



HERRITY REPORT



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Summer 2008 in Review Part #1

(The second summer edition will be coming out soon)

***** SPECIAL NOTE: Pat will be on Newstalk on News Channel 8 TOMORROW (9/12/2008). The show airs live from 4pm-5pm and then a half hour portion of the program (deleting the news, traffic and weather updates done in the 4pm broadcast) re-airs at 8:30pm and 11pm.**

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Buying Foreclosed Homes is a Bad Idea

On June 30, the Board of Supervisors authorized a new initiative to address home foreclosures in Fairfax County. This initiative includes three programs: (1) counseling for homeowners at risk of foreclosure, (2) providing loans for first-time homebuyers to

purchase foreclosed homes, and (3) direct purchasing of foreclosed homes, rehabilitating the property and reselling to first-time homebuyers. The Board approved the initiative by a vote of 8-2 with me and Supervisor Frey dissenting. I did not vote for this initiative for many reasons.

First, the numbers that the Board and staff have used to make this decision are inaccurate. We do not have a good handle on the number of foreclosures in the county nor do we have any data to support that the private sector is not adequately responding to this problem. Beginning a new initiative without this information is the wrong approach. Please take time to read my other article "County Overstates Foreclosure Problem" in this report.

Another concern I have is that we have not established any criteria upon which to decide to purchase a home. The parameters that were given by staff include homes that are "abandoned" and "deteriorating." Staff indicated this decision would be largely guided by each Supervisor for his district. Without such criteria, how can we possibly decide which home to buy? And, we already have a blight abatement program that addresses the same problems that this program supposedly will correct. Given that the FHA recently waived its 90-day financing rule for foreclosures, many more buyers will be available to buy these homes. This and private industry initiatives like the foreclosure busses will help prevent hard hit communities from destabilization and the foreclosure mess.

My position was echoed by many of the Supervisors who added other concerns such as whether this program would be putting homeowners into homes they really can't afford. This program may only exacerbate the problem which created this crisis in the first place. I also had questions about the type of loans we are providing and the investment of tax-payers' money -- the county should not get into the business of real estate brokering.

While I agree that the number of foreclosures is increasing, I believe that the crisis will correct itself without the county's attempt to bolster the real estate market by purchasing foreclosed homes. I believe the best thing that Fairfax County can do is to not intervene and allow prices to fall within reason allowing homeowners to buy and move in. The County should be focusing its efforts on counseling and programs to keep people in their homes.

County Overstates Foreclosure Problem

At our June 30 Board of Supervisors meeting I introduced a motion, which unanimously passed, requesting more accurate information about foreclosed homes in Fairfax County. The reason that I made this motion is because of the numbers being presented to the Board and the media on the foreclosure crisis in Fairfax County are overstated. According to RealtyTrac, a subscription online marketplace for foreclosed properties, the number of foreclosed homes in our county for the first quarter of 2008 is 3,518. After doing some research, however, I discovered that RealtyTrac's numbers are overstated. They count homes once the lender sends a Notice of Default to the homeowner, again if there is an Auction Sale for the property, and, if not sold, then again when the lender

repossesses the home. If there are multiple liens on the property each lien may be counted separately at each level.

George Mason University has scrubbed RealtyTrac's numbers and their total number of foreclosures for the one-year period ending in February 2008 is 2,058. Compare that with RealtyTrac's count of 6,742 for the same period. There is a significant overstatement in the RealtyTrac numbers if presented as a measure of foreclosures alone. However, RealtyTrac information is useful when looking at trends in the housing or foreclosure markets.

On the other hand, our office also received from our tax department numbers for net foreclosures of 1,780 at the end of May. This number is understated because it does not include instances where the bank has sold the property short or decided not to record the deed.

It is clear we have seen an increase in foreclosures, what is not clear is how long these foreclosures are staying on the market. The MRIS data tells us that the average number of days a home is on the market in Fairfax County is 93. We do not have that same information specifically for foreclosed homes.

I requested from staff to determine the most accurate sources of foreclosure information and provide the Board with the number of new foreclosures, the number of net foreclosures, the average net absorption rate of foreclosed homes, and the mean number of days the foreclosed homes stay on the market. With this information we can better and more accurately assess the foreclosure crisis in Fairfax County.

Open Process Begins for the Residences at the Government Center

At the Board of Supervisors Workforce Housing Summit meeting, Chairman Connolly announced that Dallas-based JPI has been selected as the contractor for the Residences at the Government Center. To date this process has been conducted behind closed doors. I am glad that we will now have an open process where we can weigh in. You can be assured that I will lead the effort in providing every available opportunity for the community and neighborhoods surrounding the Government Center to provide input into the process.

At the Workforce Housing Summit, speakers stressed the importance of the link between workforce housing and easing our traffic congestion problems. I can think of no better solution for our County employees who work in our Government Center complex than to have affordable housing right next door to where they work. In fact this morning a speaker again billed the Residences as a project for "our employees," as housing for our firefighters, teachers and bus drivers.

Currently, the project will **not** be limited to the County workforce as originally promised to my predecessor Supervisor Elaine McConnell or to the community. The community was told this would be a project for workforce housing for County employees without

SROs. However, now this project will **not** be limited to County employees only and will be for persons with incomes under 60 and up to 120 percent of median area incomes *and* will have SROs. As I promised during my campaign last year, I will only support this project if limited to Fairfax County employees.

Widening of Rolling Road between Old Keene Mill Road and the Fairfax County Parkway: Getting the Best Project We Can

On Thursday, June 12, I attended VDOT's public hearing on its plan to widen Rolling Road from two to four lanes between Old Keene Mill Road and a point just north of the Fairfax County Parkway. Though some worthy information was provided during the presentation, the actual public hearing during which citizens could ask questions and provide comments were cut incredibly short and lasted only about 30 minutes. I was as disappointed as many of the citizens that attended.

As I promised many residents along Rolling Road, I did take another look at the project to determine if it was really needed. Based on a number of factors – VDOT traffic projections, comments from residents, and the three year crash statistics – 114 crashes and three fatalities – I determined the project to widen Rolling Road is necessary. However, I also promised to do all I could to minimize the impact to the citizens that either live on or have to get on Rolling Road on a regular basis.

Working with VDOT and some community leaders early in the process we were able to get some changes in the plans before they even went to public hearing. Some of these changes include decreasing the width of the multi-purpose trail proposed for the west side from 10 feet to 8 feet, reducing the design speed from 45 to 40 (with a posted speed of 35 mph), and eliminating the striped on lane bicycle paths and using wide shoulder lanes.

As far as design goes, this project is not a “done deal.” I am still working with residents and VDOT staff to resolve some outstanding issues as well as pushing for some design revisions. These design revisions are primarily access related and attempts to further narrow the projects width and therefore the impact on the homeowners. The outstanding issues involve:

- Access to the Sunoco Station – we are working to insure access to the Sunoco and the shopping center without having to return to the Old Keene mill intersection to go south on Rolling.
- Obtaining a general consensus (on a block by block basis) whether the residents want on-street parking
- Specific design changes I am pushing for include underground utilities, a 5-foot sidewalk on the western side (instead of the 8-foot multi-use trail), decreased median widths where feasible, reducing the width of the on street parking, and a signal in the southern part of the project (possibly Viola).

My goal is to get the best Rolling Road widening project we can, which to me means affecting people's front yards as little as possible while still handling the traffic in a safe and efficient manner.

Easing Congestion on the Beltway

The Beltway is Fairfax County's Main Street and is vital to our economy and quality of life. As we all know the Beltway is far from a functional Main Street – it is severely congested and lacks any form of car pool or mass transit. We are beginning to take a step in the right direction. A public-private partnership, between the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Flour-Transurban, will put High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes on the Beltway between Springfield and the Dulles Toll Road and ease some of the congestion that Beltway travelers face every day. These will be lanes with guaranteed minimum speeds that buses and carpools of more than three can use for free and non-HOV motorists can pay a toll to access the lanes as well.

Those riding in the existing “free” lanes will benefit as well from all of the trips moved to the high capacity HOT lanes. Commuters heading to Tysons Corner from points south and around the Beltway will finally have a way to carpool or take mass transit. This is a project I have supported for many years as a member of the private sector and I continue to strongly advocate for now as an elected official.

The current HOT lane project is a significant improvement over the original proposed design. It reduced the cost from \$3B to \$1.9B with \$1.5B coming from private investment (to be repaid with tolls). Fewer than 10 homes will be taken as compared to 300 with the original proposal. Only 6 acres of parkland will have a temporary impact (3 with permanent impact) vs 20 acres with the original design. The current proposal will have over 40,000 additional linear feet of sound walls. All of the bridges and overpasses on the Beltway will be reconstructed with much improved pedestrian and bike access.

As with all road construction the Beltway improvements will not come without a lot of pain as we suffer through the construction. This construction is underway now. The project team has been committed to working with the County, the Park Authority, and the surrounding communities throughout the entire process. I urge you to learn more about the HOT Lanes project and to visit

http://www.virginiadot.org/PROJECTS/HOT_main.asp or as always you can contact my office at 703-451-8873 or Springfield@fairfaxcounty.gov

Extended Availability of Shoulder Lanes on I-66 during Rush-Hours

At the January 28, 2008 Board of Supervisors meeting, I presented one of my first Board Matters to my fellow Supervisors. Among other traffic-related initiatives, it discussed the need for extended use of the shoulder lanes on I-66 during the morning and evening rush hours. I am happy to report that VDOT was able to win the approval to open the shoulders an additional hour in the morning and evening. The eastbound shoulder is open an hour later, until 11:00 a.m. and the westbound shoulder is open an hour earlier; at 2:00 p.m.

Transportation improvements are a priority to me; I am hopeful this will help ease the often-frustrating commute of Springfield District residents and drivers countywide. While this is certainly a good step in the right direction, I will continue to push for a long term solution to I-66 congestion and work with VDOT to pursue the use of shoulder lanes on weekends, as well as to make available the Stringfellow Road and Monument Drive slip ramps outside of HOV hours as short term solutions.

Commending Our Police and Fire Departments on a Job Well Done

The June 14th issue of the Washington Post had an editorial highlighting the inefficiencies and problems with the police response that Washington, D.C. faced on June 13th following two fires on the Red Line of the Metro, and a Pepco power outage. The article complained of the City's inability to dispatch police or transportation personnel to busy intersections or into stations to help the public.

Far too often we only recognize those who perform poorly and forget to recognize those who do their jobs well even under tough circumstances. As you probably remember, in early June, Fairfax County came across a similar situation where storms, lightning, heavy rain, wind, and tornados reaped havoc and left many without power and many of our roads without working traffic signals. Our Police and Fire Departments reacted instantly, canvassing the majority of intersections and areas where traffic lights were not working within minutes. Their presence and guidance ensured that confusion was kept at a minimum and that traffic was able to flow to allow people to get back to their homes and loved ones safely.

Our outstanding Police and Fire Departments in Fairfax County are often taken for granted, but in situations such as the one we experienced last month, it is easy to see why they are second to none, and deserve much praise for their ongoing commitment to excellence and the well being of Fairfax County residents. I take my hat off to them for a job well done, and thank them for there continued service.

Bringing Home Silver in the Junior Olympics!

Congratulations to Coach Pat Herrity, Coach Aaron Smith, Coach Mike Lewis, Pat's son Sean and the rest of the U-16 Virginia Stars inline hockey team on their silver medal in the Junior Olympics.

Upcoming Events

First Springfield District Concert to be Held on Saturday, September 20th!

I am very happy to announce that for the first time the Springfield District will have its own weekly summer concert series starting in 2009. These weekly, family oriented concerts at **Burke Lake Park** will provide a free entertainment option for families and will also serve as a community gathering place for all of

us in the Springfield District. As a preview of what's to come next summer we will be having a **free special "preview" concert on Saturday, September 20th 2008 from 5:00 PM-7:30 PM.** I would like to thank EnviroSolutions and The Peterson Companies for sponsoring our first concert. You can view the flyer for the concert by clicking on this link http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/springfield/pdf_files/springfield_nights_2.pdf.

I hope to see you there!

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| Springfield District Nights Concert |
| Saturday, September 20th 5:00 PM-7:30 PM |
| Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road Fairfax Station, Virginia |
| Bands: Bill Kirchen & Too Much Fun (Grammy Nominated Roots/Rock) Rocknoceros (The BEST Children's Show in Town) IONA (Premier Pan-Celtic) |

Supervisor Herrity and Delegate Dave Albo to Host Joint Town Hall Meeting on October 6th

On Monday, October 6th Supervisor Herrity and Delegate Dave Albo will host a town hall meeting at Washington Irving Middle School, 8100 Old Keene Mill Rd, Springfield, VA from 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM. The meeting will be held in Irving's auditorium, and members from the Police's Gang Unit, as well as Fairfax County's Zoning Enforcement Department will be present to explain what they do and also to field any questions that you may have. We hope that you will be able to join us.

Clifton/Fairfax Station Launches Aging in Place Initiative on September 14

A new, local organization, the Clifton/Fairfax Station – Transition in Place Services (CFS-TIPS), an aging in place initiative, is ready to move forward and roll out their help. CFS-TIPS plans to help member senior citizens obtain services they need to remain in their homes, provide information on reliable contractors, and promote wellness and social and cultural activities that are important to seniors. As Fairfax County's number of older citizens continues to grow, I appreciate this type of initiative in aiding our communities.

Many communities across the United States are exploring ways to better serve seniors by developing plans that address their future needs. Both homeowners and local governments have discovered it is cheaper and better to assist homeowners to remain in their homes rather than move to a retirement or assisted

care facility. The primary goal of TIPS is to help make that wish possible – at a nominal cost.

CFS-TIPS will host a "Kick Off" meeting at the Clifton Presbyterian Church on Sunday, September 14, 2008 from 7:00 to 8:30 PM. A presentation of the TIPS program will be made, questions answered, and references provided. I will be present to lend my support. Refreshments will be served. The Church is located at the end of Richard's Lane, between the Hermitage Restaurant (Clifton Hotel) and the railroad. The meeting is free and is open to all, to include interested prospective members and volunteers.

The initial coverage area for CFS-TIPS includes the Clifton and Fairfax Station geographic area generally south of Braddock Road and north of the Occoquan, between Union Mill Road and Ox Road (Route 123). For additional information, write to CFS-TIPS at PO Box 311, Clifton, VA 20124, send an e-mail to cfs-tips@cox.net or visit them online at www.cfs-tips.org.

Child Safety Seat Inspections on September 13th

In conjunction with the Burke Centre Festival the West Springfield Station of the Fairfax County Police Department will be conducting Child Safety Seat Inspections from 10am - 2pm on Saturday, September 13, 2008. In addition, there will be two Bicycle Rodeos, one at 11am and the other at 1pm. Both of these events are being held in the Giant Parking Lot located at 6011 Burke Centre PW (across from Terra Centre Elementary School).

Also, the Crime Prevention Section will be part of the festival on the Burke Centre Conservancy property and children's fingerprinting will be available.

Please come out and support everyone involved. Anyone with questions can contact MPO JT Frey, 703-644-5026 x 2237 or jt.frey@fairfaxcounty.gov.