



HERRITY REPORT



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Summer 2008 in Review Part #2

***Editor's Note: Please plan to attend a FREE community concert this Saturday (9/20/2008) at 5:00 PM at Burke Lake Park. More details below.**

- Free Community Concert Series for the Springfield District
- Hiring/Spending Freeze Proposed
- Focusing on Our Commercial Tax Base as a Board Priority
- West Springfield High School Renovation Group – *SOAR* – is Launched
- Responding to Tropical Storm Hanna
- I-66 Short-Term Improvements: Part Two
- Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the Planning Commission
- Clifton Day 2008 – Sunday October 12th
- Marshall Cemetery Restored – October 19th 2:00 PM

Free Community Concert Series for the Springfield District

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 this Saturday, September 20th, 2008.**

We have lined up some very exciting performers for this first concert. Kicking off the show will be Bill Kirchen, a Grammy nominated Rock and Roots guitarist. Following Bill Kirchen will be the band Rocknoceros. Rocknoceros puts on one of the best children's show in our area and if you haven't seen them I hope you take this free opportunity for you and your children to enjoy this great band. The last act of the night

will be Iona, the premiere Pan-Celtic band on the East Coast (it wouldn't be a Herrity event without an Irish band!).

The opportunity to bring these free, family oriented concerts to the Springfield District would not be possible without our generous sponsors. I would like to personally thank our sponsors for this first concert, EnviroSolutions and The Peterson Companies.

I would also like to thank Sousan Frankeberger of the Fairfax County Park Authority and all of the staff at Burke Lake Park. They have been instrumental in helping our office put together this concert.

This first concert is going to be a wonderful time so please come enjoy the park, listen to great music and meet some of your neighbors. This is a preview of things to come next summer. I hope to see you there!

Hiring/Spending Freeze Proposed

Across the country and in Fairfax County we are facing very difficult economic times. In these tough economic times we as leaders of the county government must be looking at every possible way to save money just as most families and businesses in our county are being forced to cut from their budgets to make ends meet. We are already facing a significant budget shortfall that is likely to get much worse. As a result, we will soon be forced to make very difficult decisions that will likely impact the lives of our residents and County staff. We should not wait to act. Many businesses, governments as well as the Commonwealth of Virginia have instituted hiring freezes. By acting now we can proactively address some of the problems we will be facing as we begin the 2010 budget process as well as potentially reduce the impact on residents and County staff. However, if not handled correctly hiring freezes can have unintended negative consequences and should include areas such as public safety that should be exempted and a process by which other positions that are truly critical can still be filled with senior management or Board review and approval.

At the September 8th Board of Supervisors meeting I proposed that the County Executive report back to the Board on how such a freeze could be implemented for hiring and consultants. Other board members asked that travel also be looked at for a "freeze". There will be more information to report on this in the September *Herrity Report*.

Focusing on Our Commercial Tax Base as a Board Priority

In 1976, a Blue Ribbon Commission set up by the Board, set a goal of 25% of the tax base from the commercial sector. The commercial tax base is critical because it provides much of the tax revenues we use to fund the high quality services our residents have come to expect. For each dollar of taxes paid by commercial business they use services costing a fraction of the dollar. On the other hand residences typically use services costing in excess of each dollar of revenue they provide. Our best current estimate for the high density residential tax base is they use about a dollar of services for every dollar

in taxes. The higher the proportion of commercial tax base the lower the tax rate needs to be to fund a given level of services.

Fairfax County reached its goal and actually reached 27% in 1990. Since then we have slipped to 18%. The recent rise in residential property values contributed some to the decline in the commercial tax base and the Board has continued to fund and support the Economic Development Authority and revitalization. However the Board should be doing significantly more to return the commercial tax base to 25%. There has been some confusion in the private sector as to whether the 25% commercial tax base is still a goal of this Board. Achieving a 25% commercial tax base would provide significant relief to homeowners.

Since the Board adopted its latest set of Board Priorities five years ago, we have added three new board members. The Board of Supervisors retreat scheduled for earlier this year was not held and we did not have an opportunity to review or ratify the Board Priorities. Accordingly there has not been a formal mechanism to update the Board priorities.

At the September 8th Board meeting I proposed that the Board make economic development and the achievement of a 25% commercial tax base a Board priority. After much discussion the Board agreed to reaffirm its support for economic development and the achievement of a 25% commercial tax base a Board priority.

West Springfield High School Renovation Group – *SOAR* – is Launched

As you know I have been keeping you up to date through the *Herrity Report* about the deteriorating physical condition of West Springfield High School (WSHS). I am happy to inform you that some of the dedicated parents and community activists who I have been working with all year to advocate for the badly needed renovations at West Springfield High School have formally created ***SOAR West Springfield*** – Spartans Organized for Action on Renovation (www.soarwestspringfield.com). ***SOAR***, chaired by future West Springfield parent Erik Hawkins, is working closely with the West Springfield High School PTSA and WSHS principal Paul Wardinski to ensure that WSHS is included in the Fairfax County Public School's new school renovation plan in fall 2008 with completed renovation by 2016, WSHS's 50th Anniversary.

SOAR is hosting a town hall meeting at **7:30 PM on Tuesday, October 28th, 2008** at West Springfield High School to review and discuss WSHS's projected status in the new Capital Improvements Program (CIP) renovation queue. While the founders of ***SOAR*** have made a tremendous amount of progress, they simply can not do the rest alone. This must be a large community wide effort including alumni, future WSHS parents, local businesses, and various community groups. There will be multiple members of the Fairfax County School Board at this town hall meeting and a message needs to be sent that the WSHS community is organized and willing to work hard to secure WSHS's proper place on the CIP.

I strongly encourage you to visit the *SOAR* website (www.soarwestspringfield.com) and sign up so that we can keep you informed. Also please plan to come out and show your support for WSHS at the town hall meeting on October 28th, 2008. If you would like to get involved with *SOAR* before then please contact Erik Hawkins through *SOAR*'s website: http://www.soarwestspringfield.com/?page_id=7

Responding to Tropical Storm Hanna

In anticipation of the fury of Tropical Storm Hanna and the impact it would have on the constituents of Fairfax County, I and my Chief of Staff Dave Foreman opened up my West Springfield office on Saturday, the day of the storm, as well as Sunday. It was a good thing I did as I received numerous calls regarding fallen trees, flooded streets and other inconveniences caused by over 8 inches of rain and wind gusts. I was called to South Run Recreation Center which had been set up to evacuate down stream from Lake Royal which was threatened with high waters. I then went to Lake Royal to get a first hand look at the problem. I was extremely pleased with the teamwork and ingenuity shown by the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, the Fire Department, the Office of Emergency Management, the Police Department, and the contractor at Royal Lake, Angler Environmental. They all worked tirelessly to redirect the flow of water from one side of the damn and avert a potential disaster impacting around 300 homes.

I stayed at Lake Royal until the disaster passed and put a call into the VDOT District Director to help get a bridge inspector to the scene so that we could safely reopen Guinea Rd. I then toured some of the other damage in the district including Byron Avenue Park, which was under water, and some washed out roads in the Fairfax Station and Clifton areas.

On Sunday I returned to Lake Royal and was able to walk the front of the dam. It was only then that I realized how important the quick action of our staff was in averting disaster down stream.

I then returned to Byron Avenue Park where the West Springfield Little League and the Springfield Youth Club play their games. Accotink Creek had overcome its banks and swallowed the fields. It was a scene that I had not witnessed since I played on those fields as a youth many years ago.

When I arrived, SYC volunteers had already begun working to clean up the damage which destroyed most of the appliances in the snack bar and other equipment. John Blevins, SYC's Football Commissioner, indicated a need for County support to remove debris from the field. I was able to reach our Park Authority's Director of Maintenance that day (Sunday) and get a commitment from them to help remove debris. In another great display of teamwork the community came together to get the fields back into playing condition as soon as possible. Please see an article on the community effort at <http://www.usafootball.com/articles/displayArticle/6322/6214>.

During my visit to Byron Park I also noticed that the protective berm that keeps the field from flooding had been substantially altered. This is an area that still needs to be addressed by the County.

On Sunday I also toured the affected roads in Fairfax Station and Clifton – Clifton Rd, Fairfax Station Rd., Colchester Rd., and Henderson Rd. - all of which had significant damage. I had a meeting with VDOT at Fairfax Station Rd. where the actual roadway had been washed away. I have been keeping residents up to date on the status of the repairs which have been delayed by the need to order a new pipe.

Overall it was a very busy two days and I am glad I was able to open my offices on the weekend during this difficult time. It was so nice to see our citizens, county employees and state agencies coming together during the storm and I want thank all of you for this effort.

I-66 Short-Term Improvements: Part Two

My previous newsletter mentioned the recent opening of the I-66 shoulder lanes for additional time during the morning and evening rush hours. Though I will continue to work with VDOT to have these lanes open on weekends as well, another I-66 short-term improvement that I have been pushing for is the opening of the slip ramps at Monument Drive and Stringfellow Road outside of HOV hours. When I spoke with VDOT this past week, I was told they recently completed one hurdle in the process to move forward on this initiative. This involved a report from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) regarding a multi-fatality accident that occurred in Georgia on a ramp similar to these in 2007. As a result of this report's recommendations, VDOT is now working on a signage plan to be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration and then the Commonwealth Transportation Board for approval. Though this certainly seems like a lot of "hoops" to jump through, I was reassured by VDOT that all parties and agencies involved have indicated unanimous support for this project, which should help keep the process moving along as quickly as possible.

Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the Planning Commission

Guest Column by Planning Commission Chairman (and Springfield District Commissioner) Pete Murphy

As we celebrate and commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Fairfax County Planning Commission – founded on July 6, 1938 -- and its dedicated service to the citizens of Fairfax County, we also recognize and honor our Planning Commissioners – of yesterday and today -- who have given unstintingly of their time and talents to make our county a better place to live, work, worship, recreate, educate our children and retire.

During the past seven decades, 121 county citizens – including those on the current commission – have served as Planning Commissioners, overseeing the land-use process

and ensuring that our citizens enjoy a safe and secure quality of life as our county evolved from an agricultural crossroads – focusing on milk and poultry products – to a dynamic suburban/urban 395-square mile jurisdiction with an all-important goal of preserving and enhancing our environment.

Since its first meeting on July 18, 1938, in the Old Court House in Fairfax City with its five charter members, to the Board Room in the Massey Building, to the Board Auditorium in the new Government Center, Planning Commissioners have convened thousands of public hearings and countless citizen, committee and task force meetings.

And, from that first meeting to the last convened, each commissioner has had the undaunting task of finding a balance between the rights of the landowner and the desires of the citizens.

As Fairfax County grew – due primarily to its proximity to Washington, D.C. – we began to transform from a dependant bedroom community for the nation’s capital to a thriving, independent, diversified jurisdiction with a strong and vibrant residential and business-oriented base.

The Planning Commission, as the custodian of the Comprehensive Plan – the county’s primary land-use guide for development and growth -- has been and continues to be in the forefront developing policies and plans to logically and realistically address the growth issues and the infrastructure needed to keep pace with the county’s increasing population and changing demographics.

Planning commissioners, with professional guidance from the dedicated county staff, – and with maximum citizen participation, input and recommendations -- developed for the approval of the Board of Supervisors, the PLUS (Planned Land Use System) Plan in the early 1970s, Planning Horizons in the early 1990s and frequent, if not yearly, reviews of the Comprehensive Plan to the present day.

This timely and relevant process ensures the Comprehensive Plan – the “Citizens Plan” – addresses, in a significant and meaningful way, the applicability of its guidance to the overall quality-of-life goals that afford our citizens a true “sense of community.”

Even today, as Planning Commissioners prepare for the Area Plan Review process for North County, a special citizen task force – the Fort Belvoir Base Realignment and Closure APR Task Force -- from the Lee, Mount Vernon and Springfield Districts and at-large members -- is examining land-use nominations in specific areas around the Army post that will experience a very significant increase in military, civilian and contractor personnel by 2011 due to the BRAC legislation.

It is a team effort.

Since its founding, the Planning Commission owes a debt of gratitude to the members of the Fairfax County staff for their expertise, counsel and tenacity as we commissioners determine our courses of action in land-use and related matters.

We also thank the Board of Supervisors, their staffs, and the County Executive, his deputies and staff, for their support.

The Planning Commission also appreciates Channel 16, our superb TV crew, with us at each public hearing from before the gavel goes down to well after we adjourn – and to all those who produce, direct, film and edit the Planning Commission Roundtable.

The past and present Planning Commission staff cannot receive enough praise for all the members have done and do today for the commission, the various Fairfax County staffs, the Board of Supervisors and, most importantly, the citizens of our county.

We may not always agree, but we are united in our goal of making, to the best of our ability, sound, realistic and well-thought out land–use recommendations and decisions.

Thank you for all your support.

Clifton Day Festival 2008

Sunday, October 12th is the date for this year's Clifton Day Festival. The event runs from 9am to 5pm, and I will be there to see many of you take delight in one of the most beautiful parts of our County. As always there will be a variety of music, arts and crafts, and of course food vendors to keep you busy throughout the day; and I will also have a booth that I invite you to drop by. Last year's festival took place on a gloriously sunny day and was a great day for all. I urge you to come out and see with your own eyes what this enchanting part of our County has to offer... See you there!

<http://www.cliftonday.com/>

Please be advised that if it rains The Clifton Day Festival will reschedule to Sunday October 19th).

Marshall Cemetery Restored

In my May report, I told you about the Marshall Cemetery which was recently vandalized and a meeting that was held to discuss how to address this and the many similarly isolated cemeteries in our county. I'm pleased to report to you that the Fairfax County Cemetery Preservation Association was formed as a result of this meeting by a group of volunteers led by two of our History Commissioners, Lynne Garvey-Hodge and Mary Lipsey. After a cemetery survey to determine the extent of the damage and potential restoration, twenty volunteers transformed the Marshall Cemetery. They cleared the area of dead trees, bushwhacked brush, picked up bits of glass, bottles, and other trash, and spread woodchips. By restoring the area they brought renewed respect and beauty to the

cemetery. By recruiting local businesses to assist with their effort, they developed teamwork and a spirit of cooperation.

The work, however, is not completed. They plan on cleaning the marker of its graffiti and may also pursue ground penetrating radar to determine if other gravesites are located there. They are also organizing a dedication ceremony for Sunday, October 19, at 2 p.m. and are recruiting interested volunteers to adopt and monitor the cemetery. The Association is using the restoration of the Marshall Cemetery as a pilot program for addressing other cemeteries. If you are interested in learning more about the dedication ceremony or other information or if you would like to assist this group, please contact Mary Lipsey at christopherlipsey@verizon.net or Lynne Garvey-Hodge at lghassoc@erols.com.

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