

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of September 21, 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 reported on the successful September 19 debate for the 11th District that the Federation co-sponsored with the League of Women Voters, which featured incumbent Congressman Tom Davis, Democratic candidate Andrew Hurst, and Independent Green candidate Ferdinando Greco. He introduced two Health Department speakers, Dr. Raja'a Satouri and Donna Foster of the Medical Reserve Corps, who spoke about the county's preparations for pandemic flu.

Program —

Dr. Satouri said that seasonal flu, which usually occurs in December to March, represents a "drift" from previous flus rather than a sudden "shift" to a new virus; there is some immunity in the population from vaccines and past flus, and antivirals are often effective against it. Season flu does not pose a threat to the local economy and causes relatively few deaths, although she strongly encourages everyone to get their flu shots. By contrast, a pandemic flu is a new virus that causes serious illness and spreads easily between people. The avian flu (H5N1) is new and serious, but it does not spread easily between people, so in its current form, it is not pandemic flu. It is a cause for concern, however, because flu viruses mutate rapidly and it could develop the ability to spread easily. Past pandemic flus include the Spanish flu (H1N1) of 1918, with 40 million deaths; the Asian flu (H2N2) of 1957, with 2 million deaths; and the Hong Kong flu (H3N2) of 1968, with 700,000 deaths. Computer models indicate that pandemic flu is likely in the next ten years. We don't know whether it will be based on H5N1 and when it will come.

A pandemic would break out in many parts of the world at once. In each area, it would occur in two or three waves over 12 to 18 months. Each wave would last two to three months. The federal government plans to develop vaccines and antiviral drugs as soon as pandemic flu is identified anywhere in the world, but these would not be ready for the first wave; they might be ready for the second or third wave.

The county plan for pandemic flu is at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/pandemicflu/countyplan.pdf. State and federal governments will provide very little assistance because they too will be overwhelmed. Fairfax County's plans assume that up to 35 percent of the population would be affected, or 50 percent counting family members of the patients. Planning for a pandemic began in October 2005 and has included county and city agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector; it is being led by the two deputy county executives. The two thrusts of the plan are public health and critical infrastructure.

The plan aims to limit the number of deaths and illnesses, preserve essential government functions, and minimize social disruptions and economic loss. The Health Department's roles will include disease tracking and control, community disease prevention, health system coordination, mass fatality response, communications, and laboratory services. The health system will experience extreme shortages of staff, beds, morgue space, and counseling services; demand will outpace supply. One estimate is that the number of deaths in the county in six weeks would equal the normal number in six months. The avian flu attacks the young and healthy; if this is true of the pandemic flu, the working population will be the most affected, including health care staff. Businesses can expect about 50 percent absenteeism during each wave. Encouragement of "social distancing" to avoid contagion will also have a big impact on small businesses such as restaurants.

Citizens associations can help by providing basic information now in public meetings, such as website addresses, flyers, and phone line information. They can identify neighbors with special needs in advance and check on them if a pandemic (or other emergency) occurs. During a pandemic, they can address rumors and fear, follow up on those with special needs, and encourage people to follow health advisories.

Individuals can stay informed, follow cough etiquette (cover cough with arm, not hand), wash their hands, stay home when sick, get a flu shot each year, check the CDC website for travel health advisories, and put together a home disaster preparedness kit that would include the usual supplies as well as antifever medications, a thermometer, and comfort medications for cough and nasal congestion. A three-to-five day food and water supply will also allow healthy people exposed to the flu to stay home during the incubation period to ensure they are not coming down with it and spreading it.

Donna Foster of the Medical Reserve Corps reminded the group that the MRC is a volunteer organization that is part of the Citizen Corps program; it includes both medical and nonmedical volunteers. The corps will help in dispensing in other types of health emergencies and perhaps in second or third wave of flu. For pandemic flu, volunteers will be needed to man the agency's information line and to check up on quarantined households by phone, recording the symptoms, making sure supplies are adequate, and so on. The corps currently has 3500 volunteers but needs many more, and hopes to have a huge volunteer pool for any eventuality, including a biological terrorist attack or other health emergency.

Business Meeting —

- a. The minutes for the June 15 membership meeting were approved unanimously as written.
- b. Carol Hawn noted the next deadline for the Bulletin (newsletter) is September 29.
- c. Education committee chair Charles Dane reported on the Federation Board's support for the proposal to name the new FCPS administration building in honor of Maryanne Lecos. The committee has had its first meeting of the year and its website will be updated in the next month.
- d. Steve delBianco presented a Zoning Ordinance Amendment resolution on fence and wall heights, which the Planning Commission is about to hold a hearing on. The resolution was approved 15 to 2.
- e. Steve delBianco then presented resolution on portable storage containers, which have up until now been regulated as sheds. The county is now revising its original proposal, but he asked the membership to ratify the Federation's resolution pending the readvertisement of the county proposal. The resolution was ratified 22 to 2.
- f. Steve delBianco also presented a resolution asking the county to prohibit the parking of recreational vehicles on public streets. There was a motion to table the resolution, but no second. The question was called by a vote of 25 to 4 and passed 20 to 9.
- g. Bill Hanks gave a preview of the joint Federation and Committee of 100 dinner meeting at JR's restaurant next month, which will take the place of the Federation's membership meeting. Details and a discount coupon are in the previous newsletter. Follow a social time from 6:30 to 7:00, dinner is at 7:00, followed by a panel on immigration and a question and answer session.
- h. Environment committee co-chair Flint Webb reported on the next Green Breakfast; Legislation committee chair Sally Ormsby is preparing the Federation's annual legislative program and encourages suggestions from the membership.
- i. In District Council news, Art Wells reported from Braddock that all 13 nominations for the Area Plan Review were approved by the Board of Supervisors and a forum with George Mason is being planned. Judy Harbeck reported from Mount Vernon that committees are now working on aspects of the BRAC impact; now that the plan is for building in the Springfield area, this may be more of a concern for Springfield and Lee, as well as Mount Vernon. Sally Ormsby reported the next Providence meeting would be the following Tuesday; a new "transit oriented development" project of more than 700 units has been proposed for the Metro site at Dunn Loring.

j. President John Jennison noted that the Citizen of the Year nomination forms are on the website.

k. Sally Ormsby proposed a resolution from the floor in support of the bonds that are on the ballot this November. The resolution was unanimously approved.

Next Membership Meeting: October 19, 2006, “Immigration: Why Should We Care?” panel forum, co-sponsored by the Fairfax Committee of 100. Note: this meeting is at JR’s Restaurant at 6:30 – not at the Packard center.

Next Board Meeting: September 28, 2006.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.