

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of May 17, 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 reviewed upcoming events. The workshop on "Emergency Preparedness: A Focus on Seniors," organized by Tania Hossein as chair of the Human Services Committee, will be held from 11 to 1 on June 7 as a brown bag lunch at the James Lee Community Center [note the change of location]. The final membership meeting of the 2006-07 year will be on June 21; it will include a "State of the County" report from Chairman Gerald Connolly and, weather permitting, will be a picnic. He also reported on the success of the Issues Fairfax: Fairfax 2030 session on the future of Fairfax County, for which he served as a panelist and breakout session discussion chair. Organizers are seeking ways to disseminate the findings and may be televising some parts of the program, most likely on Channel 16.

Some business was conducted prior to the speakers' presentation, and the rest was conducted afterward. For simplicity, all of the business of the meeting is listed in a single section following the program.

President John Jennison introduced the speakers for the "Report from Richmond": Senator Jeannemarie Devolite Davis (R) of the 34th District, Delegate Tim Hugo (R) of the 40th, and Delegate Dave Marsden (D) of the 41th. Delegate Steve Shannon (D) of the 35th was expected, but could not attend.

Program —

Senator Davis began by reviewing the transportation bill, of which she was the chief Senate patron from Northern Virginia. Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads will have the ability to raise their own taxes and fees to pay for transportation improvements in their own regions, with the money raised by a region staying in that region. The money in Northern Virginia will be allocated to projects by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority. Under the bill, money will go to urban and secondary road upgrades and transit, with \$50 million designated for Metro and \$25 million for VRE from the initial funds. Up to 3 billion dollars toward transportation and transit will also be bonded by the state. Revenues will also come from higher car registration fees and higher fines for overweight trucks and for reckless driving and driving under the influence. The bill addresses shortfalls in VDOT maintenance funding, although this will have to be readdressed in 5 to 6 years. Land-use provisions allow for transportation impact fees and provide incentives for development in urban rather than open areas.

She then reviewed her other initiatives this session. One provided for enhanced cyber security for state employees who access databases that contain private individual information and is meant to prevent them from copying or forwarding the information. Another was the photo-red legislation, permitting localities to install automatic cameras to detect red-light violators. Another was to establish an auditable verifiable paper trail for electronic voting machines via optical-scan technology; the bill provides that when any current machine at a polling site needs replacement, all the machines at the site will be replaced with optical-scan machines. She answered questions regarding accommodations for the disabled at voting places, which are already mandated by the Help America Vote Act, including the visually impaired.

Delegate Dave Marsden reported that he is less enthusiastic about the transportation bill because it had to be very convoluted, in his view, to win sufficient support. He said that Virginia has been one of three states in the country with a comprehensive statewide transportation system and he regrets the trend toward regionalization. He is also concerned about the sustainability of the funding approach. However, we needed to do something, and this does get us started. He said that members of the Northern Virginia delegation, including Senator Devolites-Davis and Delegates Dave Albo, Tom Rust, and Tim Hugo, took a leadership role in forging the compromise and he also praised the fact that the bill does a lot for rail. He is pleased to be moving forward, but believes there is a lot more to be done.

He also spoke about his other initiatives. As former director of the state's Department of Juvenile Justice, he was concerned about correcting what he saw as an inequity in the juvenile justice system. In the past, a child tried as an adult but found innocent would still be tried as an adult automatically from then on; under an initiative he sponsored, the law will now require that a child be convicted after being tried as an adult, before being automatically tried as an adult after that. This change has had a significant impact nationally in the juvenile justice community. He was less successful with an effort to limit overspraying of fertilizer or pesticide pellets onto adjacent impervious surfaces by commercial lawn services, a practice which contaminates stormwater. This was defeated by lawmakers from more rural parts of the state. Often, divisions in the General Assembly are on an urban/rural basis, rather than according to party.

He also noted that Virginia has been named the best managed state in the country by Governing magazine, the best place to do business by two magazines, and that an education magazine had determined a child born in Virginia had the best chance of success.

Senator Davis spoke briefly to the issue of the sustainability of the transportation funding, following Delegate Marsden's presentation.

Delegate Tim Hugo noted there have been substantial increases in the budget this session, in addition to transportation, in funding for elementary and secondary school education, state colleges, health care, public safety, and clean-up efforts for the Chesapeake Bay. He praised Governor Kaine, and Chairman Connolly, for supporting the transportation funding compromise, which he described as rising above partisanship and avoiding a train wreck that might have helped the Democrats in the General Assembly in the short term, given that they are not the party in power.

He noted that the downstate population does not need roads; they need jobs. Their economic needs and interests are very different than those of Northern Virginia. In addition, they dislike Northern Virginia, especially Fairfax County. These are the reasons, in his view, that regionalization had to happen in order for transportation to move forward. The advantage of the regional approach is that it keeps tax dollars where they are raised. He agreed with the need for paper, verified ballots to provide certainty and confidence that the election outcomes are accurate. In addition to working on the transportation bill and on voting machine technology, he focused on district issues related to potholes, snow plowing delays, and other matters; he agreed with Senator Devolites-Davis that the VDOT maintenance effort has been underfunded and has noticed a significant increase in complaints about these matters.

Questions from several members of the audience addressed practical issues with the use of optical scanners, which are currently used on absentee ballots in Fairfax County and have tended to be slow and hard to manage with the existing bins, causing jamming and delays. Another question concerned concerns about the safety and value of HOT lanes retrofitted into existing highways.

Business Meeting —

- a. The April 19 membership meeting minutes were unanimously approved as written. Scott Schlegel presented the Treasurer's Report and there was a unanimous vote to receive and file it.
- b. Carol Hawn, as head of the Nominating Committee, announced that there had been a delay in putting forward candidates for vice president because of some logistics related to travel, but nominated Jeff Parnes as President, Esther Ferington as Recording Secretary, and Scott Schlegel as Treasurer. The floor was opened to additional nominations but there were none. The nominees were unanimously elected.
- c. Esther Ferington presented a resolution on the Virginia Tech tragedy that had been reviewed by the Board and published in the Bulletin. The resolution was unanimously approved as written.

d. Steve DelBianco, chair of the Land Use Committee, discussed the issue of soil erosion on school property near trailers and playing fields, which Merrily Pierce had raised. Flint Webb, chair of the Environment Committee, suggested that Merrily may wish to prepare a resolution on the matter. Sally Ormsby suggested checking with the School Board members for different regions to determine whether this is a concern across the county. Tania Hossein noted that the Board of Supervisors has asked similar questions about soil erosion on school properties and that older schools may need to be retrofitted to address this issue; she felt that a Federation resolution would be a good idea to encourage the schools in pursuing this issue. President John Jennison agreed that the next step would be to check with the School Board members.

e. Charles Dane reported that, as chair of the Education and Youth Committee, he presented the one dissenting opinion at the recent School Board meeting on the budget. Several other witnesses supported changes in school hours to allow high schools to start later, higher salaries for instructors, and more computer support, especially for elementary schools. In his testimony, he pointed out that if the school system were to spend all the money now in hand it could have a 56 to 60 million dollar shortfall beginning in FY 2009; because of the limited funding available, he cautioned against enhancements that are not affordable. The Education Committee will meet May 21 with the county foreign languages coordinator to discuss a long-range vision for foreign language in the schools.

f. Carol Hawn asked that newsletter submissions be provided by June 1.

g. Tania Hussein noted the flyer for the June 7 emergency preparedness workshop for seniors was available at the meeting and encouraged all to attend.

h. When the business meeting resumed after the speakers' presentation, Jeff Parnes reported that Tania Hussein has agreed to serve as the new Federation webmaster and thanked her for this. He also reported that the latest membership letters will be out shortly.

i. Flint Webb reported for the Environment Committee that the State Implementation Plan (SIP) had received only about 15 comments. By contrast, the environmental impact statement (EIS) related to the Base Reallocation and Closing (BRAC) changes at Fort Belvoir has received over 700 comments. The SIP plan includes a rule that does not allow a coal-burning plant that is out of compliance to trade NOx credits with plants outside the region. The Mirant plant in Alexandria, to which this rule would apply, had previously petitioned to have it taken out. But when the SIP was provided for public comment, no comment was received on this matter. To take it out now would make the SIP nonresponsive and would lose federal highway funding for the state.

j. Art Wells reported the Braddock District Council had met on senior services in May and would meet on trash and recycling issues in June. The Braddock-GMU forum will be meeting soon as well.

k. Jeff Parnes reported that the Sully District Council met with VDOT and FCDOT representatives last month for an update on the Centreville Route 28 situation. This month, the meeting will be on land use and transportation.

l. At President John Jennison's request, Art Wells reported on the 2007 convention of the American Military Engineers, which included a BRAC track. He has shared charts from the BRAC presentation which gave a good overview of the money (needs and available funds) and the status of the projects.

Next Membership Meeting: June 21, 2007, "State of the County" with Chairman Gerald Connolly; picnic

Next Board Meeting: May 24, 2007

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.