

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of April 19, 2007
MINUTES

The meeting of FCFCA was held at the Packard Center at 7:30 p.m. (attendance list attached to file copy). President John Jennison reminded the group about the Issues Fairfax forum scheduled for April 26. If anyone else is interested in attending, please let him know. The next membership meeting will be on May 17 and will include officer elections. The program will be a "Report from Richmond." Delegates Shannon and Marsden have accepted and responses are pending from two other legislators. The Emergency Preparedness workshop, with an emphasis on senior citizens, is moving ahead thanks to Tania Hossain, and will be held June 7. The June 21 membership meeting will be a picnic with a "State of the County" report from Chairman Connolly. Board meetings are scheduled for April 25, May 24, and June 28.

President Jennison reported that he testified to the Board of Supervisors on the Federation's position on the budget and CIP on April 10 and the testimony was well received. The Federation Board will be developing a resolution on the Virginia Tech tragedy. With some exceptions, Fairfax County school events have been canceled in the afternoon and evening of April 20, the statewide day of mourning.

Scott Schlegel presented the Treasurers Report, which was received and filed. The minutes for the March membership meeting were approved unanimously. President Jennison introduced Arnie Quirion, the president and CEO of the Fairfax County Convention and Visitors Corporation, known as Visit Fairfax.

Program —

Mr. Quirion explained that a 2004 state law provided for a local hotel tax. In addition to sales tax, a hotel visitor pays a 4 percent hotel tax, half of which goes to the state and half to the locality. Under the law, a quarter of the local portion is designated for tourism development. This is the source of funding for Visit Fairfax. Visit Fairfax operates based on a memorandum of understanding with Fairfax County, but it is not a part of the county government. It is a private 501c6 corporation. It has a 26-member board that includes 10 members appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Its goal is to distinguish Fairfax County as a premier tourist destination, which includes letting local residents know of local offerings.

Tourism in the northern Virginia region accounts for \$1.8 billion a year, including travel for both business and recreation. Mr. Quirion described tourism earnings as "clean bottom-line money." Whereas residents require office buildings, homes, schools, police and fire services, and a health-care infrastructure, tourists either do not require these resources or make minimal use of them. Also, while residents use the roads during peak hours, tourists try to avoid heavy traffic and generally use roads at other times.

From July 1, 2004, to May 31, 2006, the local portion of the hotel tax amounted to \$16 million, of which \$12 million went to the county's general fund and \$4 million went to Visit Fairfax. Visit Fairfax generated \$5.5 million in group business referrals, \$2.1 million in direct referrals to stakeholders, \$2.8 million in leveraged brand recognition (which Mr. Quirion explained is not money in hand, but is an audited figure), and the website www.fxva.com. Visit Fairfax is the second East Coast tourism organization to offer eMap virtual tours, which include multiple panoramic views of major attractions.

The brand for Visit Fairfax is "FXVA," with the tagline "FX marks the spot." Advertising for the FXVA brand has included the exterior of a Fairfax Connector bus on the Dulles corridor for four months and similar exterior decoration of the corporation's utility van, which also has the license plate LUV FXVA. An FXVA-branded Segway was ridden around Tysons Corner Center every weekend as well. One major promotion involved burying an FX35 Infiniti as part of a "treasure hunt" to draw attention to the tourism treasures of Fairfax County (this also coincided with the recent *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie). Ten finalists, five from elsewhere and five from this area, gathered at the Gristmill Park in the Mount Vernon district and competed to stand over the car using instructions and GPS equipment. The shipping container holding the car was unearthed, and the winner drove off in the car. The event attracted coverage from

Russian, Chinese, and Fox television throughout the morning. An even more successful promotion was “Tis the Season,” which included hotel, shopping, and air travel packages and was heavily marketed on radio. Visit Fairfax joined the celebration of the George Mason basketball team with a Patriot Pride bus and a video. Visit Fairfax operates at 15 fairs and festivals each year. It has won major industry awards for the FXVA brand launch and for the buried car promotion.

This summer, coinciding with the Jamestown 2007 celebration, Visit Fairfax will be launching several “Magical History Tours” of local attractions, to include “The 18th Century to Outer Space,” “The African American Heritage Trail,” “Crossroads of Conflict [Civil War sites],” “The Best of Fairfax,” and “Only in the Capital Region.” Each tour will be available on the website in 1, 2, and 5 day versions. These are not escorted tours but itineraries with supplementary information and referrals to hotels and other providers.

Visit Fairfax includes some attractions outside of Fairfax County in its promotions because visitors who come to the county may wish to see those as well. To visitors, Fairfax County is geographically “right in the middle” of the region’s attractions, which include Annapolis, Skyline Drive, the Baltimore Inner Harbor, Gettysburg, Charlestown, and Fredericksburg, as well as more local destinations. Because it is in the middle of many attractions, Fairfax County is the logical place to stay. To publicize this “in the middle of things” selling point, which has tested strongly in market research, Visit Fairfax has adopted a live dog, FX the tourhound, as a mascot. In addition to his public appearances, FX is shown as “always in the middle of things” in advertisements featuring various destinations. Visit Fairfax has also distributed several thousand small toy figures of FX the tourhound, some of which were provided at the meeting.

Mr. Quirion answered questions on tour bus operations, coordinating with Metrorail, and how to get more travelers at Dulles to go to the Udvar-Hazy museum. President Jennison then introduced Esther Ferington and Sally Ormsby to conclude the program. Esther Ferington is the Federation representative to the county’s citizen planning committee for Virginia 2007, the 400th anniversary celebration of the Jamestown settlement, and Sally Ormsby is the chair of that committee.

Esther Ferington explained that the county group is one of many local committees encouraged and officially recognized throughout the commonwealth as part of the Jamestown 2007 / Virginia 2007 celebration; there are also active committees within the county for Vienna, McLean-Great Falls, Herndon, Gum Springs, Occoquan, and other areas. The county committee includes representatives from the schools, parks, and libraries, county historical and civic groups, different ethnic communities, the faith community, and others. It has suggested, reviewed, and approved ten public service announcements (PSAs) on local history and tourist attractions, spanning the period from 1607 to today. Three PSAs were shown. The PSAs are available on the Fairfax county website, are airing regularly on Channel 16, and are also displayed at events such as Celebrate Fairfax. She also reported on a major event coming to our region: a recreation of the voyage of Captain John Smith that will launch from Jamestown and will include stops along the Potomac in Alexandria, Washington, and Great Falls. This will involve a replica of a small vessel known as a shallop, suitable for coastal and river travel, and is in addition to voyages by recreations of the three ships that brought the settlers to Jamestown from England.

Sally Ormsby described the committee’s “legacy project,” an anthology of original articles on the last 400 years of Fairfax County history, none of which has been previously published. The articles have already been submitted and reviewed by a committee of experts. About thirty will be published. The committee hopes to publish the book just before Celebrate Fairfax, which will be on June 8, 9, and 10 this year. She also presented another major Jamestown 2007 initiative, the “America’s Anniversary Garden” project. This is a joint effort involving Jamestown 2007, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences to encourage planting red, white, and blue gardens to commemorate America’s 400th anniversary in 2007 and includes a related contest. Details are available at www.ext.vt.edu/americasgarden. She also provided information on creating red, white, and blue gardens using plants native to Virginia. As an example of the numerous 2007 projects occurring throughout the county, she also played a selection of music written for the anniversary by Randy Cabell.

Business Meeting —

- a. Carol Hawn reported the Nominating Committee is at work. The newsletter deadline is April 27.
- b. Roger Hoskins reported for the Transportation Committee that preliminary Transportation Advisory Committee recommendations on the Base Realignment and Closure Committee (BRAC) changes at Fort Belvoir have been sent to the Board of Supervisors.
- c. Charles Dane reported for the Education and Youth Committee that the proposed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) resolution postponed from last month is now moot. The county has agreed to test students for whom English is a second language as required by the federal government, but will stop the test once students become uncomfortable with the difficulty level. This probably means that more schools will fail the NCLB requirements and the county will ultimately be required to offer students from those schools the opportunity to move to other schools within the system. The Board of Supervisors will set the transfer amount to the schools on April 23 and there will be a hearing on the school budget on May 15 and 16, for which the committee will develop testimony it will circulate to the Federation Board in advance. A May 24 hearing is scheduled on the remaining surplus school properties.
- d. Bill Hanks noted that the Committee of 100 will hear from Superintendent Jack Dale on May 8 and encouraged all present to consider attending.
- e. Tania Hossain reported for the Human Services Committee that the brown bag lunch for emergency preparedness, directed toward seniors, will be held at the Little River Glen Senior Center from 11 am to 1 pm on June 7. [The meeting has since been relocated.] This schedule allows for travel time from other parts of the county by some attendees. The content will likely include a hands-on workshop related to preparing home emergency kits from 11 to noon, followed by a presentation from noon to 1 pm.
- f. Jeff Parnes reported that the membership letter will go out this month.
- g. Flint Webb reported that he testified as an individual at the BRAC draft EIS (environmental impact statement) hearing and also entered the Federation's resolution on BRAC into the record. His testimony focused on issues of "general conformity," which is a part of the Clean Air Act which can stop an action that does not conform to the act. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality will be submitting comments on the draft BRAC EIS for Fort Belvoir, as will the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee's Technical Advisory Committee, on which Flint Webb also serves. He reported that a major theme of the hearing was the need for substantial funding for transportation and transit improvements. He also reported that there will be public hearings on April 24 and 26 on the proposed 8-hour ozone state implementation plan.
- h. Jeff Parnes reported that the website includes directions to the brown-bag lunch at Little River Glen Senior Center. He is in the process of updating the section on current resolutions, and asked committee chairs to forward any resolutions approved in the last year and a half to him in their final approved form. Due to some technical adjustments, the website is also now appearing much more frequently in Google and other search-engine results online. He would like to post District Council newsletters on the website. Art Wells, as the Braddock District representative, gave approval to post the Braddock District Council's newsletters on the Federation website.
- i. Art Wells reported for the Braddock District Council on a presentation by several state legislators, primarily on transportation, and on a write-up in the BDC newsletter regarding the safety workshop.

i. Roger Hoskins reported for the Mason District Council that the council has been using e-mail alerts on legislative issues in Richmond. They are holding quarterly meetings but may meet over the summer to catch up due to weather delays this winter. The council also held its annual Citizen of the Year ceremony.

j. Carol Hawn reported that Jane Hilder is the second vice president for the Lee District Council and will be the Lee District representative to the Federation as part of that role.

k. Jeff Parnes reported from the Sully District that the March meeting included a report from local state legislators. The next meeting, on April 25, will be on transportation impacts and issues in Sully and will include speakers from VDOT and from the county.

l. Bill Hanks, the Federation representative to AHOME (Affordable Housing Opportunity Means Everyone), encouraged attendance at the April 23 hearing of the Board of Supervisors Housing Committee, which will include the report on affordable housing issues related to high-rise development. Jeff Parnes noted there is a link to AHOME on the Federation website.

m. President Jennison said that he will serve as the Federation representative to the Revitalization Committee being established by the county executive's office.

Next Membership Meeting: May 17, elections and "Report from Richmond."

Next Board Meeting: April 26, 2007.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.