

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of February 16, 2006
MINUTES

The meeting of FCFCA was held at the Packard Center at 7:30 p.m. (Attendance list is attached to file copy.) President John Jennison introduced Flint Webb and Walt Sisson, co-chairs of the Environment Committee. They introduced Supervisor Penelope Gross.

Program —

Supervisor Gross had been invited to speak on efforts to clean up the Chesapeake Bay.

She began by saying that the clean up effort will require partnerships between government, nonprofits, the environmental community, and the public. She reviewed water's significance in state, local, and even international disputes. Locally, we have reservoirs that will maintain the Potomac's flow of drinking water even in drought periods, but more than half of the U.S. population relies on groundwater. A dispute between Maryland and Virginia over a Virginia intake pipe in the Potomac ultimately had to be resolved by the Supreme Court.

For many years, the Chesapeake Bay's water quality was not a policy focus. The Bay was seen primarily as a regional resource. The regional multi-state Chesapeake Bay Program was established in 1983. In 1998-99, the Chesapeake Bay 2000 agreement was drafted. This led to the Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee, of which Supervisor Gross was the chair. The committee work was based on four principles: voluntary action, voice, equity, and good science. The Metropolitan Areas Working Group reached out to Councils of Governments from Baltimore to Hampton Roads, with considerable outreach to other organizations and local governments.

The Chesapeake Bay 2000 agreement provided a roadmap to delisting the Bay as an impaired water body by 2010, but it depends upon EPA numbers on water quality standards. In 2003 and 2004, the Chesapeake Bay Blue Ribbon Watershed Finance Committee was established to explore ways to pay for the cleanup. It was chaired by former governor Baliles; Supervisor Gross was its only local official member.

The committee's 2004 report, Saving a National Treasure, is also a good overview of the Chesapeake Bay clean-up issue; it is available online at <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/pubs/blueribbon/index.cfm>. During deliberations of the committee, the total estimated clean-up cost rose from \$18 billion to \$28 billion. The committee proposed a fund of \$12 billion with an 80/20 federal-state split, for a total capitalization of \$15 billion. There would be a Chesapeake Bay Finance Authority committee; Supervisor Gross also served on the committee to establish the structure of the authority. But the money was not available. Reallocating existing money will not be enough. An interstate compact is also needed. The report was shelved.

Other recommendations in the report included better coordination among federal programs affecting water quality in the Bay and in the headwater states; making the Secretary of Agriculture a member of the executive council, rather than an appointee; allowing cap-and-trade permits but not allowing their use to build excess capacity in local treatment plants; fees for stormwater management (locally, the Fairfax Board of Supervisors has chosen instead to dedicate one penny of the real estate tax, avoiding administration and billing costs); a specialty fertilizer surcharge; and efforts to educate homeowners and to promote low-impact development. Legislation to add information on runoff and environmental effects to specialty (home use) fertilizer bags was killed last year. Senator Patsy Ticer has reintroduced it this year, but it has been carried over to 2007.

In other efforts, state and local governments have had a meeting of roundtables. Supervisor Gross chairs the Potomac Watershed Roundtable. The Virginia Watersheds Alliance of all Virginia watersheds has formed.

Locally, the Health Department and Department of Environmental Quality disagree on septic systems, which are a growing source of nitrogen pollution in the Bay. Peat systems and Wisconsin land mounds have a high rate of failure, yet have been approved by the Health Department, which needs to coordinate with DEQ. There are a variety of local initiatives to limit stormwater runoff, including green roofs.

Supervisor Gross encouraged continued advocacy on water quality and watershed issues; the debate over the flush tax and water quality last year was a good sign. Governor Warner's last budget proposal included increased funding for the Water Quality Improvement Fund. She encouraged a dialogue, not "us against them", among all regions and groups. She is heartened by the stormwater management penny and said we should get cracking on getting the projects built as soon as possible. She would like to see riparian buffers planted along streams, volunteers energized, and the biggest splash for the cash.

We are at a turning point as the population grows, the forests disappear, and time is running out.

Supervisor Gross also responded to questions on increased numbers of diseased fish in parts of the Potomac, riparian barriers for cattle, loan programs for expensive no-till or low-till planting machines, linkage between nitrogen pollution in the air and water through air deposition, impact of infill development on trees and impervious surfaces, and tree preservation. She said that the main sources of water pollution from Fairfax County are in nonpoint source stormwater runoff, some due to construction, most to everyday activities, which includes sediment, grit, heavy metals, oil, fertilizers, and more. On the positive side, phosphorus levels in the Potomac are greatly reduced due to the federal ban on phosphorus in detergents. The county's backlog of stormwater management projects is so great that it would require 20 cents of the real estate tax to eliminate it all in one year; in practice, that would not be possible anyway, as the projects must be done over time. The main purpose of these projects is to stabilize stream beds; a stream restoration in Kingstowne a few years ago was a model project.

In response to a question as to what the Federation can do to get the word out, she suggested sharing simple suggestions with members—perhaps 5 bullet points—that could be included in the newsletter. For example, homeowners should fertilize (if at all) only in the fall, not in the spring.

Business Meeting —

- a. The minutes for the January 19 membership meeting were approved unanimously as written.
- b. Patrick Rea reported that membership letters had been sent out to associations in the Mason District in advance of this evening's program with Supervisor Gross. Follow-up contacts are planned.
- c. The Treasurer's Report was presented and approved.
- d. Carol Hawn noted the next newsletter deadline is March 12.
- e. Jeff Parnes reported that the Federation website now includes a password-accessible section where Board members can post materials as an alternative to sending them out as e-mail attachments.
- f. Charles Dane reported that the school system has reported a \$15 million carryover from the previous fiscal year. Due to the carryover, the requested increase in the transfer from the county has been reduced from 9.8 percent to 8.8 percent.
- g. Flint Webb reported that the Technical Advisory Group is working on reasonably available control measures (RACM) to reach air-quality attainment. He said that the city of Alexandria has had a setback in efforts to keep the Mirant plant from operating.

h. President John Jennison asked whether there were Bay-friendly water runoff tips for homeowners that could be included in the Federation newsletter, building on Supervisor's Gross's suggestion. Flint Webb and Walt Sisson will work on this.

i. Steve DelBianco reported on the zoning ordinance amendments, for which staff reports are to be forthcoming. These amendments will affect lot widths and yard setbacks, which could increase teardowns and overbuilds.

j. Sally Ormsby reported that the General Assembly session has been very active. The day before this meeting was crossover day, the deadline by which bills must cross from one house to the other. There is a new rule allowing subcommittees to kill a bill without action by the full committee, and without a recorded vote. She put forward a resolution opposing the new subcommittee rule. Charles Dane moved to table it until the next legislative program. His motion was approved 14 to 10.

k. Jeff Parnes reported regarding the Transportation Advisory Commission that the Transportation Plan, part of the county's Comprehensive Plan, has been up for review. An advance copy of community responses was made available to the TAC and is available online or through members' local TAC representative or Supervisor's office.

l. In reports from District Council representatives, Art Wells reported Braddock is planning workshops and also hopes to improve communications between district councils and homeowner associations. Judy Harbeck reported from Mount Vernon that there is debate about whether to develop the last large parcel along Route One, a 15 acre lot called North Hill across from Beacon Mall, for affordable housing; the alternative is to preserve it as green space. She reported that infill construction has become a particular issue in Hollin Hills, where many existing homes are built on two lots. Jeff Parnes reported from Sully that the Sully District Council is hoping to get the Western Fairfax County Citizens Association to come to the district council, which will now look at overall Sully issues.

m. Sally reported that the Citizen of the Year selections have been made; the banquet is March 19. The invitations will be mailed shortly. The cost is \$60 a person. The invitation flyer will also be on the website.

Next Membership Meeting: March 23, 2006, County Executive Tony Griffin on FY 2007 county budget

Next Board Meeting: February 23, 2006

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.