —

- a. Federation President John Jennison and Mount Vernon Council Co-Chair Errol Bergsagel called the meeting to order.

President John Jennison thanked the Mount Vernon Council for co-sponsoring the event and thanked Supervisor Gerry Hyland and Federation First Vice President Patrick Rea for obtaining the meeting space and for organizing the event and the panel of speakers. He explained the Federation represents citizens and homeowner associations throughout the county and introduced several of the Federation committee chairs, including Charles Dane (Education), Patrick Rea (Membership), Walt Sisson and Flint Webb (Environment), Steve DelBianco (Land Use), and Earl Flanagan and Roger Hoskins (Transportation), mentioning some of the issues now being reviewed, such as the School budget and stream re-classification. He noted that Carol Hawn, also chairman of Human Services, had Citizen of the Year nomination forms, also available on the Federation website (www.fairfaxfederation.org); the nomination deadline is January 15. Membership meetings are on the third Thursday of each month; the programs for the next three are Q & A with Chairman Connolly (December 15), Education and No Child Left Behind impact, with FCPS Deputy Superintendent Brad Draeger (January 19), and the Chesapeake Bay clean-up, with Supervisor Penny Gross (February 16).

Mount Vernon Council Co-Chair Errol Bergsagel noted that the council is an umbrella group for associations in the Mount Vernon District. It meets in the same space, the Jack Knowles Lecture Hall at Walt Whitman Middle School, the last Wednesday of each month. Its committees include Budget and Finance, Consumer Affairs, Education, Environment and Recreation, Health and Human Services, Affordable Housing, Planning and Zoning, Public Safety, and Transportation. Supervisor Gerry Hyland attends the meetings. Minutes, resolutions, schedules, and other materials are on the Council website, www.mvcca.org. He thanked the Federation for the opportunity to co-sponsor this important meeting.

- b. John Jennison introduced the panel members: the Honorable Gerry Hyland, Supervisor of the Mount Vernon District; Leon Marshall, the BRAC Implementation Leader for Fort Belvoir; the Honorable Dan Storck, Mount Vernon School Board Member; Gary Chevalier, FCPS Assistant Superintendent; and Jan Vaughn, of VDOT's Arlington/Fairfax office.

- c. Supervisor Hyland congratulated the Federation on co-sponsoring this meeting in the Mount Vernon District and expressed his thanks. He noted that both the county and the Army were very surprised by the large number of persons who will be based at Fort Belvoir. He said that planning for these changes was like trying to get your hands around jello. Initially the projected military and civilian increase in positions was 12,000, then 16,000, then 18,000. It is now 21,000. After the first announcement, he and the county staff immediately began speaking with Fort Belvoir's commandant on how to facilitate transportation of so many people in and out of the base. Transportation improvements are needed to make this work. At a bare minimum, back of the envelope estimate, these improvements would cost \$350 million. Senator Warner has the list corresponding to this

figure. BRAC won't work without such improvements and the financial help to make them happen. Under the BRAC law, there are just 6 years before all 21,000 people arrive.

In addition to financial help, the county needs assistance to learn the basic parameters quickly. First, where the 21,000 people will be located, either within Fort Belvoir or at the separate Engineering Proving Ground. (In response, Leon Marshall stated that a development consultant has been hired and will have a preliminary report by April.) Second, a survey of the personnel at the agencies being transferred, to include where they live now, whether they will move, and how many children they have at what ages. (Leon Marshall stated that a survey has gone out, but does not include questions about the children in this round.) While personnel will turn over, this is the best data we can get now.

d. Supervisor Hyland noted BRAC poses a special challenge to the southeastern county because i) Lorton/Newington/Laurel Hill is already the fastest growing part of the county, with 27,000 more persons projected in the next 5 years; ii) the BRAC realignment will bring with it defense contractors and their additional employees; iii) the National Museum for the U.S. Army on Fort Belvoir is projected to have 1 million visitors a year; and iv) the Lorton Arts Foundation will also attract traffic at Laurel Hill. He also later noted the projected redevelopment of Springfield Mall and of the nearby 100 acres of the GSA warehouse area. In 6 to 10 years, and realistically 6 rather than 10, there will be a new southeastern part of the county that we will not recognize. The county must be joined at the hip with the federal, state, local, and military leadership in making this happen and doing it right. He then asked Leon Marshall whether the \$1 billion allocation for BRAC transportation improvements (nationwide) includes improvements off the base, or only on the base.

e. Leon Marshall said that no money from that fund is available off post. So far \$30 million has been allocated on post for road widening, lights, and so on. He thanked the Federation, the Council, and Supervisor Hyland for holding the meeting. He said that prior to the BRAC decision, which was unexpected, the fort had been planning for growth of 3,000 to 6,000 personnel. He also noted the personnel figures that BRAC used were from Fiscal Year 2003 and actual current levels at the agencies are higher; this accounts for the growth in the estimated number of new personnel to 21,000. (There is actually a 23,000 increase coupled with a 2,000 decrease.) This September the fort began an implementation plan based on the BRAC recommendation. It calls for more than 3 billion dollars in construction costs for a total of 600 million square feet. This is the largest ever DOD BRAC initiative and requires resource assistance. An RFP has been issued for a master developer to create plans that will integrate Fort Belvoir and the surrounding community. A major aspect of this plan is where to correctly site facilities on Belvoir, which has not been determined, and may well include the Engineering Proving Ground, a great potential resource that has previously not been used.

Fort Belvoir outreach has included several meetings with local Chambers of Commerce and Rotary Clubs. Clearly transportation is the top issue. Funding for transportation will come after the Master Plan and the Environmental Impact Statement and will affect both Fairfax and Prince William counties. The Army will have to mitigate this.

A web-based zip code survey has gone out to the agencies being transferred. Some are classified and must survey their own employees and then report aggregate data back. Many could not or would not act until BRAC became law on November 9. This survey is transportation-related only. In the first week, there has already been a 10 percent response. (In response, Supervisor Hyland stated that for planning purposes, information is needed for every single person, not a statistical sample). The National Geospatial Agency, at 7700 employees, is the farthest away, in Bethesda, so the decisions of those employees are of particular concern; however, NGA operates around the clock every day, so it may have less impact on commuter flows. Other large groups are 10,000 DOD employees and 2,000 Army employees. He noted that the commandant has stated there must be no daylight between post and community in planning for this major transition.

Part of the change will be a large new hospital. With the closure of Walter Reed, half the patient list will be reassigned here. An audience member said that some local veterans now going to West Virginia will almost certainly choose to go to this new hospital and add further to the patient load. Supervisor Hyland noted that the location of the hospital has major implications for traffic flow and trip generation, and that Fort Belvoir already has one of the largest PX/commissaries in the world. Leon Marshall stated that the hospital siting is at the top of the commandant's list. It was later stated that the hospital is expected to generate hundreds of thousands of trips a year. However, many will not coincide with rush hour.

Under the law, the realignment must be complete in 6 years from the date the president approved the recommendation, so the deadline for completion of the entire BRAC process is September 15, 2011. All military construction should be complete by then. Personnel will transfer primarily in 2010 and 2011, although the first 7 people will come in 2007; all will be at Fort Belvoir by September 15, 2011. Under the current residential housing program, the fort is only allowed to supply 25 percent of the military housing need. Although the recently completed housing analysis will be redone, it probably will not change. Supervisor Hyland urged an increase from the 2000 units now planned to 4000 as a way of increasing affordable housing.

f. Members of the audience, including some Federation chairs and some members of the Mount Vernon Council, asked several questions at this point.

On the environment, one question was whether the preliminary BRAC information was included in the recent transportation conformity analysis. Mark Cannalli from the county transportation staff, who was in attendance, stated that the July analysis used a BRAC figure of 18,000 but may also have double-counted some people.

Most questions were on transportation. Mark reiterated the need for hard data on where facilities will be and where people will be going, to assess options that include extensions of the Blue or Yellow lines, Rex express bus services, and a revised TDM (traffic demand management) program to encourage carpooling and use of a base shuttle. Earl Flanagan asked whether VDOT has time to incorporate exits from the I-95 express lanes to the county parkway at Newington. Mark noted that VDOT has a short-term, medium, and long-term list for projects. The ramps from I-95 to the parkway are on the long-term list and are not currently funded. Jan Vaughn of VDOT noted that a decision about HOT lanes on I-95 is still pending, but expected next month.

In response to other questions, Mark noted that currently 67 percent of personnel at Fort Belvoir live south and west of the base. He said that the planned section of Fairfax County Parkway through the Engineering Proving Ground was put on hold by VDOT in May 2005 due to contamination issues related to petroleum spills and underground pipes. It would have been complete by 2008 but is now unscheduled pending a resolution of the problem, though still funded. He also stated that the Route One/Telegraph Road connector is going forward without question and will not be affected by BRAC. Supervisor Hyland noted that this connector road, built in response to the September 11 road closures on the base, will be open to partial traffic in 2008 and complete in 2009. This timespan of eight years from need to completion is two more years than are available to complete the BRAC project.

There was much discussion about the difficulty of obtaining firm data on traffic and residential patterns in the very limited time remaining. Two factors are how many current personnel in the agencies will respond to the voluntary survey, and how those aggregate answers will change due to turnover in the next 6 years. Supervisor Hyland noted that some decisions need to be made now based on zip codes of existing employees in agencies scheduled to be relocated to Fort Belvoir. He agreed such data will change as relocation occurs, but is sufficiently accurate for preliminary planning of Fairfax County services. He requested this data.

Mount Vernon Council Co-Chair Errol Bergsagel raised two questions from the council: how to expedite “throughput” of traffic on Route One that is not going to the fort, including encouraging this traffic to use I-95, and easing access to the fort by neighbors in the local zip code area, perhaps through a green id tag system.

On mass transit, Supervisor Hyland stated that rail has got to be brought to this part of the county or BRAC will not work, whether it’s Metrorail or light rail along Route One. The audience also raised the question of ferries on the Potomac to open up housing options in Maryland or downriver in Virginia. Leon Marshall stated there are several good locations at the fort for a landing. The problem in the past has been too limited demand for this service.

g. Some questions were also raised on education impacts. School Board Member Dan Storck stated that information is the top priority; the schools need data to anticipate where people are coming from and what capacity is needed where. Currently, elementary schools in the area are growing and at capacity, but there is some capacity at some middle and high schools. Once data is available, the schools can plan, but at least a 5-year head start is needed to do this right. Although countywide enrollment has recently declined slightly, this area does not share in that trend and is growing rapidly. There is also an issue with the accuracy of local enrollment projections, since South County High School, just built, has filled up much faster than expected. Use of limited school capacity outside the immediate district is unlikely to work well because of the problem of long bus rides and a desire for schools to be part of the local neighborhood. Lacking data so far, communities south of Fort Belvoir expect to be most heavily affected. Leon Marshall told Supervisor Hyland that data on school age children will be included in the next web-based survey of those affected by BRAC.

h. In a further discussion of the timeline, Leon Marshall explained that to get federal DOD base access funds, hard numbers are required. A study will be conducted next year that will lead to an application for these funds. Supervisor Hyland stated that according to the usual county process, it would take 10 to 12 years to complete the roads. He said that “someone has to be creative to make this work.” Private-public partnerships were discussed, as was the possibility of using old railbeds still on Fort Belvoir, which could be given tracks again.

i. Leon Marshall noted that this BRAC transition is unprecedented in scale, which is one reason we do not have good data from any similar action to guide us. Fort Belvoir’s only previous BRAC experience was to relocate 5,000 people from Cameron Station in Alexandria to Fort Belvoir. DOD has experience with large-scale closures and transfers between widely separated parts of the country, but not within the same region on this scale.

j. Federation President John Jennison thanked all the members of the panel and all those who attended. He appreciated the opportunity for all parties to assess the impact of BRAC on the region and the challenge to Fairfax County resources.

Next Federation Membership Meeting: December 15, 2005.

Next Federation Board Meeting: December 1, 2005.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.