

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of April 16, 2009
MINUTES

The April 16 membership meeting of FCFCA was held at the Packard Center at 7:30 p.m. (Attendance list is attached to file copy.) President Jeff Parnes introduced the Federation's Second Vice President, Esther Ferington, who then introduced the evening's three speakers, all of whom are Federation representatives to other organizations, and Education Chair Charles Dane, who provided an update on school transportation issues. She also distributed a list of Federation representatives.

Program

The first speaker was Jim Davis, the Federation representative to the Engineering Standards Review Committee (ESRC). The ESRC reviews proposed changes to the county's Public Facilities Manual; changes are submitted to the county staff, which presents them to the committee. The committee members include representatives of builders, heavy construction operators, surveyors, and citizens at large from a variety of organizations, including the Federation and the League of Women Voters.

Jim Davis explained that while the zoning ordinance is "what you can do," the Public Facilities Manual describes "how you can do it." He provided the manual's table of contents as an overview of the topics covered. The entire Public Facilities Manual is now available online on the county web site in the Land Use and Development section. The manual addresses, for example, sidewalks, streets, and geotechnical aspects. One example of a proposed modification of interest to the Federation was the classification of "perennial streams," since the classification of a stream affects the permitted land use near it.

He used life-size rectangular wooden forms to illustrate a recent issue about the permitted maximum dimensions of a "water drop." A water drop is the low rectangular opening beside a road that allows water to run off into the storm drain. If the dimensions are too large from top to bottom, a small child can get inside, but if the dimensions are too small, the drop may clog.

He noted that the Public Facilities Manual has already changed a great deal and will continue to change, due to environmental concerns. By its nature, all development causes some damage; the issue is how to set limits to that damage. In our area, stormwater runoff, non-point-source pollution, and siltation are contributing to dead zones in the Chesapeake Bay.

The second speaker was Jeff Nolan, the Federation representative to the School Board Advisory Committee on Students with Disabilities. He noted that a committee on the needs of students with disabilities is required by state law. The committee conducts an annual conference (except for last year); the conference this year will be held at Marshall High School. The committee also provides an annual report to the Fairfax County School Board. This year, the Fairfax City School Board has requested a briefing on the report, which the committee is providing with the permission of the Fairfax County School Board.

About 17 percent of the Fairfax County school population, or one in six students, are considered special education students. There has been a steady increase in costs associated with special-education students, but this has kept pace with the increase in costs associated with all students. The committee is concerned about an initiative by the school system to respond more quickly, informally, and cheaply to requests for special-needs intervention for a specific student. The committee wants to be sure this new approach is effective. On the other hand, the committee is happy to see that the approach includes a close working relationship with the school staff and a strong collaboration with instruction services.

In response to a question, Jeff Nolan said that the federal stimulus has allowed a "net zero" in the special education budget, avoiding previously expected cuts, but is not a permanent source of added funding beyond the two-year period covered by the stimulus.

The third speaker was Mark Tipton, the Federation representative to the Trails and Sidewalks Committee. The committee has 17 members, including one from each magisterial district of the county and representatives from the Federation, the Fairfax County Park Authority, the Northern Virginia Regional Park authority, the Fairfax Area Disability Services Board, the Northern Virginia Builders Association, the Washington Area Bicycle Association, and the Clifton Horse Society. It promotes and provides input for the development of the county's trail and sidewalk system.

Funding for pedestrian needs has come primarily from transportation bonds and from federal grants and VDOT. Developers sometimes build sidewalks themselves, but often provide the money for sidewalks as monetary proffers. They may also request sidewalk waivers. Trails (as opposed to sidewalks) are covered by the Park Authority and funded primarily by park bonds, although some trail funding comes from transportation bonds and VDOT; almost no funding for trails is from developer proffers. There are 300 miles of trails in Fairfax County parks and about 20 miles of bike lanes, which are fairly new to the county. In answer to a question, he said that there will probably be no funding from the transportation portion of the stimulus for trails and sidewalks; that funding is more likely to go to large road projects because of the paperwork and other requirements involved for funding each project. There are currently 350 escrow accounts holding developers' proffers; the accounts do not grow with interest and total about \$2.4 million. In many cases they are being held pending the remaining required steps, such as a road widening, before sidewalk construction. However, as costs rise, often the funding is not enough for the planned sidewalk.

Recently, the committee has helped county staff who are assembling a list of missing sidewalk connections (gaps). As a member of the committee, Mark Tipton solicited members of the Federation to let him know about such gaps and he has submitted four requests based on this input. Another recent issue was a request last year by the Potomac Heritage Trail Association to Fort Belvoir for trails along Route One and in the Accotinck Wildlife Refuge, both within the base. Then-Chairman Gerry Connolly supported both proposals. The base commander is willing to discuss the Route One trail, although he will not provide Army funds for it. He declined to allow the trail in the Accotinck Wildlife Refuge. A third issue came up due to a short stretch of sidewalk in Supervisor Gross's district that was unusually expensive (due to the need for a retaining wall); she has asked the committee to look into ways to reduce the cost of sidewalk construction. Mark Tipton noted that the Park Authority has proposed a \$4 fee to enter certain parks, which will discourage trail usage. The four parks in question have some of the largest trail networks in the county. However, the committee had not yet had a chance to discuss the fee.

He answered several questions on topics that included specific sidewalks and roads in need of sidewalks, particularly in the Mount Vernon district, where there continue to be persistent pedestrian safety issues, including a recent fatality; volunteer opportunities for clearing trails (those interested can contact a variety of groups including Fairfax Trails and Streams and MORE, a mountain biking group); and funding for trail and sidewalk maintenance, which is minimal, as opposed to construction.

Charles Dane, Education Chair, then provided an update on a topic addressed at last year's membership meeting featuring Federation representatives—the School Transportation Task Force. The task force, which concluded work last year, included three representatives from the Federation; two supported the majority recommendation and one signed the minority report. All three recommended greater input from the community and additional groups. When this was done through extensive community dialogue, 75 percent opposed the bell schedule change, which was dropped.

The School Board then considered looking at the task force's re-engineering proposals as an opportunity for savings; this was defeated on a 6-6 vote. It seems clear that a much more robust computer program would be required to adjust the bus schedules, which are currently still done by hand by staff members. Jeff Nolan, who is a member of the Federation's Education Committee, arranged meetings with some of his colleagues at BEA with representatives from the school system to look at what would be required to

provide an adequate computer system to schedule the buses. This would require development of a series of modules, an expense that would have included if the motion for re-engineering had passed.

Esther Ferington thanked each of the speakers and thanked all of those who volunteer as Federation representatives for their time and effort.

Business Meeting —

a. President Jeff Parnes noted that a proposed slate of officers should be presented at the April meeting but is not yet complete. The slate will be published in the next newsletter. Election of officers is at the May meeting. He asked for additional nominations from the floor but received none. He encouraged those present to submit their own or others' names to the Nominating Chair, immediate Past President John Jennison, if they are interested in serving.

b. President Jeff Parnes then reviewed the upcoming membership meetings. The May 21 meeting will be the annual "Report from Richmond." He has invited the six local state legislators who attended the Federation's Citizen of the Year (COY) banquet. The June meeting will be a picnic and the guest speaker will be Chairman of the Board of Supervisors Sharon Bulova.

c. President Jeff Parnes thanked Carol Hawn for her efforts as the Newsletter Editor for the Bulletin, which included the March 19 membership minutes provided by Esther Ferington. Charles Dane provided some additional comments on the March 19 minutes, which were accepted as friendly amendments. The minutes, as amended, were moved, seconds, and unanimously approved.

d. Flint Webb, the Environment Chair, reported that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) met on April 14 and he is looking forward to a report from Ana Prados, who is now the Federation representative to the TAC. He thanked Kosmo Tatalias for an article on polyaromatic hydrocarbons from sealants used in asphalt, which is an issue for runoff.

e. Fred Costello, the Land Use Chair, is looking into the question of the cost of completing the backlog of stormwater management capital projects. President Jeff Parnes reported that he and Fred Costello had attended the Smart Growth Conservation Summit. Fred Costello also planned to attend a land use workshop in Herndon.

f. Charles Dane, who as First Vice President is also the Membership Chair, reported that, counting one pending membership, the Federation has fifty paid member associations. As compared to last year, this reflects nine non-renewals and nine new member associations.

g. There was a brief discussion of the web site, which now has some video clips for the first time. The video clips include Federation President Jeff Parnes's public testimony on the county budget.

h. Among district council representatives, Art Wells reported that the new Braddock Supervisor, John Cook, is hiring a new staff and ramping up operations. The most recent Braddock District Council meeting featured a legislative back brief from state legislators, including Senator Richard Saslaw. Karen Pohorylo of Mount Vernon reported that the Mount Vernon Council is reinstating its transportation task force. The Mount Vernon Gala will be May 2 and RSVPs are requested by April 22. Kosmo Tatalias reported that the next Providence District Council meeting will be a report from state legislators, and President Jeff Parnes reported that the next Sully District Council meeting would be the same.

i. Fred Costello asked, as a new committee chair, when it is appropriate to submit a letter without consulting the Federation Board or membership. This has commonly been the case for certain committees which must respond before a Federation Board meeting will occur. A discussion ensued

and concluded that this is usually done in regard to urgent matters when the timing does not permit such consultation, that the person doing so should be sure to inform the Board, and that they should clearly identify their role (title) in signing the document. Kosmo Tatalias asked that this information be added to the policies and procedures document.

j. President Jeff Parnes noted that, due to a business obligation, he will not be at the May meeting, which will be chaired by First Vice President Charles Dane.

Next Membership Meeting: May 21, 2009.

Next Board Meeting: April 23, 2009.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm