



Below is a copy of my annual address to the Springfield District Council on the major issues impacting Fairfax County and the Springfield District and my thoughts on them. I welcome your feedback and comments.

Supervisor Pat Herrity

2012 Annual State of the District/County Address

Looking Back

What a historic year 2011 was - an earthquake and record flooding in a two week period, historic elections at the state level as Republicans take control of both houses while holding the three statewide offices, and the local level where the entire Board of Supervisors is reelected for the first time in history. Here in Fairfax County we continue in relative prosperity as the rest of the nation suffers under some of the worst unemployment and prolonged economic distress. Despite our struggles, we often forget how good we have it in Fairfax County.

As I start the first year of my second term as Springfield District Supervisor, I thought it would be a good time to reflect on some of the progress I have made over the last four years, and some of what I hope to accomplish going forward.

Cutting Spending and Homeowner Taxes - In the seven years before I joined the Board taxes on the average homeowner doubled from \$2,400 to over \$4,800. We have made some progress; taxes on the average homeowner in the 2012 budget are \$ 4,746, lower than when I took office. Some of the leadership roles I took in making that happen include:

- Standing up to the majority in my first year on the Board and presenting an alternative budget that would have cut spending by over \$60 million and provided a

substantial tax cut to our citizens.

- Sending a message that the years of unchecked, prolific spending were over, I laid the groundwork for the FY 2010 budget where I lead a bi-partisan effort that resulted in approximately \$100 million in budget cuts and a tax decrease for the average homeowner.
- Leading the effort to put the county's checkbook online so taxpayers can see how their tax dollars are being used.
- Leading the successful effort to oppose the county's proposal to spend over \$400 million to buy a waste-to-energy facility currently owned by Covanta Energy, a private sector company that has owned and operated the plant since 1988. Last fall, Harrisburg, PA filed for bankruptcy protection in a large part due to their purchase and renovation of a similar plant.
- Getting my colleagues to agree to end part of the county's misguided affordable housing program where the county was spending \$200 plus million dollars to become the largest landlord in the county and was subsidizing housing for families making over \$100,000 a year.
- Leading the effort to "Change the Equation" on the school budget by insisting that our education dollars are spent on our students, classrooms and teachers and not on administration and to consolidate county and school functions.
- Leading the fight against the county implementing a "meals tax" and purchasing the Gatehouse II school administration building.

There is much more work to be done in this area to give our homeowners relief from the enormous tax burden placed on them in the seven years before I was elected to the Board.

Reducing Government Regulation - I have worked hard and been successful at reducing some of the regulations on our businesses and homeowners. These regulations result in increases to the county budget, increases in costs to homeowners and businesses and increases in the cost of housing. Some of my specific accomplishments include:

- Making sure that the county considers the true cost of any new regulation before they are adopted, including the impact on the county budget, homeowners and businesses.
- Reducing the requirement on homeowners to submit grading plans for minor home improvements and additions. In many cases these requirements increased the cost of improvements 20 - 40%. These regulations were hurting many of our home improvement contractors (small businesses) who were losing business and putting people out of work.
- Bringing common sense to the tree ordinance, 125 pages of regulation that were expensive, time consuming and hard to understand. In short, an administrative nightmare for many of our homeowners and businesses. We adopted common sense revisions that help relieve the burden while still protecting our tree canopy.
- Revising our Zoning Ordinance Regulations to protect our riding and boarding stables.
- Helping a large number of business and homeowners navigate the maze of regulations and inspections. This has become an increasing source of frustration to our citizens and is an area that I will attempt to address in 2012.

Protecting Our Neighborhoods - There is a lot of focus on Fairfax becoming more

urban. While I believe we should urbanize in certain corridors of the county, it is our suburban neighborhoods that make Fairfax County great. I have continued to fight for our neighborhoods.

- I have pushed to have the County look at our immigration policy, something that had been ignored by previous Boards. Due in part to my efforts to make sure the Board held to its campaign promises to address criminal illegal aliens, Fairfax County now participates in the "Secure Communities" program which is a comprehensive plan to identify and deport criminal aliens.
- I have held town hall meeting on gangs, the crime spree, sexting, internet safety, Lyme disease and other topics important to our communities.
- I was a strong supporter of the county's efforts to add Strike Teams to address boarding houses.
- I have been a vocal supporter of our teachers and schools and the need to focus resources into the classrooms and on kids. I worked to hold the school capital funds at their current levels when they were slated to go down and pushed for the schools to take advantage of current low construction costs and interest rates.
- As the chair of the 50+ committee I am engaging citizens and the Board in reexamining our plan to be ready for the "Age Wave" as the baby boomers reach 65.

Making Transportation a County Priority - Our residents spend far too much of their time stuck in traffic. According to US Census data, Fairfax County commuters spend an average of 62 minutes getting to work or school daily-- this means for a standard work year, our residents, on average, spend 10 days annually just commuting. As a transportation advocate for the last 25 years, I have pushed to make transportation a county priority and continue to support common sense transportation solutions.

- Finding short term and long term solutions to the congestion on I-66 continues to be one of my top transportation priorities. When I took office in 2008 no one was pushing for solutions on I-66 outside the beltway - one of our most congested corridors. In 2008, I developed a 4 part plan to begin solving the problem.
 - Extend HOV hours - this has been accomplished.
 - Open the slip ramps at Monument and Stringfellow for non HOV drivers in non HOV times - this was accomplished in 2011 with the help of Congressman Wolf.
 - Open the shoulder lane at any time I-66 is congested -this is underway.
 - Getting the Environmental Impact Statement restarted. This study of I-66 between I-495 and Route 15 is the first step in the process of identifying a long term solution for I-66 congestion and should be completed in 2012. There are several firms lined up to submit creative proposals for a long term solution in 2012.
- Addressing safety and congestion problems on the Fairfax County Parkway.
 - Sidestepped bureaucracy and got the Fair Lakes/Fairfax County Parkway Interchange schedule moved up by 1-2 years; The project will be largely complete in 2012.
 - Worked with Delegate Albo to have VDOT conduct a safety study of the Parkway after several cross-over fatalities. Many of the recommendations from the study will be implemented next year.
 - Identified the need and led the effort to have the Parkway's status upgraded

- from a Secondary to a Primary road to bring additional state construction and maintenance funding. The entire Parkway will be paved in the spring of 2012.
- Successfully added the Parkway North Loop Ramp (at Rolling Road) to the County's transportation priority list. The project is now funded and scheduled for a design public hearing in fall 2012.
- Proposed the creation of a Multimodal Interconnected Mass Transit network to encourage the development of a cost effective, consumer-oriented, interconnected and time-advantaged solution to getting cars off the road. The Board approved a study to take this idea to the next level. The county issued an RFP for this study in December, a consultant has been selected and the study is underway.
- Implemented safety improvements on Hunter Village Drive including a light at the Rolling Road intersection.

Making Affordable Housing Affordable for Taxpayers - In 2011 I renewed my criticism of the county's affordable housing program when the Thomas Jefferson Institute reported that the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority was paying more than \$1.3 million in homeowner association fees for county-owned condos and townhomes including fees for luxury units with outdoor pools, athletic centers and billiards rooms. I also opposed the Residences at the Government Center which was approved by the Board last year-these affordable housing units serve households whose incomes may be up to \$125,000 and competed with available private sector units with similar rents. The role of government should be to give those truly in need a hand up, not provide them with a place to live that provides no incentive for advancement and is better than the housing and amenities of the majority of the taxpayers that are funding it. I will continue to support housing opportunities that support our seniors, our disabled, and our lower income residents and oppose taking money from our taxpayers to support housing already provided for by the free marketplace.

Improving Localities' Relationship with the State - Last fall, I was honored to be selected to chair Governor McDonnell's Task Force for Local Government Mandate Review. The Task Force was charged with coming up with ways to reduce the burdens facing local governments that are imposed by the state.

In the past, the vast majority of local government relief requests have been simply asking for more money from the state. Our approach was different; we set out to identify mandates that were duplicative, unnecessarily burdensome, and unnecessary. Over a two month period, we worked with local governments, state agencies, the Governor's policy office, elected officials, and the public to identify over 80 mandates and over 40 education mandates for modification or elimination.

On January 16th, we released the first interim report to the Governor where we specifically asked for 41 mandates and 20 education mandates to be eliminated or modified as well as calling for a 15% reduction in the reporting requirements on public schools. On that same day, the Governor announced that he would be putting forward 20 of our suggested mandates for elimination immediately. He also announced several others will be eliminated by administrative action and future legislation.

This is truly a historic step towards smaller, more streamlined government. In the history of mandate review and repeal, only one mandate has ever been eliminated. In two months, the Task Force was able to identify and move forward the elimination of over 60. The work of the Task Force has just begun. In the near future, the Task Force will facilitate a conversation on

the long term relationship between the state and its localities. I look forward to chairing the Task Force and working to reduce the burdens of outdated mandates to make local government jobs more efficient and more responsive to citizens.

Lyme Disease - Lyme disease is on the rise in northern Virginia and Springfield District has been hit especially hard. In 2009, I held a joint town hall meeting on Lyme disease with Congressman Frank Wolf and Supervisor Mike Frey that was attended by over 200 people. Out of that town hall came a three point action plan:

- The Health Department is now working with local health care professionals to make sure they are up to speed on this disease. The "bulls-eye" rash occurs less than 50% of the time and the test for Lyme disease is only about 50% accurate.
- A pilot study of the 4-poster deer bait station which kills ticks on deer is now underway.
- I called for legislation at the state level that would allow doctors more flexibility when prescribing long term antibiotics to treat Lyme disease.

I will continue my efforts to raise awareness and look for solutions to reduce the impact of this horrible disease.

Communications - I have worked hard to maintain an open line of communication with my constituents. From the regular Herrity Reports, to numerous open town hall meetings, to attending numerous civic association and community meetings, I have worked hard to be available to citizens.

Looking Forward - the County

While I believe Fairfax County has made progress in the last four years despite the national economy, our future success is not preordained. I think we have some major challenges ahead of us that must be addressed. Let me share with you what I think some of the challenges are and what we should be doing to address them.

Preparing for Cuts in Federal Contracting - We have been largely insulated from the "Great Recession" because of the federal government. But as Congress looks to scale back the size and scope of the federal government our local economy will surely feel the effects. There is a debate on how significant the impact will be but we need to start preparing for the inevitable or our local economy and job market will suffer. Some of the ways we can reduce our reliance on federal contractors and prepare are:

- Increasing the funding of the Economic Development Authority and have them continue to focus on diversifying the types of businesses we attract to Fairfax County. We have a great opportunity to use the region's significant IT knowledge base to capture the growing health care IT market.
- Looking for ways to make the county more business friendly including reducing our regulatory burden.
- Ensuring we continue to have the best educated workforce in the nation.
- Supporting Governor McDonnell's quest to make Virginia the energy and technology hub of the east coast.

- Ensuring our airports remain strong. We must work to reform the MWAA Board and make sure the Authority focuses on keeping the east coast United Airlines hub at Dulles.

We have done well the last few years to attract some large companies to the county such as Volkswagen, Hilton, and SAIC - but our future success is not guaranteed. In order to keep our residential taxes low we need a large and vibrant commercial tax base.

I have been meeting with the county's large employers to find out how they feel about Fairfax County and there are many things we can improve on. Retaining our current business is as important as attracting new ones.

Making Transportation a County Priority - Tysons Transportation Funding -During my Dad's twelve years as Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, more money was put into transportation in Fairfax County by the private sector (primarily developers) than the federal, state and local governments combined. Times are clearly different but I think we have lost sight of our priorities. Instead of real dollars for transportation we are getting Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plans (promises not to drive) and affordable housing (along with the resulting increase in services and reduction in our tax base). I believe it is time to make transportation a priority again - starting with revisiting the Tysons Plan.

I have been a vocal critic of the fact that the Tysons Plan was approved without a transportation plan or a way to fund it. The newest estimates for Tysons infrastructure now exceed \$2B and the Board is allowing the Planning Commission to recommend how much citizens across the county will pay for the infrastructure. The Tysons Plan includes significant requirements for affordable housing (double that required elsewhere in the county), storm water, public infrastructure (potentially a conference center), etc. that by developer estimates exceed \$27 per square foot. The developer of the first few buildings approved in Tysons Corner estimated that the affordable housing requirement alone will cost them over \$25M and that excludes the ongoing loss in tax base. That's over \$25M that could have gone to transportation in this small project alone. We need to hold the developers accountable for a large piece of the transportation funding but relieve them of many of the other requirements so that the Tysons Plan will actually work.

I have asked the Auditor to the Board for a report on the effectiveness of TDM's across the county. I have one small development in the Springfield District that was paying \$117,000 per year to run an empty bus to and from the Metro station. We need to understand the effectiveness of these promises not to drive before we trade them for real transportation dollars. I have also asked county transportation staff for an analysis of actual transportation proffers over the last 15 years.

Decisions on Dulles Rail Phase II - This spring the Fairfax and Loudoun County Board of Supervisors will be required to make a final decision to opt in or out of Phase II of the Dulles Rail project. Rail through Tysons past the airport and into Loudoun is the largest public works project in the history of the Commonwealth and it has significant financial implications to the counties, its residents and businesses, and especially to the users of the Dulles Toll Road. As the Dulles corridor and Tysons are the economic engines of the region and the Commonwealth the project also has telling implications on our future job growth.

I will not go into full details here as you can read my [full thoughts on Dulles Rail Phase II at this link](#), but essentially there are several common sense actions that need to be taken now in order for us to have the best deal in front of us when we make our decision and make the best decision for our citizens. Here is a sample of the common sense steps we should be taking:

- Immediately begin a study of the economic impact of the tolls on the Dulles corridor and Tysons. It is critical that we understand the impact that the high tolls will have on the economic engine of Fairfax County and the Commonwealth.
- Explore and begin negotiation on additional funding sources. At the December 6th meeting I proposed that we have the County Executive begin looking at additional revenue sources including the sale of air rights over the toll road at the stations, development rights at the airport station and/or a modest toll on the access road as ways to relieve the burden on the toll road users.
- Work to immediately improve the MWAA Board. In 2005, then Governor Kaine gave the Dulles Toll Road and the Dulles Rail project to MWAA - an interstate body with no elected representatives and a majority of appointees that live outside of Virginia. Congressman Wolf worked a solution to improve Virginia's representation through Congress. It was signed into law by President Obama and adds two Virginia, one DC and one Maryland representative to the MWAA Board. Our county Supervisors need to get behind Congressman Wolf's solution for the best interests of Virginians.
- Clarify No Mandatory Project Labor Agreement (PLA). We need to clarify that there will be no mandatory project labor agreement (like in Phase I) or we risk exporting these jobs outside Virginia and eliminate any financial contribution from the state - be it \$150M or \$500M.
- Understand the impact of the ongoing operating expenses of Phase II. On January 23rd the Board approved my request for a 15 year projection of operating expenses that Fairfax County taxpayers will be on the hook to pay as a result of operating deficits.
- Get new projections on ridership and assess the impact of the changes. The latest ridership forecasts were made as part of the Environmental Impact Statement in 2002. A lot has changed in Loudoun and Fairfax since then.
- Continue working to drive down the project's cost.

Eliminating the Blight of Illegal Road Signs - The recently completed election cycle saw 99 candidates run for office in Fairfax County, and with them many thousands of campaign signs joined the bright yellow Junk B Gone and other advertising signs that litter our median strips and roadways. It is past time that Fairfax County move to address these illegally placed signs as other localities throughout the Commonwealth do.

At the December 6th meeting of the Board of Supervisors, the Board approved my motion to do the following:

- Support legislation that would remove from the Virginia Code restrictions that apply only to Fairfax County with respect to the removal of political signs from VDOT rights-of-way. At my urging, Delegate Dave Albo submitted such a bill this legislative session to eliminate this Fairfax County specific limitation. As of the date of this article it passed the House Yes - 100, No - 0. Now it will go on to the State Senate.

- Direct the County Executive to develop and present to the Board cost effective options for removal of signs from the rights-of-way including leveraging the use of existing staff, part time resources, VDOT and organizations or groups that currently remove signs - the Town of Herndon, Reston, Fair Lakes League, Burke Center Conservancy and Adopt a Highway groups to name a few, and present them for discussion.
- Direct the County Attorney to draft an agreement between the Board and the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner that would authorize the Board to remove all signs from VDOT rights-of-way.

It is well past time to put an end to illegal signs in the rights-of-way. I believe we are making good progress and hope that by November's election cycle we will have the ability to rid our communities of illegal road signs.

Continued Tax and Regulatory Relief - I have spoken much already about the need to further reduce regulation and the tax burden. The projected budget gap for FY2013 is \$140 million. This figure assumes a 5% increase in transfer to the public schools and that all federal and state transfers remain neutral. Taxes doubled from 2000 to 2007 and I believe there are still areas where we can cut spending and I have laid these out in my past Herrity Reports on the budget.

Recently, I have been receiving an increasing number of calls about the regulatory requirements on our homeowners. We need to work some common sense back into the process. I will continue efforts on both of these fronts this year.

Connected Rapid Transit (CRT) - Developing a Cost Effective, Consumer Oriented, Time Advantaged, Interconnected Mass Transit Network - In May 2009, I proposed the Board study the creation of a cost effective, consumer oriented, time advantaged, interconnected mass transit network. Such a network would consist of BRT or express bus running in dedicated or semi-dedicated lanes (many of which already exist) that would give people what they need to get out of their cars - a time advantaged commute. I believe this network could link our employment centers with our population centers and be designed so that it would be cost effective. We currently have Fairfax Connector bus express routes in the county that require no subsidy - riders pay the full fare because it is a direct route that gives them a time advantage.

The Board has approved a study of the concept and a study is underway. I have been meeting with local and state leaders and transportation staff and the response has been very positive. I hope we will be taking important next steps in 2012 towards making this network a reality.

Hiring a New County Executive - The County Executive is the most important figure in the Fairfax County Government. He serves as the administrative head of the government and is appointed by the Board of Supervisors. The current County Executive, Anthony H. Griffin, will be retiring this summer and the Board of Supervisors has begun a nationwide search for his replacement. It is critical that the new County Executive has experience working across a broad range of issues and understands the importance of economic development, the commercial tax base, reducing the tax burden on homeowners and putting citizens first. With all of the critical issues facing Fairfax County hiring a new County Executive is one of the most important decisions the Board will make this year.

Other - A few other key areas worth a quick note:

- **Commercial Tax Base** - Increasing our commercial tax base is one of the ways we can reduce the tax burden on our homeowners and continue to provide a high level of services. Businesses pay more in taxes than they use in services. We need to continue to focus on building our commercial tax base as we redevelop parts of the county.
- **Pension Study** - In the spring of 2011, I asked the Board to study converting from a defined contribution (pension) to a defined benefit (401K) type plan for new employees. What I expected was a robust analysis; what we got was a justification for the current defined benefit plan. I have re-asked the question and hope to get the analysis I expected. The study did provide some additional useful suggestions such as increasing the retirement age for new participants.
- **Accotink TMDL** - This EPA requirement will significantly restrict the ability of homeowners and businesses to modify or expand their properties. The county must take a hard stand against the EPA's unrealistic proposed regulations where they go beyond protecting the environment.

Looking Forward - Springfield District

In addition to the challenges we face across the county, we also face some significant challenges right here in the Springfield District.

Renovating West Springfield High School - West Springfield High School has not been renovated since it was constructed in 1966 and the building is in dire need of repair. It is essential that West Springfield, the pillar of the West Springfield community, be fully renovated as soon as possible.

When I took office in 2007 WSHS was not even on the renovation queue (the CIP). I have worked with our local elected officials, SOAR (Spartans Organized for Action on Renovation) and other WSHS alumni, like Delegate Dave Albo, to get the school onto the CIP - this is a good start, but we need to continue to push and have it moved up even farther.

Despite the problems with the physical structure, it must be noted that WSHS has an outstanding staff and is an amazing school that has realized enormous success both academically and athletically in the past couple of years. I will continue to work with Springfield District's new School Board member Elizabeth Schulz to push for the school's renovation.

Executing a long term plan for I-66 - The short term improvements have been implemented or are underway but we need to stay focused on getting the Environmental Impact Statement completed so that we can move on to on a long term solution.

Visioning a Long Term Plan for the Fairfax County Parkway - The Parkway is one of Fairfax County's "Main Streets" and if we're not careful we could see it turn into the time trap that is I-66. We have made some improvements to the Parkway that are outlined above, but it is of the utmost importance that we have a vision for its long-term future so as to avoid creating another I-66. I will be holding a Town Hall Meeting in late March or early April with VDOT and county staff to try to get ahead of the problem. I hope you can join us for this

important session; I would love to have your input.

Bringing the FBI to Springfield - Although not in the Springfield District, Springfield is of the utmost importance to our residents as a place to work, a transportation hub and a recreational and shopping destination. Parts of Springfield are in dire need of modernization and rehabilitation. With this in mind it is critical that we attract businesses and government agencies to the area to spur the redevelopment. The recent transition of federal employees to the NGA site and other BRAC related relocations at Fort Belvoir have begun this revitalization. Now there is a prime opportunity to speed the revitalization of Springfield as the FBI looks to relocate.

The GSA Warehouse site in Springfield is significantly underutilized federal land that I believe would make a great home for the FBI. The site has the best transportation infrastructure in the region (Metro, bus, VRE, Amtrak, highway, airport access, etc) and will meet the security and telecommunications infrastructure requirements that will allow the FBI to accomplish their very important mission. The majority of the employees already live in Virginia. I look forward to working with Supervisor McKay, the business community, our congressional delegation and the Commonwealth to do all that we can to encourage the FBI to relocate in Springfield, and in the process help speed the revitalization of Springfield.

Conclusion

It can't be said enough: our future success is not preordained. We certainly have the ability and resources needed to keep Fairfax County the envy of the rest of the country but without strong leadership on the key issues facing our county; our next few decades will not be as successful as our last few decades. Personally, I think we are up to the challenge and I look forward to working with our citizens, the business community and the Board of Supervisors to keep Fairfax County the best place in the country to live, work, play and raise a family.

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