

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of January 18, 2007
MINUTES

The meeting of FCFCA was held at the Packard Center at 7:30 p.m. (Attendance list is attached to file copy.) In President John Jennison's absence, First Vice President Jeff Parnes chaired the meeting. He introduced the evening's speakers, Dr. Richard Moniuszko, Deputy Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, and Deirdre McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent for Financial Services. He also introduced Janet Oleszek, an at-large member of the School Board, who attended the meeting.

Program —

Dr. Moniuszko noted that the Fairfax County Public Schools system is one of the best in the nation. *Newsweek* ranked all FCPS high schools in the top 3 percent nationwide. Eighteen months ago, the School Board began developing a vision for the system's future that includes three strategic goals: academics, essential life skills, and responsibility to the community. Each goal has several sub-goals.

The overall enrollment, or membership, of the system grew rapidly between about 1998 and 2003, then leveled off. It has been stable for the last four years. The composition of the membership is changing, with a 16 percent increase from FY 2003 to FY 2008 in students who require instruction in English as a second language and a 7.5 percent increase in those who qualify for free or reduced-price meals. One in three families with students in the system speaks a native language other than English.

Performance continues to improve, with an increase of 25 percent in AP tests taken in just the last three years (this statistic is in addition to the International Baccalaureate tests at other schools). SAT scores are the highest in the region with the exception of Falls Church; scores for Asian-American, black, Hispanic, and white students are also among the highest for each of those groups within the region. All of the county's schools are accredited. The system has the highest graduation rate of the top 50 high school systems in the country. A total of 93 percent of graduates go on to post-secondary education, including 60 percent of special-education graduates. Standards of Learning results continue to improve.

FCPS initiatives include full-day kindergarten (there are 137 elementary schools in the system, of which about 70 have full-day kindergarten already); foreign language in elementary schools, including French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, and other programs; teacher leadership, which refers to grants to schools for teachers to work year-round; and competitive salaries and benefits.

The proposed FY 2008 budget reflects an increase of 4.6 percent in the county transfer to the schools above the FY 2007 figure, which is the lowest proposed transfer increase since 2004. The Board of Supervisors target for FY 2008 was 3.5 percent.

The \$2.2 billion operating budget is for a system with 198 schools and centers, 164,490 students (the 13th largest system in the country), and 22,199.3 FT-equivalent positions, making FCPS one of the largest employers in Virginia. The proposed budget is shaped by the goals and initiatives described above, as well as the recognition this is a very tight budget year due to changes in residential real estate values. The county transfer makes up about 73 percent of the FCPS budget, and comes principally from real estate and personal property tax.

Starting teacher salaries remain the highest in the region at \$42,400; a teacher with a master's degree and several years of experience receives, on average, \$58,067, which is in the middle of the regional salary rankings; the maximum salary is \$88,394, which ranks seventh out of nine local systems.

About 85 percent of expenditures goes to instructional programs, which means salaries; 5.4 percent to support, human resources, finance, and the like; and 5 percent to transportation, primarily meaning the school bus system. A total of 73.7 percent of anticipated revenues come from the transfer from the

county; additional funds come from the City of Fairfax under an agreement, and from the state, the sales tax, and federal aid. The state aid is about 12.8 percent of the revenues and is mainly related to Standards of Quality (SOQ); the sales tax revenue, which is projected to be down 10 percent next year, is budgeted at 7 percent; and the federal aid is roughly 1.8 percent.

The budget was proposed January 11, the School Board hearings are January 29, and the proposal should be adopted on February 7. The Board of Supervisors will review the budget on April 10 and the final budget will be adopted on May 24.

Dr. Moniuszko and Ms. McLaughlin responded to questions on No Child Left Behind, particularly the county's objection to the type of testing mandated for ESOL students, the teacher-student ratio in classrooms, the Department of Vehicle Services budget and diesel fuel costs, bus maintenance and years in service, types of teachers who are most challenging to recruit (special education and math and science), timing of the program budget proposal, teacher benefits, International Baccalaureate programs, methods of managing discipline problems, including a pilot program based on a positive behavior support model, and changing start times for high schools. Janet Oleszek also responded from the audience on the high-school start time issue, explaining the arguments that have been put forward in support of a later start time and stating that it remains of great importance to many Board members.

Business Meeting —

- a. The minutes for the December 14, 2006, membership meeting were presented by Esther Ferington and were approved unanimously as published in the Bulletin.
- b. The Treasurers Report was received from Scott Schlegel, who presented it to the meeting.
- c. Sally Ormsby reported the previous auditor has supplied a summary letter for each of the past two audits, but cannot provide the full records because the files are on an older computer and are no longer readable. This summary letter is attached to the file copy of the minutes.
- d. Sally Ormsby provided a historical item of interest, Who's Who biographical data on the first Federation president, Thomas Powderly Martin (1887–1963; served as Federation co-founder and president, 1940–42). This is also attached to the file copy. A February 1970 memo on the forecast for the county's future and a November 1970 memo on "the cost of growth" have also come to light through an author's recent research on local-history topics.
- e. Sally Ormsby, chair of the Legislative Committee, gave a report on General Assembly actions to date on issues included in the Federation's legislative package. It was agreed unanimously to take a position on another matter; under the Regional Cooperation Act, the fact that Northern Virginia is a party to the regional, interstate Council of Governments exempts it from having its own planning district, yet one is needed. The membership voted to support eliminating that exemption.
- f. Jeff Parnes noted the next newsletter deadline is January 26. He solicited volunteer assistance with folding, which includes collating, applying stamps, and other steps. The last issue took two people six hours to fold, so a group of volunteers would be ideal. There is a window of only a few days between printing and mailing, however, so scheduling is also a consideration. Anne Johnson indicated a second-grade Brownie troop might be available.
- g. Steve DelBianco, chair of the Land Use Committee, reported that the Planning Commission has decided to defer a decision by two weeks on the pipe-stem zoning ordinance amendment on which the Federation recently passed a resolution. He reminded the membership of the portable storage containers issue that had been brought up in June, which was deferred. The topic will be revisited at the next Planning Commission hearing on February 8.

h. Charles Dane, chair of the Education and Youth Committee, reported the committee had met on the proposed budget and drafted testimony, which it would forward to the Federation Board for approval.

i. Bill Hanks, chair of the Resolutions Committee, presented the resolution published in the Bulletin on the Tysons tunnel for the Metrorail line extension. The resolution was adopted unanimously.

j. Art Wells had to leave early, so Esther Ferington provided his report on the Braddock District Council. January 3 was the first meeting of the Braddock District / George Mason University Forum on issues of mutual concern and the forum will meet again in April. On January 17, the District Council sponsored a successful workshop on safety issues, including personal safety, community safety, 911 operations, and more.

k. Sally Ormsby reported that the most recent Providence District Council meeting included a presentation on homelessness in the county. Jeff Parnes reported that the most recent Sully District Council meeting was on land use and transportation.

l. Merrily Pierce noted that the next Federation membership meeting will be a public forum on alternative land-use and transportation co-sponsored by the Federation, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), and Fairfax County Supervisor Cathy Hudgins, who is the TPB chair. **PLEASE NOTE** this public meeting will be held “on the road” at Sunrise Elementary School in Reston and not at the Packard Center.

Next Membership Meeting: February 15, 8:00 p.m., cafeteria of Sunrise Elementary School in Reston. (Not the Packard Center!) Public forum on alternative land-use and transportation co-sponsored by Supervisor Cathy Hudgins and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board.

Next Board Meeting: January 25, 2007.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.