

Courier

Inside this issue...

- ◆ Compensation Review Moves Forward- 4
- ◆ Achievements and Awards - 5
- ◆ Benefit Information in the Mail - 6
- ◆ FAQ on Dependent Care Audit - 6
- ◆ Briefs - 7
- ◆ Tech Tip - 8
- ◆ Security Awareness Day - 8

When viewing Courier online, use the active links to get directly to stories.

What Happened in Richmond County's Legislative Update

The following legislative update is provided by the Government Relations staff in the Office of the County Executive. It is a follow-up to the Jan. 6 Courier article "The Road to Richmond." To read that article, go to <http://infoweb/courier>.

"Well, it's Groundhog Day and déjà vu, all over again!" as the political pundits have described the General Assembly's failure for the third time in six years to adopt the state budget during the regular session. For Legislative Director **Sue Mittereder** and other county staff who are veter-

ans of the annual trek to Richmond, the need to return again and again in recent years has been compared to the movie "Groundhog Day." While Mittereder and staff try to find the lighter side to the seemingly endless trek to and from the legislative session in Richmond, the stakes are high.

Finding a long-term solution for the transportation funding crisis in Northern Virginia is the Board of Supervisors' highest priority. Unfortunately, the General Assembly's inability to resolve budgetary differences persisted for three months, reflecting the

Update, page 2



Mount Vernon District Supervisor **Gerald W. Hyland** (left) and Chairman of the Board of Supervisors **Gerald E. Connolly** (middle) have a hallway conversation with Gov. **Timothy M. Kaine** during a trip to Richmond earlier this year. (Photos by John Nash)

Two Bond Referendums on Nov. 7

Fairfax County voters will have the opportunity to vote on two bond questions (called referendums) when they go to the polls on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 7. The two questions ask whether the county should be allowed to borrow money for county parks and public safety facilities. Look for more information on the parks and public safety referendums in the next issue of Courier on Oct. 13.

The bonds for parks total \$25 million, which the county's Park Authority will

use to acquire land for new parks and improve athletic fields and trails. The public safety bonds total \$125 million. This funding will be used to renovate police stations, the Fire and Rescue Training Academy and other public safety, civil and criminal justice facilities.

State law requires the county to put bonds before the voters as a referendum. If the majority votes yes, then the Board of Supervisors will be authorized to sell

Referendums, page 4

Update, from page 1

contentious nature of relations between Virginia's House and Senate as well as the lack of agreement on how to solve the transportation funding crisis afflicting economically vital regions like Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads. Having reached an impasse during its regular session, the General Assembly adjourned its 60-day session on March 11 and reconvened on March 27 in special session to resume work on the state's biennial budget.

Tom Biesiadny, transportation division chief, explains, "Senate negotiators supported a package of new and increased revenue dedicated to transportation, but their House counterparts preferred spending existing General Fund dollars and issuing bonds." A budget compromise finally was achieved June 28, two days before the end of the fiscal year, while transportation discussions continued without resolution throughout the summer. Formal deliberations on transportation are set to resume in the last week of September, with the results unknown prior to publication of this issue of Courier.

Board initiatives and regional priorities

Among the Board's priorities this session were 10 county initiatives, as well as several bills dealing with Northern Virginia regional priorities. Successes included one initiative providing Fairfax County with the authority to increase bonding requirements on developers who consistently fail to fulfill land development obligations, thereby reducing the costs to the county of completing default projects. Also, a bill requiring the Virginia Real Estate Board to notify localities of planned condominium conversions will provide jurisdictions the opportunity to advise tenants about their options early in the process.

Several county bills were "carried over" for further study prior to the 2007 session, a common fate for bills dealing with complicated or controversial subjects which legislators feel need more deliberation. One bill would allow tenants of apartments being converted to condominiums to transfer their right to purchase units to a housing authority or non-profit or-



County staff working at the Richmond office earlier this year include (l-r) Tom Biesiadny, Katie Boyle, Sue Mittereder and Karen Harwood.

ganization, advancing the county's affordable housing preservation initiative. Three bills dealing with overcrowding violations and the costs of blight abatement likewise were carried over to 2007, their fate unknown.

Perennial regional priorities such as restoring photo red light authority and strengthening pedestrian safety laws failed again, although Northern Virginia succeeded in securing modest funding to lessen the impact of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) decisions and for Birmingham Green, a regional assisted-living facility.

Preserving current authority and avoiding unfunded mandates

Keeping score of legislative victories and defeats in Richmond can be complicated. "Some of our most important victories are in playing good defense," explained County Executive **Anthony H. Griffin**. "Numerous bills introduced every session would limit county authority or impose unfunded mandates on county agencies -- and county legislative staff must try to kill or amend them." For example, one bill ultimately killed in committee would have prohibited localities from regulating hunting or the discharge of firearms, a potentially dangerous situation in densely populated counties.

Winning over the opposition

Pursuing the county's interests in the General Assembly is sometimes a Herculean task, with hours of effort devoted to a single bill. This session, one of the county's anti-gang initiatives to impose severe penalties for brandishing a machete, was presented before four

subcommittees, two full committees, and a conference committee. Persistence was necessary to convince legislators in districts not affected by gangs that the legislation was a valuable tool and the bill was successfully passed. County Police Captain **Deborah Burnett**, who testified before the House and Senate courts committees in support of the bill, said, "Passage of this law was critical in our efforts to address gang members who induce fear in our communities."

Support from home

In addition to supplying testimony in Richmond during the session, some county departmental staff have been appointed by the county executive to serve on the county-wide legislative review team. In 2006 the team diligently reviewed and commented on some 3,200 bills for potential effect on county operations. While the workload is considerable, many members insist they enjoy the work and have remained on the team for years.

Sue Woodruff, assistant director of human resources, said, "Being part of the legislative review team has been a good learning experience. Even with my many years of county service, I am always surprised by the complexity of the legislation and the impact it can have on those of us who work in the county. That makes the work rewarding."

The Office of the County Attorney is a vital participant in the county's legislative efforts. This session, several experienced attorneys served as key review team members, treating areas as wide-ranging as tax law, personnel regulations, the Freedom of Information Act and cable franchise regulation.

Board of Supervisors in Richmond

Board members brought the county's legislative priorities directly to the attention of legislators during the 2006 session. On Feb. 9, they attended the annual Legislative Day held by the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo), which hosted an address by Gov. Timothy M. Kaine. Chairman of the Board of Supervisors **Gerald E. Connolly** said, "As a former local government official, Gov. Kaine has been uniquely attentive to local concerns, especially on transportation, our number-one priority." Board members then participated

in a regional press conference to advocate for new, dedicated, sustainable sources of revenue for transportation priorities.

In late February, the board held a reception to thank the county's state senators and delegates for their efforts and advocated for county positions and priorities.

What's next?

While the transportation funding session continues, the first Board Legislative Committee meeting is today, Sept. 29. This committee of the full board will be busy this fall identifying new priorities and developing new strategies both for addressing persistent issues and protecting the county's interests. Issues already have been referred to the committee by board members. Legislative proposals from county agencies, boards, authorities and commissions will be considered.

Government Relations staff also will continue to attend and report on meetings of study commissions, meet with regional liaisons to strategize for the upcoming General Assembly and work on federal legislation and funding issues. The fall Legislative Committee meetings, dubbed the "Friday Follies," should be particularly interesting this year with the agenda including the concurrent wind-up of the 2006 General Assembly, as well as preparation for the 2007 session.

Stay tuned as we follow the board through the legislative process in a future edition of Courier. ■

Upcoming Key Legislative Dates for the Board of Supervisors

Legislative Committee Meetings

Sept. 29, Oct. 13, Nov. 3 and Dec. 1 (if needed)



Public Hearing on 2007 Legislative Program
Nov. 20



Board Adoption of 2007 Legislative Program
Dec. 4



Breakfast Meeting with Fairfax County's State Senators and Delegates
Dec. 13

Compensation Review Moves Forward



The review process is quickly moving toward the Nov. 15 deadline of a final report to the county executive. The focus group meetings have been completed and the task force thanks all participants for making the time to participate in the review process.

The task force is sponsoring an e-mail survey (with hard copies to be distributed to those without e-mail addresses). Specific information about the timing of the survey will be included in NewsLink, fliers and through pay roll contacts and task force members. The survey is another opportunity for employees to provide input into the pay for performance review process. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey. The results will be included in the analysis for the final report to the county executive. Reminder – all input from individual employees as part of the compensation review is kept strictly confidential.

The deadline for e-mail, voicemail and written comments is Oct. 1 for inclusion in the analysis of the final report. Comments received after the deadline will be reviewed but may not be in the final report due to time constraints. The e-mail account will be closed on Nov. 1.

You can provide your input as follows:

- ◆ Send e-mail to: *CompensationTaskForce@fairfaxcounty.gov*
- ◆ Leave a voicemail message at 703-324-1000
- ◆ Send written comments to 12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 258, Fairfax, VA 22035

Information about the compensation review can be found online at <http://infoweb/cex/comptaskforce>. Several comprehensive articles have appeared in Courier, including the July 21, Aug. 4, Sept. 1 and Sept. 15 issues and can be found online at <http://infoweb/courier>. ■

Referendums, from page 1

bonds in the future to generate the funds for public safety and parks facilities projects. If the majority votes no, the county cannot issue general obligation bonds to finance these projects, but may seek other forms of financing.

Bonds are a form of long-term borrowing used by most local governments to finance public facilities. There is a benefit to using bonds as a method for building public facilities. Because the cost is spread over time, current residents don't have to pay for the entire cost for a public facility all at once. Future residents who will benefit from these facilities, such as trails or athletic fields, will help pay the cost. However, some residents feel new facilities should be paid for out of current tax dollars.

"Borrowing for capital improvement projects is planned well in advance," explains Debt Manager **Len Wales**. "The bond program is based on the county's very strict policies, including that the cost of annual interest and principal payments be kept below 10 percent of annual combined general fund spending... based on our ability to pay for the debt."



County Debt Manager Len Wales and Assistant County Debt Manager Mary Casciotti are among several county staff who are working on the 2006 bond referendums.

Borrowing always entails interest costs. Since the interest earned by holders of municipal bonds is exempt from federal taxes, interest rates for these bonds generally are lower than the rate charged for private loans.

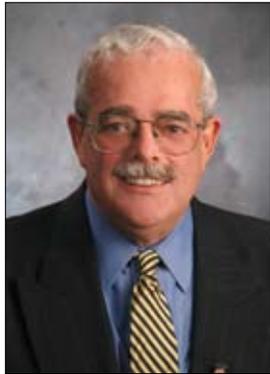
Because of its reputation for sound financial management, Fairfax County has the highest credit rating possible for a local government, Triple-A from Moody's Investors Service Inc., Standard & Poor's Corp. and Fitch Ratings. As of April 28, only six states, 21 cities and 22 counties have Triple-A ratings from all three rating agencies. For this reason, Fairfax County's bonds sell at low interest rates, even compared with other tax-free bonds.

For more information about the bond referendums, visit the county Web page at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/opa/bond. ■

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 7.

Achievements and Awards

Board of Supervisors Chairman **Gerald E. Connolly** has received the 2006 Local Distinguished Service Award from the American Public Transportation Association. The award will be presented next month during a special ceremony at APTA's annual meeting in California.



Gerald E. Connolly

Early in his term as chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Connolly laid out a Four-Year Transportation Plan which the board approved unanimously. The plan included support of the extension of Metrorail through Tysons Corner and the Dulles Corridor, and called for a \$165 million bond referendum that passed with a record 78 percent approval rate. Of the \$165 million bond, \$110 was allocated for the county's share of the "Metro Matters" capital improvement program. The plan also included the 2004 launch of the South County Bus Plan, which increased bus service in southern Fairfax County by 40 percent and introduced REX – the Richmond Highway Express – a limited-stop, rapid-transit-style bus service connecting Fort Belvoir with the Huntington and King Street Metro stations.

Election specialists **Kate Mickey** and **Sonia Skipper** recently completed the requirements to become certified elections/registration administrators (CERA), the highest professional achievement for elections and voter registration officials.



Kate Mickey and Sonia Skipper

Only 371 of the more than 21,000 elections and voter registration officials throughout the country have achieved CERA status. There are currently only six

CERA-certified election officials in Virginia; three are in Fairfax County, including Election Manager **Judy Flaig**. CERA designation is achieved through a multi-year course of study conducted by the Election Center's Professional Education Program and taught by the masters in public administration faculty of Auburn University.

Master Technician **Willie Bailey** is the recipient of the 2006 Career Firefighter of the Year Award from for the Fire and Rescue Department. The 15-year veteran, assigned to Woodlawn Fire and Rescue Station 24, was honored at a ceremony held last month. The Firefighter of the Year Award is the department's highest award, established in 1985 to provide special recognition for outstanding service and dedication in keeping with the highest traditions of the Fire and Rescue Department.



Willie Bailey (Photo provided by Fire and Rescue Department.)

Clerk of the Fairfax Circuit Court **John T. Frey** was named the 2006 Public Official of the Year by the National Association of County Recorders, Election Officials and Clerks (NACRC) last month at its annual conference in Chicago. The award is the highest that NACRC presents to any member, recognizing a commitment to excellence in the industry and exemplary service to the community served.



John T. Frey

NACRC cited Frey's outstanding list of accomplishments with the association as clerk of Fairfax Circuit Court and as a civic leader. Among Frey's accomplishments are automating the Fairfax Circuit Court's land records recording process. He also upgraded and significantly expanded Virginia's first remote access system for court records, which include 35 million digital images of land records, marriage certificates, probate and other Fairfax case documents. ■

Focus on Benefits



Benefit Information in the Mail

The county and its health and vision plan providers will be mailing the following information by mid-October to all benefit-eligible county employees to assist with the open enrollment process:

- ◆ Benefit changes for 2007,
- ◆ A schedule of open enrollment events,
- ◆ Health/vision benefit summaries,
- ◆ Information on how to research network providers.

When making 2007 benefit elections, employees should take the time to review their health plan options. There is a new option, the CIGNA Open Access Plus (OAP) Plan,

available for 2007. Employees enrolled in county health coverage will be automatically enrolled in the Davis Vision benefit plan.

Employees also are encouraged to attend the benefit meetings that will be held at various county work sites during the open enrollment period. Representatives from CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, CIGNA, Kaiser Permanente, Delta Dental and Davis Vision will be available to explain the details of their plans and answer questions. Look for details on open enrollment meetings in upcoming issues of Courier. ■

FAQ on the Dependent Audit

Earlier this month, more than 6,200 employees with two-party or family health and/or dental coverage received a form requesting certification of the eligibility of their dependent(s) to remain covered by the county's plans. This dependent audit is being conducted by the Department of Human Resources in an effort to help contain rising health care costs by ensuring that only eligible dependents are covered under the plans.

Dependent certification forms are due back to HR by Sept. 29. Below are some of the most frequently asked questions about the dependent audit process:

Q. I already submitted my marriage certificate and birth certificates for my children when I enrolled for coverage a few years ago. Do I have to resubmit my documents?

A. No, you do not have to resubmit if your documents are already on file. Simply check the box "Documentation Previously Submitted" on your certification form by each dependent's name who has a document already on file. HR will verify your documents are on file and contact you if any documentation is missing. Please note birth certificates were generally not required before last year.

Q. My 20-year-old daughter is eligible to continue coverage because she is a full-time student at a university. What should I put on

the "Date occurred" line?

A. Leave the "Date occurred" line blank if your dependent is eligible for continued coverage under the plan. This line is to be completed only for dependents who are no longer eligible to be covered under county health and/or dental insurance.

For instance, if your child got married and is therefore no longer eligible to be covered under the plan, you would put the date of his marriage on the "Date occurred" line. If your child met the previous definition of eligible dependent, but will not meet the new definition as of Jan. 1, 2007, use Dec. 31, 2006 as the date occurred.

Q. The certification letter says that I must complete the Student Certification Form to verify that my daughter is enrolled as a full-time student. Where do I get the form?

A. In October, student certification forms will be mailed to all employees who indicated their child is a full-time student between the ages of 19-23. This form can also be found on the HR Infoweb page under Benefits/Forms/Dependent Certification. The form must be completed by the parent and the school's registrar's office to verify full-time student status and then submitted to HR.

If you have other questions, call HR Central at 703-324-4900, TTY 703-222-7314. ■

HR Central
has benefit
information.
703-324-4900,
TTY 703-222-7314

Emergency Response Open House is a Success



Crime Prevention Police Officer Liz Barrington (left), Fair Oaks Station, explains personal safety training with employees who attended the Emergency Response Open House at the Government Center on Sept. 20.

The hallway outside the Government Center's cafeteria was thick with employees asking questions and picking up materials from the 10 booths at the Emergency Response Open House on Sept. 20.

"On behalf of the Government Center Emergency Response Planning Team, I would like to thank the agencies and the American Red Cross who participated in the open house. We were very pleased with the number of people who stopped by!" said **Cheryl McLean**, FMD.

Invitation to Sully Station Open House

Employees and their families are invited to the Sully District Police Station's open house on Saturday, Oct. 7, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event includes the department's K-9 dogs, SWAT team, dive team, bomb squad and vehicles. Kids will enjoy the moon bounce, giant slide, pony

rides, cotton candy and more, all free of charge. The station is located at 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. For more information, call (703) 814-7000, TTY 711.

Diversity Conference

Oct. 2 is the deadline to register for the 2006 Diversity Conference on Friday, Nov. 3. This year's event features keynote speaker Jhoon Rhee plus workshops that will give you the tools, techniques and understanding to bridge the gaps that differences can sometimes create.

Workshop descriptions and registration forms are available on-line at <http://infoweb/OEP/homepage.htm> or from your department's training coordinator. Participants may attend two morning workshops or two afternoon workshops. Morning and afternoon sessions will overlap for the mid-day portion, which includes the keynote speaker and lunch.

Explorer Post 1742 Meeting on Oct. 16

The Fairfax County Law Enforcement Explorer Post 1742 will host its annual recruitment and informational meeting on Oct. 16, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Massey Building, 4100 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax. Interested young adults, ages 14-20, and their parents are invited to attend. For more information please call 703-246-4311, TTY 711.

The Explorer program is sponsored by the Police Department as a service to residents. Members receive law enforcement training and citizenship and character education while gaining experience in leadership roles. Exploring is a youth-led program with police officers serving as advisors and facilitators.

Call For Volunteers

The Fairfax Area Agency on Aging's Cluster Care Volunteer Program is seeking volunteers to assist seniors and adults 18 and older with a variety of tasks. For information on how you can volunteer or to request reasonable ADA accommodations, contact the Department of Family Services, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging's Cluster Care Volunteer Program at 703-324-5184, TTY 703-449-1186 or e-mail trina.mayhan-webb@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Pandemic Flu Plan

Fairfax County has developed a Pandemic Flu Response Plan. It will supplement the county's emergency operations plan and remain flexible as information is added or changed.

Look for it on the county Web page at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/pandemicflu.

Tracking Changes in Word

Sharing digital documents can be an incredibly useful and productive way to request or provide information. However, there are also certain pitfalls to sending these documents in digital format. There are a few steps you can take to ensure the copy of a Word document the end user receives is the intended version. Depending on the purpose and content, you may wish to invite changes to the information or to protect the integrity of information the document contains.

If you are collaborating with co-workers in the creation of a document, Microsoft Word can be helpful with its Track Changes option which allows a document to be edited with any recommended changes, additions, deletions or comments being indicated with

strikethroughs, underlines and balloons. While it makes sense to have edits and comments appear in the document during the collaborative process, they shouldn't appear in the final document. Be sure the published version is clear of all marked deletions, insertions and comments. DIT has enabled a prompt that warns document authors when saving, printing or e-mailing a document containing tracked changes. For more information on the usage of the Microsoft word track changes feature including how to clear all changes and comments, visit the DIT Infoweb page at <http://infoweb/DIT/TID/TSS/Office2003/TrackChanges.pdf>.

There are also advanced solutions for those documents that must be shared, but due to the content, addi-

Tech Tip # 106

Department of Information Technology
Technology Infrastructure Division
Technical Support Center
Fairfax County Government Center
12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035
Tel: 703-222-3535, option 1
Fax: 703-222-3396
TTY: 711

tional security measures need to be in place (e.g., intellectual property must be protected, document integrity must be preserved, etc.). If there is a requirement for such solutions or if you have further questions about track changes in Word, please contact the Technical Support Center at 703-222-3535 - option number 1, TTY 711, or e-mail TSChelp@fairfaxcounty.gov. ■

S E C O N D A N N U A L

Security Awareness Day Oct. 20, 2006

Sessions include:

- ◆ Protecting Your Health Information
- ◆ Firewalls For Home Use
- ◆ How Wireless Works
- ◆ Protecting Your Teen Online
(Parts 1 & 2)

Open to all county staff. Registration is required. For more information and session details, visit <http://infoweb/dit/iso/education/securityawarenessday>.

8 AM - NOON ◆ GOVERNMENT CENTER

STOP

THINK

CLICK

Courier is published most payday Fridays. The deadline for articles and information is two weeks before publication.



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