

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of June 17, 2004
MINUTES

The meeting of FCFCA was held at the Packard Center at 7:30 p.m. (Attendance list is attached to file copy.)

President Carol Hawn asked for a moment of silence in memory of Peter Brinitzer. A former Federation president and Federation Bulletin editor, and a former Planning Commission member, Peter Brinitzer was a civic leader in the Mount Vernon area and throughout Fairfax County. She introduced the Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Gerald Connolly.

Program — Chairman Connolly also began with a tribute to Peter Brinitzer. He then addressed his six goals for the county, which are supported by the Board. Described below, they are public safety, education, tax diversification, the environment, affordable housing, and transportation. He noted the Board retreat in February set a collegial tone. The Board has also unanimously approved the 4-year transportation plan, the budget, and the eastern part of the Dulles tax district.

Public safety: He noted the county has the lowest crime rate for any comparably sized jurisdiction, and that crime rates that have fallen every year since 1978. However, there is a problem with gangs that must be addressed now so it does not become a crisis later. He urged a multifaceted approach in partnership with non-profits, the faith community, and ethnic groups. Possible initiatives include after-school programs for 13 to 15 year-olds, restoring intramural sports, and providing anti-gang training for county workers.

Education: In addition to maintaining the schools' high academic standards, Chairman Connolly described "reconnecting the schools to the community" as a priority, reinforcing schools as centers of local community life. He noted all 24 Fairfax high schools made Newsweek's list of the best high schools in America. This level of achievement has occurred during a demographic shift which will lead in 3 to 5 years to an enrollment that is more than 50 percent minority. Fairfax County has the country's 12th largest school system. Unlike most states, Virginia provides only 22 percent of the operating cost and no construction or renovation funds.

Tax diversification: The county is overly dependent on real-estate taxes. The rise in home values has resulted in high tax burdens, even though the county has reduced the tax rate by 10 cents in 3 years. Meanwhile, other revenue sources have declined. In terms of new revenues, the county has a hotel tax, and has imposed fees for ambulance service and athletic fields; the state budget also provides more education funds and other relief. The county will again lobby for a restaurant tax.

In response to a question, Chairman Connolly identified the two largest budget items as the schools and public safety. He noted that the county has incurred \$90 million in unanticipated public-safety costs since the September 11 attacks.

Environment: He looked forward to the imminent adoption of a 20-year environmental plan. The first such county plan, it is partly driven by federal and state laws. It sets an environmental vision in terms of air and water quality, land use, stormwater management, and other issues.

Affordable housing: Affordable housing is in a regional crisis; lack of it affects everyone, as this increases commuting from outlying areas, causing pollution, congestion, and sprawl. The priority is to preserve existing affordable housing. The Board has set a goal of saving 200 threatened units within the next 18 months and hopes to do more in later years. Solutions include county outreach and assistance to existing rental-property owners in terms of county requirements; low-interest loans; tax incentives; and working with non-profits to buy up existing complexes.

Transportation: The county's 4-year transportation plan has been unanimously adopted by the Board. A \$100 million initiative, to be funded in part by the proposed transportation bond, would pay for spot improvements and pedestrian connections. Beyond that, the emphasis is on creating choices, such as rail to Dulles, light rail in the Richmond corridor, and teleworking. Chairman Connolly noted that September 11 led to more interest by companies in telecommuting, but that a stronger federal commitment to telecommuting by federal employees is needed. HOT lanes offer another option. VRE is at capacity and needs more cars; Metrorail has high ridership but faces a funding crisis as it has no dedicated source of revenue.

Chairman Connolly answered questions on affordable housing, HOT lanes, and bond referenda.

Business Meeting —

a. The minutes of the May 20, 2004, Membership Meeting were moved, seconded, and approved as published.

b. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to attach a statement from the Federation regarding Peter Brinitzer to the minutes.

c. Charles Dane reported that the Education Committee had commented on the original budget, which limited all increases to teacher compensation but still exceeded the transfer amount. Since then, new state funds have more than covered the difference. The interim superintendent has proposed using the surplus for needed programs and enhancements of existing programs. The committee felt these expenditures were needed but cautioned against adding recurring costs. The Education Committee's testimony is on the Federation web site.

d. Flint Webb presented a resolution on parkland public safety. The resolution, as amended, was moved, seconded, and adopted.

e. Art Wells reported he will be the Federation representative on the Bond Referendum Citizens' Committee.

f. President Carol Hawn reported that the Community Action Advisory Board, which has long included a Federation representative, has informed the Federation and several other organizations that they must appoint current representatives no later than this September.

g. President Carol Hawn also reported that she is serving as the Federation representative on the Council on Homelessness, which brings together several preexisting organizations.

h. President Carol Hawn informed the group of two upcoming VDOT citizen information meetings on the HOT lanes proposal for the Beltway.

i. Jeffrey Nolan, who has served as the Federation representative on the Advisory Committee on Students with Disabilities for FCPS, reported that he would like to serve again in that capacity, and the meeting unanimously approved.

Next Membership Meeting: Thursday, September 23, 2004. Next Board meetings June 24, July 22, and August 26, 2004.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Addenda:

Photocopy of materials regarding Peter Brinitzer