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[My Thoughts on the John Geer Shooting:](#) It has been sixteen months since John Geer was shot by a Fairfax County police officer and we do not know much. I do not believe this lack of transparency is warranted or in the best interest of John Geer's family, the officer, or the community.

[Board Votes to Look at Raising Their Own Salary:](#) At its last meeting the Board voted to look at increasing their salaries. I voted against this measure for several reasons.

[95 Express Lanes Are Open:](#) The 95 Express Lanes are now open to commuters, see below and "know before you go" about how these new lanes will work.

[Stringfellow Road Update:](#) The new lanes on Stringfellow Road have been opened to traffic. Full details below.

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My Thoughts on the John Geer Shooting

John Geer was shot by a Fairfax County police officer in August of 2013, it is now December of 2014 and we still don't know a whole lot more about what happened that day. This is wrong, and we owe it to both the officer and John Geer's family to get a

resolution as soon as possible. I also believe we owe answers to our community, especially in the Springfield district where this occurred.

From the failure to release basic information about the shooting, to the failure to release personnel files to the Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney, to the failure to release the personnel files to the Department of Justice investigators (later provided via subpoena), this matter has not been handled the way I would have like to have seen it handled. I do not believe this lack of transparency is warranted or in the best interest of the family, the officer, or the community.

For many months I have been speaking out for more transparency in this case and my displeasure in the way it has been handled. I have made my feelings known to the Board, the County Attorney's office, the Commonwealth's Attorney, the County Executive, the police Chief, and the press. At our next Board meeting I will again ask that the Board of Supervisors and the County Attorney's office discuss these issues and the lack of transparency.

There has been a lot of discussion on the release of the name of the officer that fired the shot. I support our policy of not disclosing the officer's name until after the investigation has been completed. I believe every citizen has the right to a presumption of innocence until proven otherwise with all of the facts known. I have been assured that this information will be released as soon as the criminal case is decided.

It is also clear that we should not be releasing any information that would violate law or interfere or hamper the investigation. However, the Department of Justice has made it clear that they are not standing in the way of the County releasing information on the shooting.

This incident proves that there is an obvious need to review our policies and procedures, and I have been personally assured by the Chief that these policies will be reviewed once the criminal investigation has concluded.

Transparency in government is extremely important, without it you cannot foster trust between the people and their government. With all of the media attention on police shootings across the country right now, it is imperative that the County be as helpful and open as possible in the investigation of this case. At a minimum we owe that much to the officer, Mr. Geer's family, and our citizens.

Board Votes to Look at Raising Their Own Salary

At the December 7th Board meeting, the Board voted 8-2 in favor of looking at the legal process and requirements for adjusting the compensation of members of the Board of Supervisors. Based on the current condition of the economy and the County I cannot support looking at raising our salaries.

- we have increased our citizens' taxes by 14.5% in the last 3 years alone,
- our commercial office vacancy rate is hovering at a historic high of 19%

- we are facing a \$160M shortfall in next year's budget, and
- our AAA bond rating is in jeopardy.

Frankly, our residents don't have the luxury of just increasing their pay when we raise their taxes to pay for our salary increase, and many of them have seen their take home pay go down or stay the same while County taxes continue to rise. We have many challenges ahead in the FY2016 budget and we have more pressing priorities to deal with.

By state law the Board of Supervisors cannot give themselves a pay raise, but they can give the next Board a pay raise, and with our elections coming up next year the Board decided that they would look into doing just that. Supervisor Smyth and I voted against the request.

I-95 Express Lanes Opening Date Announced

Just last week Transurban announced that the I-95 Express Lanes project was ahead of schedule so they opened the lanes and new ramps last Sunday, December 14th. The current rush hour HOV rules will be in effect until December 29th when tolling will start, but you will be able to try the lanes out for free in non-peak times before the 29th.

These lanes will be similar to the I-495 Express Lanes, and will be free to use for buses, motorcycles, and HOV-3 vehicles. Please remember to use these lanes as an HOV-3 vehicle you will need an [EZ-Pass Flex](#). They will however have a different tolling method to the I-495 Express Lanes .

I would advise all commuters to familiarize themselves with the new lanes by viewing [this short video](#). For full details on who, when, and how you can use the road visit www.95expresslanes.com

Stringfellow Road Update

Great news - after many years of utility relocations and construction, the new lanes on Stringfellow Road were opened to traffic beginning on Friday, December 12, 2014. The project will not be finished until July but drivers will be able to enjoy the extra lanes most of the time until then.

The \$63 million project widens Stringfellow Road to two lanes in each direction from Fair Lakes Boulevard to Route 50. View more project details: http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/northernvirginia/stringfellow_road.asp.

Signal Timing Change for Route 28 and New Braddock Road

Starting last week motorists will have noticed a change in signal timing on northbound Route 28 at New Braddock Road during the morning rush hours.

The change will allow Route 28 traffic to be served twice within one signal cycle. The purpose is to reduce lengthy backups and the space between vehicles caused by heavy right turn traffic from northbound Route 28 to New Braddock Road. The signal timing change will allow more vehicles to go through the intersection on northbound Route 28.

VDOT will monitor this new strategy and make timing adjustments as necessary.

Holiday Message

The holiday season is a time to be reflective and to give thanks for all of the good things we have in our lives. As another year comes to a close I would like to take a minute to say thank you to all of you who read my newsletter, contacted my office, or said hello to me at an event. From my first day in office my goal was to have an open and honest relationship with my constituents, and to try to help make the county government work for them. I believe that in many ways we have succeeded in doing this, and I am appreciative of all of you who email us back to let us know your ideas, thoughts on our newsletters, or on issues you are facing with the county. My office is always open to anyone who needs our help.

I wish you all happy holidays, and hope that you make it a memorable one with friends, family, and loved ones.

Pat