

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of May 20, 2009
MINUTES

The May 20 membership meeting of FCFCA was held at the Packard Center at 7:30 p.m. (Attendance list is attached to file copy.) First Vice President Charles Dane presided. He introduced the first speaker for a "report from Richmond" on the recent General Assembly session, Delegate David Bulova, and noted that another scheduled speaker, State Senator George Barker, would arrive later. Delegate Bulova reported that he had gotten a call from the third expected speaker, Delegate Mark Sickles, who was stuck in traffic in Delaware and would be unable to attend.

Program

Delegate Bulova noted that a more detailed briefing on the session is available from the Legislative Services office. Unlike Congress, the General Assembly is in session for only 46 days or two months a year (depending on the year) and must get through a large volume of bills in a short time. This year there were 2300 to 2500 bills, fewer than usual because of a new cap in the House of fifteen bills per legislator, excluding resolutions. There is split-second voting on each bill, so legislators rely heavily on subcommittees and committees for guidance. Delegate Bulova serves on the Agriculture and Natural Resources, Education, and General Laws Committees and on several subcommittees.

This year the big issue was the budget. In the past, revenue has usually grown 7 to 9 percent, or 2 to 3 percent in a bad year, but for the first time in recent memory it is decreasing. It was expected that there would be a \$2.9 billion deficit to make up to create a balanced budget, and the governor had made several cuts before the session. During the session, however, it was learned that January and February revenues were even lower than expected, yielding a \$3.7 billion deficit. This would have required deep cuts in core services. A week later, the federal stimulus package was passed, providing some relief. However, cuts of \$2.8 billion were still required even with the stimulus. It just kept things from getting worse.

During the budget process, there were "victories and concerns," he said. Medicaid funding was protected with the help of additional federal stimulus funding; K-12 education cuts were avoided, as were \$230 million in public safety cuts; \$20 million was added to support agricultural best practices related to runoff into the Chesapeake Bay; \$180 million was set aside for the reserve fund. However, concerns included continued cuts to the correction system with a lack of rehabilitation that he believes will boost repeat offenses; cuts to higher education, including higher tuition and greater reliance on out of state students; and, of greatest concern, the area of transportation funding, where the primary source of revenue is the gas tax, which was set almost 25 years ago at 17.5 cents a gallon (not a percentage). Because this revenue is not keeping pace with transportation needs, the state is running out of money for new construction and beginning to take some money out of the maintenance budget as well.

He went on to note that the Climate Change Commission for the governor had led to many bills on energy independence, energy conservation, renewable energy, weatherizing buildings, and related matters. This session also passed the smoking ban in restaurants, but did not pass no-excuse absentee-in-person voting or nonpartisan (bipartisan) redistricting. He carried eleven bills, including eminent domain reforms, stormwater management, line of duty act for firefighters, and a simplified way for schools to produce records for child custody cases without requiring school administrators to personally testify.

He answered questions on the effect of the federal stimulus package, the rejection of a \$125 million portion of the stimulus related to unemployment benefits, the allocation of the portion slated for regional rail projects and other transportation, protections for home owners associations, the Dillon rule, the housing redevelopment authority, better VRE signage and visibility, VRE extensions, incentives for solar and wind energy, and ways to increase the gas tax or other transportation funding.

(The presentation from Senator George Barker, who arrived after Delegate Bulova's departure, followed the Business Meeting but is listed here for the sake of continuity.)

Senator Barker did not recap the same information on the budget, although he also noted the smoking ban in restaurants, which passed after the Speaker of the House changed his position on the issue and advocated for it. Given our Virginia history, he said, this was extraordinarily significant. The ban will go into effect in December 2009. Every public restaurant will have a smoke-free environment, although it can have a smoking-permitted room (in addition to the smoke-free space) if it is separately vented.

He also noted the speed with which legislation is considered; he is on four committees, two of which met only once to consider all the bills before them. He favors a 60 day session for both years, rather than a 46 day session every other year. He had 30 bills, counting resolutions. He succeeded with a bill solving a problem with providing health care for children in child support situations, reversing a situation where existing insurance policies can make such insurance unaffordable. He also succeeded with a bill establishing a time table to reduce the waiting list for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities for the Medicaid waiver process over ten years, as reducing the backlog in a single year would be unaffordable. He hopes this can be a model for resolving other long-standing challenges.

He remains very concerned about transportation funding but also about higher education funding. This year, for example, North Carolina provided three times the funding per in-state student as Virginia did. Other states are also investing more in faculty and research budgets. We are losing ground. He noted that Virginia's institutions of higher education were even funded during the Great Depression. Due to a long pattern of cuts he believes the state is at great risk of losing its standing in higher education.

He answered questions on the best time of year to lobby or communicate with legislators (between March and November), the best way to contact him (letters, which he reads personally; the staff reviews e-mails); general fund spending on K-12 education; ease of attending public committee and subcommittee hearings; and the gas tax.

Business Meeting —

a. First Vice President Charles Dane thanked John Jennison, who as immediate past president chaired the Nominating Committee. He then announced the proposed candidate for each position and asked for other nominations from the floor for that position. The candidates proposed by the Nominating Committee were as follows:

President: Jeff Parnes

First Vice President: Tania Hossain

Second Vice President: Kahan Dhillon, Jr.

Treasurer: Scott Schlegel

Recording Secretary (shared position): Ed Wyse, Patty Parker

Corresponding Secretary: Esther Ferington

b. No nominations were received from the floor for any position. Bill Hanks moved that the nominations be closed and the Secretary instructed to record that a unanimous vote was cast for the full slate of nominees. Carey Campbell seconded the motion. The motion carried, unanimously.

c. The minutes for the April membership meeting were unanimously approved as amended.

d. First Vice President Charles Dane distributed the Treasurer's Report. There was a discussion of the list of member associations. As Chair of the Membership Committee, he noted that the number of member associations stands at 50, with nine associations having not renewed and nine new associations having joined.

e. John Jennison discussed the budget for the Citizen of the Year award banquet. The Washington Post once again co-sponsored the event, but contributed \$500 instead of the \$1500 contributed in past years. For the first time, SAIC and the Fairfax Chamber of Commerce also co-sponsored the event, each contributing \$500. Two RSVPs were received but not paid for. Certain additional expenses were discussed. On balance, the event produced a loss.

f. Bill Hanks moved that the Treasurer's Report be received and filed. Carey Campbell seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously on a voice vote.

g. Charles Dane noted that there are as many committee chairs as at any time in the past few years, but that one vacancy remains: Human Services. C. Monique Berry expressed an interest in the position and was asked to talk with him after the meeting. Committee chairs are appointed by the Federation president with approval from the Federation Board.

h. Kosmo Tatalias reported that the Board of Supervisors has unanimously passed a budget. The unusual unanimous vote was a major triumph, he said, and reflected the best compromise that could be achieved. He reported that many of the cuts which the Federation had requested be restored in its resolution on the budget have now been restored. The main difference is that stormwater management funding will be held to a penny of the tax rate, whereas the Federation had supported 1.5 cents. The tax rate was also held to \$1.04 instead of \$1.05, as the Federation had recommended. Some items are being funded by increased user fees. Funding for the affordable housing preservation plan is declining significantly and looks likely to decline further in future years. He noted that next year's budget is expected to be as tight and awful as this year's budget.

i. Charles Dane, as the Education Chair, noted that several county items have an impact on the school budget. For example, the final county budget restored much but not all of the funding for clinic aides and all of the school resource officers. The FCPS budget was to be adopted on May 21, the same night as this meeting.

j. At this point, Senator Barker arrived and gave the presentation described above. Resuming the Business Meeting, Charles Dane noted that the final membership meeting will be on June 18 and will be a picnic. It will be at the outdoor pavilion on the same property as the Packard Center, where the picnic meeting has been held in past years and will begin half an hour earlier than usual, at 7:00 p.m.

k. Don Hinman, Chair of the Association Services Committee presented the bond release brochure he had worked with the county staff to develop. He noted he may be doing the same with a stormwater management brochure since many HOAs must deal with this issue.

l. Fred Costello, Chair of the Land Use Committee, noted he needed to send a letter to the Planning Commission on an issue that the Federation has addressed in the past, and has written similar letters about in the past to the Commission. Charles Dane stated that since our position had been previously approved and has not changed, the Land Use Chair can write and send a letter reaffirming the Federation's position. Fred Costello also reported that he has been working closely with Randy Bartlett, the county's leader on stormwater management and has another meeting scheduled.

m. Charles Dane, as Chair of the Education Committee, reported that the committee had met with a guest from the Advanced Academic Achievement Center. (Advanced academic achievement is the new designation for what was previously known as the gifted and talented program.)

n. He also noted that the current Federation newsletter encourages members to share any suggestions regarding the legislative package to share them now, as it is hoped to get a significantly earlier start on this program to allow for earlier contact with our delegates and senators.

o. Carey Campbell, co-Chair of the Transportation Committee, stated that he wanted to propose a resolution on high-speed rail, better signage about rail (including VRE), and expansion of VRE routes. He agreed that he and Fred Costello would draft such a resolution for the next Board meeting to review.

p. Mount Vernon District Council Representative Karen Pohorylo introduced a delegate from a new member association, Bob Holy from Waynewood in Mount Vernon.

Next Membership Meeting: June 18, 2009. Picnic and "State of the County" from the Honorable Sharon Bulova, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors. NOTE: Picnic meeting starts at 7:00, half an hour before the regular time.

Next Board Meeting: June 25, 2009.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm