

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of January 19, 2006
MINUTES

The meeting of FCFCA was held at the Packard Center at 7:30 p.m. (Attendance list is attached to file copy.) Some business was conducted before the program. For simplicity, the program is recorded first, then the business meeting. President John Jennison introduced Charles Dane, Chair of the Education Committee. Charles Dane introduced Deputy Superintendent Brad Draeger of the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS).

Program —

Brad Draeger had been asked to speak on two subjects: briefly on the proposed school budget and at greater length on the impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

He noted that 95 percent of the budget is from state and local sources. The expenditures for school programs are similar to last year, except for those increases prioritized in four budget tiers, which collectively reach the proposed total increase of just under 10 percent. Baseline spending is \$2.1 billion. Enrollment in the schools is flat; this may be due to fewer multifamily homes in some parts of the county. Increases in the number of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students, special needs students, and students from poverty remain high, but less than in the past; the number of ESOL students increased by 29 percent, versus 40-50 percent in recent years. The county competes with Loudoun County for new teachers, with Loudoun hiring 1200 next year and Fairfax 1600. Loudoun has committed to an “initiative for excellence” taking up 74 percent of their county’s revenues for the schools. They are spending more per pupil than Fairfax County. FCPS wants to increase its compensation for teachers with master’s degrees to compete with Montgomery County levels in this area.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has five goals to be met by 2014, including proficiency in math and reading for 100 percent of the students; mastery of English by 100 percent of limited-English-proficiency (LEP) students; 100 percent of students to be taught by highly qualified teachers; and 100 percent of schools to be safe, drug-free, and conducive to learning. Some of these goals come with sanctions. If a school doesn’t meet its yearly achievement targets, it can be forced to transport students to other schools of their parents’ choice and to set aside some Title I funds for private tutoring; if problems persist, it must be reconstituted. NCLB includes no measures to increase the number of highly qualified teachers, who are hard to find for math and science. Some states are changing licensure and certification so more teachers can be labeled as highly qualified. NCLB also emphasizes more information for parents. FCPS is now posting Standards of Learning (SOL) scores and safety violations online for all schools and is developing school profiles that will include the percentage of highly qualified teachers and other figures.

NCLB relies on testing six subgroups—limited English proficiency (LEP), black, white, Hispanic, learning disabled, and economically disadvantaged—at several grade levels. Scores for all subgroups must meet rising yearly goals set by the Commonwealth, leading to a 100 percent passing rate by 2014. At least 95 percent of each group must be tested. Subgroups in a school are tested if there are more than 50, a cutoff level set by the state. Special education subgroups are a challenge; at first 1 percent could be exempted, but now 3 percent can. The system may be moving toward alternative assessments. LEP students are given a one year exemption from testing even though it takes seven years to achieve fluency. However, after students leave the ESOL program their scores are counted in the LEP group for an additional two years.

Under NCLB, 163 of the 188 Fairfax County sites, or 87 percent, have made adequate yearly progress (AYP). To meet the standards for next year, 122 schools must improve on this year’s scores. Increases are needed in 402 out of the 2632 possible NCLB subgroups. More than a third are subgroups of students with learning disabilities. Sixty-six schools are at highest risk of failing future tests, of which 27 have low scores only in the learning disabled area; this pattern is the same nationwide. Dogwood and McNair

elementary schools had to allow transfers out under NCLB. Dogwood made AYP this year and is on track to progress out of this status (a “passing” performance is required for two years). McNair is carved out of several poverty areas and its boundaries need to be rebalanced. New schools like McNair also take two years to qualify for Title I. A portion of its Title I funds have been set aside for use by parents in hiring private tutoring organizations from an approved list. NCLB success stories include Hybla Valley Elementary and Irving, Kilmer, Lanier, and Twain middle schools. Dr. Draeger said that the Gifted and Talented program would be maintained, and that he is holding schools accountable for educating the more advanced students at a high level.

The schools are using assessment coaches and the Benchmark Assessment Resource Tool (BART) so teachers know how they are doing throughout the year. Other strategies include targeting money to specific schools, equitable staffing and allocation of resources by poverty and ESOL rates, community-based summer schools, and expansion of full-day kindergarten to more schools.

A federal consultant’s audit determined NCLB’s cost to FCPS is over \$60 million. The NCLB cost per student in Virginia ranges from \$95 to \$900; in Fairfax County it is \$200 to \$300 per student. Costs will rise as the testing of grades 4, 6, and 7 begins and targets increase. Unlike the SOLs, NCLB adds subgroups, but it only addresses two of the four SOL topics. NCLB pushes SOL scores higher in math and reading, but there is now less emphasis on science and social studies.

Business Meeting —

- a. The minutes for the October 20 and November 17 membership meetings were approved unanimously as written.
- b. President John Jennison shared the new Federation brochures and thanked Carol Hawn, Esther Ferington, and others for their work. He noted that he will ask the Board to consider a new Senior Services Committee. He reported Congressman Tom Davis is interested in a debate next fall co-sponsored by the Federation and League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area; the Democratic candidate will be approached after that primary. Arlington County Civic Federation wishes to work with the Federation on legislative matters. There will be a celebration of the completed county trail system on May 7 and the Federation could sponsor a half-marathon. President John Jennison testified to the local state legislative delegation and the testimony was well-received. Flint Webb has been reappointed as the Federation representative to the Metropolitan Washington Task Force on Air Quality.
- c. The Treasurer’s Report was presented and approved.
- d. Bill Hanks, chairman of the Resolution Committee, introduced the stream reclassification resolution from the Land Use and Environment Committees. Sally Ormsby asked that one passage be restored to the original wording as a friendly amendment. The resolution was passed unanimously.
- e. Esther Ferington drew members’ attention to the report on the county and nonprofit response to the 1367 Gulf Coast evacuees registered in Fairfax County. President John Jennison suggested a portion of the Citizen of the Year banquet proceeds might be donated to this cause.
- f. The next newsletter deadline is January 30.
- g. Patrick Rea reported a good response to the recent membership mailing, resulting in 12 new members. With the new brochure, a broader mailing is planned. Carol Hawn noted that 50 brochures will go to each Supervisor and 25 to each library, with others at the government center. Jeff Parnes requested a PDF of the brochure for the website. Charles Dane suggested the district representatives compare their membership list with the Federation’s, and use the brochures to personally contact potential members. President John Jennison suggested sharing a booth at Celebrate Fairfax.

h. Jeff Parnes reported that the website now has all Federation Bulletins (newsletters) from September 2005 to date; all meeting agendas; and all membership minutes. He has updated all the District Council contacts. Links on the homepage that have been requested are being added.

i. Charles Dane reported that the FCPS education program budget will not be issued until mid-March, making it difficult to compare changes in the base program. The current budget proposal represents a 10 percent increase, which seems unlikely to prevail.

j. Merrily Pierce noted there are openings on the Citizen Corps Council. The council also has \$30,000 from a federal grant, and Citizen Corps member groups, such as the Federation, can apply.

k. Carol Hawn reported a homelessness summit is scheduled for April 7 at Freddie Mac on a plan to end homelessness in the county in ten years. Let her know if you are interested in attending.

l. Flint Webb reported on the adequate outfall revisions for the Public Facilities Manual (PFM). He noted that there are new air quality standards this February. The ozone transport commission, encompassing states from Virginia to Maine, is trying to coordinate requirements. The group hopes to have model rule legislation by the end of this session. The federal Department of Energy has mandated that the Mirant coal-fired plant in Alexandria must continue to operate due to a lack of other back-up power sources for the District of Columbia. It is exceeding the national ambient standard for sulfur dioxide by a factor of 15.

m. Roger Hoskins attended the Tyson's task force and found it interesting.

n. District council reports were as follows: Sally Ormsby reported that the recent Providence District Council meeting included a task force meeting with the Tyson's land use consultants. New officers were elected; the new chair for Providence is Charles Hall. Art Wells reported that Braddock District Council is gearing up for a new round of association workshops. Judy Harbeck reported from Mount Vernon that the next meeting will be on affordable housing, including determining what the \$18 million from last year is going toward. Development of one of the last Route One parcels, North Hill, is in some dispute. BRAC remains a concern, but is in a holding pattern. Roger Hoskins reported the Mason District Council sponsored a seminar on personal financial planning. Jeff Parnes reported that the next Sully District Council meeting will be on public safety.

o. Sally Ormsby reported the Citizen of the Year date will be either March 12 or March 19. Carol Hawn reported that the selection committee for the award is scheduled to meet shortly.

p. Mary Anne Lecos reported that a new nonprofit effort associated with the Office for Children has been formed with the goal of promoting early childhood development and raising funds from the business community. The Freddie Mac Foundation has donated \$250,000. She is on the board. She asked that the Federation become a member of the School Readiness Network, at no cost to the Federation, and add a link to the Fairfax Futures website, www.fairfaxfutures.org, on the Federation website. Both requests were unanimously approved.

q. Sally Ormsby has reviewed the legislative bills and will go over this at the Board meeting. She attended environmental lobby day in Richmond and went to a briefing by Senator Patsy Ticer on a bill to cut mercury emissions at sites like the Mirant plant. She secured more sponsors for the bill.

New Business

Bill Hanks reminded members of the need for home computer security given the upsurge of malicious software. He noted Osama bin Laden's threat to "get you in your homes" could suggest cyberattacks.

Next Membership Meeting: February 16, 2006, “Chesapeake Bay” with the Honorable Penny Gross,
Mason District Supervisor.

Next Board Meeting: January 26, 2006

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.