



HERRITY REPORT



PAT HERRITY SPRINGFIELD SUPERVISOR

SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT GOVERNMENTAL CENTER
6140 ROLLING ROAD, SPRINGFIELD, VA 22152

PHONE: 703-451-8873 FAX: 703-451-3047
EMAIL: SPRINGFIELD@FAIRFAXCOUNTY.GOV

March 2008 “A Month in Review”

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 - **Attention Homeowner and Civic Associations**

Leading the Effort for a South County Middle School

I have been working very hard over the last couple of months in coordination with the South County Middle School Solutions Group www.southcountymiddleschool.org and other elected officials to build a South County Middle School (SCMS). South County is the fastest growing area of Fairfax County and the newly built high school (currently used as Secondary school) is already well beyond capacity. After the 2007 boundary study was completed, the Fairfax County School Board asked the community to be innovative and find alternative, outside the box funding solutions to build the school in a way that would not impact the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

I am pleased to announce that after a lot of hard work from community activists and elected officials, a private company has proposed a partnership that will contribute in excess of \$10 million towards the building of the SCMS and also provide other amenities to not only those residents in South County but the residents of Fairfax County as a whole. This innovative partnership to fund the school would involve the swapping of land in the immediate vicinity of the current secondary school and would allow the school

system to save money and accelerate other projects in the CIP. Most importantly, if approved, it will get the middle school built in time to prevent another boundary study. It is very important for all to understand that this funding solution will not have any impact to funding levels for any other schools in Fairfax County on the CIP list. (See Superintendent Domenech quote in my WSHS article).

Other advantages to this innovative partnership include building a separate SCMS on a 16-18 acre parcel that sits adjacent to the South County Secondary School, allowing the schools to be built as a campus and to share fields. It also allows the Fairfax County Park Authority to receive land and funding that is more suitable to its needs in the South County area. Over 200 acres of land located northeast of Silverbrook Road was transferred as part of the second land transfer from the federal government to Fairfax County and later 116 acres were transferred by the Federal Government at no cost for middle and high school sites. This proposal will meet those needs and requirements of the land transfer by providing an elementary, middle and high school for the South County area.

A second public private partnership has also surfaced and is receiving a lot of initial support. If approved it could bring an additional \$10 million to the middle school in 2 years when the middle school project would be approved. It would also make the first phase of the planned Sportsplex a reality bringing more than a handful of desperately needed fields to South County, provide a site for large tournaments, and a benefit the residents of the county. I believe this proposal is complimentary to the initial public-private partnership and has a lot of merit and should be actively pursued and investigated.

In addition Delegate Dave Albo and Senator George Barker were able to secure an additional \$1.74 million in funding in the General Assembly session this year.

As you can imagine, a lot of hard work, countless hours and dedication is needed for a proposal such as this to become a reality. Many individuals in the community, including Christine Morin and others, have never given up on making certain this school is built. Many elected officials have also shown unwavering support for the construction of a middle school. Congressman Tom Davis, Supervisor Gerry Hyland, Delegate Dave Albo and School Board members Dan Stork and Liz Bradsher have been there supporting this effort every step of the way. There is still a lot of hard work to be done to make sure the middle school becomes a reality. I am proud to be an active member of the team of leaders that will get this accomplished.

Standing up for Fiscal Responsibility

At the March 10th meeting of the Board of Supervisors the Board voted to advertise a 3 cent tax rate increase even though the County Executive had delivered a balanced budget at last years tax rate of 89 cents. Before the 92 cent rate was adopted I made a motion to advertise last year's rate of 89 cents which if adopted would provide a tax break to most of the county's taxpayers. My motion failed 8-2 with myself and Supervisor Michael

Frey being the only ones voting in favor of fiscal responsibility. Unfortunately eight of my colleagues on the board, including the Chairman, were not up to making the tough decisions on the budget and instead they opted to increase the heavy burden that our taxpayers already bear. Taxes have doubled over the last 5-7 years and the budget has grown by over \$1 billion over the rate of inflation and population growth. Click here to see me talking about the proposed 3 cent tax rate increase:

<http://video.nbc4.com/player/?id=228038>

What's Going on with the Budget?

Things are moving fast with the FY 2009 budget. We just finished the public hearings and by the time you receive the next "Herrity Report" we will have begun marking up the FY 2009 budget. It has been extremely helpful for me to hear from the hundreds of citizens who testified at the public hearings as well as everyone who has contacted our office with their thoughts. Please keep them coming. I plan to send another budget update with my latest comments on the budget in the next few weeks.

If you missed my initial thoughts on the budget newsletter please click here to read it: http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/springfield/pdf_files/herrity_report/budget_edition_2008.pdf

Protecting Children from Sex Offenders

One item worth mentioning at this time is full and dedicated funding for the Protecting Children Against Sex Offenders Program (P'CASO). Since FY 2004, 6 Fairfax County Police Officers have been funded by ChildSafeNet via grant dollars received from a FY 2004 Congressional earmark obtained by Congressman Frank Wolf. These officers working with the P'CASO program have been responsible for detecting and apprehending predators who initiate inappropriate conversations with children online and then seek to meet them face-to-face. Officers dedicated to the P'CASO Program also monitor convicted sex offenders when they are released back into the community to ensure they abide by the terms of their release.

Unfortunately those grant dollars are no longer available to Fairfax County and now we must decide whether or not to fund the program ourselves or to let it die. It is absolutely imperative that we do whatever it takes to fund this important program. The number of known registered sex offenders in the County varies from 350-400 at any one time, with most classified as violent sex offenders. It should be noted that in 2005 the officers working the P'CASO Program found that 34.8 percent of known sex offenders in Fairfax County were not in compliance with registration requirements. Thanks to the P'CASO Program the department has been successful in reducing the out of compliance rate to 22 percent. We absolutely can not let the P'CASO Program die and I for one will be championing this cause. Supervisor Hyland has proposed a budget item to fully fund this program and I will be supporting his proposal.

