



Dulles Direct Newsletter

October 2012

Welcome to the October edition of the Dulles Direct Newsletter. I know that we in Loudoun County have been inundated with political emails, calls and advertisements—so I promise that other than some comments below on the school bond referendum; this email is free of all of that!

Loudoun County is still recovering from the impacts of **Hurricane Sandy**. The County's Emergency Operations Center is active and we still have thousands of residents without power. The County has set up a Hotline for residents with storm-related questions or concerns: 703-737-8300 or hotline@loudoun.gov (or you can contact me). Throughout the storm, I was in contact with officials from NOVEC and Dominion. At the peak, about 4,400 Dulles South residents lost power due to a Dominion transmission line problem (the line served the Arcola substation which NOVEC uses). A sincere thank you to the line crews from both companies that were out at the peak of the storm repairing the problem, which allow power to be restored to most overnight.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Claiborne Parkway Extension and Braddock/Pleasant Valley Road Intersection Improvements

This month the Board of Supervisors approved a list of nine projects to submit to the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) FY14 State Revenue Sharing Program. The purpose of the State Revenue Sharing Program is to provide additional funding for use by a county, city or town to construct, maintain or improve the highway system. The General Assembly will determine the funding amount for the program when they convene the 2013 session. The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) may allocate up to \$200 million annually to the program and a locality may apply for up to a maximum of \$10 million in matching allocation, of

which \$5 million may be used for maintenance projects in the Commonwealth's Transportation Six Year Improvement or the locality's capital improvements plan (CIP).

Two of the projects in our application list are of particular interest to the Dulles district: Claiborne Parkway extension and Braddock/Pleasant Valley Road intersection. The **Claiborne Parkway extension** will include a four lane extension from Croson Lane to Ryan Road. Design, which is currently under way, should be completed by the end of 2013. The estimated cost to construct the extension is \$6 million, of which the project has \$4 million funded by the FY13 Revenue Sharing Program. This year's request (FY14) would provide the balance.

The **Braddock Road/Pleasant Valley Road intersection** improvement project currently has \$1 million in local gas tax funds allocated by the Board of Supervisors which will be used as a match to request an additional \$1 million from the Revenue Sharing Program. \$600,000 has been allocated by the state for design. We have discovered that the last time a traffic count was done at this intersection was 2003—obviously things are much different now. Therefore, VDOT's first order of business is obtained an updated traffic count. Since this intersection is just east of the Loudoun/Fairfax border, transportation staff is working to obtain the necessary resolution of endorsement from the Fairfax County Board on the revenue sharing application.

Hanson Regional Park Master Plan Approved

This month the Board approved the final Master Plan for Hal and Berni Hanson Regional Park after many months of public input in the planning process. This 257-acre park is located along Evergreen Mills Road and will provide a variety of recreational uses including over 10 rectangular/soccer fields (including two artificial turf), four baseball diamonds, a cricket pitch, basketball courts, mountain bike trails, disc golf, off-leash dog area, amphitheater, equestrian trails, among other amenities. The cricket pitch was something that I had pushed for in particular, given the large Indian population with an interest in cricket in the Dulles District. The park will now move through the legislative review process for a Special Exception and Site Plan. Final site plan approvals are anticipated in Fall 2014. A map of the Master Plan is available on page three of this [document](#).

FY2014 Fiscal Guidance for Tax Rate

As we enter the budget process, the Board of Supervisors has continued the recent practice of giving the County Administrator fiscal guidance for his proposed budget. The fiscal guidance is not binding, but serves as a guideline for him so that he does not present a budget that is totally out of sync with the Board's general direction.

Earlier this month, the Board of Supervisors voted 6-3 to instruct the County Administrator to prepare a budget that was level for County services, but had a 3 cent reduction for the Loudoun County Public Schools budget. I was one of the "no" votes on this motion for the following reason.

While there is no question in my mind that LCPS must enact significant reforms to ensure a fiscally solvent health care, benefits, and retirement system, I am not convinced that there will be

enough savings there to cover a projected gap of over \$68 million between what LCPS will be requesting and what a 3 cent tax reduction to their budget would provide. The fact is that there will be around 2,500 net new students entering the system next year, and two new elementary schools will be opening. As an alternative, I offered a substitute motion that would have provided for an equal tax rate for both the County and the school system. This still would create a large gap between what LCPS is requesting and what they would receive, but at least would provide a better and more equitable starting point for discussion. However, my motion failed 4-5. Over the coming months, I will be discussing in greater detail my thoughts on both the county and school budgets, and like last year, I'm sure I will receive plenty of input from parents and citizens. We are at the very beginning of the process and there will be much more discussion from both the School Board and the Board of Supervisors.

Home Daycare

In my previous newsletters, I have been detailing developments in the state regulations of in-home daycare providers. The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) has implemented new regulations requiring new and existing home daycare providers to be in compliance with local zoning codes. Currently, the state license allows for the care of up to 12 children (not including the provider's own children). However, our county zoning ordinance allows for up to only nine children, including the provider's children under the age of 14. Because the vast majority of Loudoun's 144 licensed home daycares are not in compliance with the county's ordinance, the reality is that immediate enforcement of this provision would literally remove children from homes.

My staff and I have put in a great deal of time pursuing a solution to this problem. After much research and a 2 hour debate at the Transportation and Land Use Committee, the Board of Supervisors unanimously supported my motion to institute performance standards that will allow for up to 12 children in home daycares in some zoning discussions and lowering the age of the provider's own children to 13 who count against the cap. Staff will now work to develop these performance standards and compose changes to the ordinance. My motion also ensures that no immediate action will be taken that would necessitate providers needed to remove existing children from their home daycares thanks to an agreement with VDSS.

While changes are being drafted for final approval, the Board directed the Zoning Administrator to refrain from prosecuting any such providers for noncompliance. The Zoning Administrator will continue to prosecute any childcare providers whose home or situation poses a health, safety or welfare threat, or who is already the subject of an existing prosecution unrelated to the issues addressed in this item. Given the staff workload on other zoning amendments, I anticipate that it will take at least several months for the new performance standards to be drafted, at which time there will be more public discussion at the Board. I will notify residents when this will occur.

Tall Cedars Parkway Signal

The Board of Supervisors has allocated \$625,000 in proffer funding (money from developers) to install a new westbound left-turn lane and signal at the intersection of Tall Cedars Parkway and Poland Road. This improvement will address new traffic patterns, accidents, and increase in

traffic volume. Unlike the Edgewater-Poland Road intersection, which I have also been seeking to improve, the Tall Cedars intersection improvement has met warrant with VDOT meaning this project can move forward.

Roadway Solicitation

You may have seen individuals or groups soliciting for donations in the median of roadways in Loudoun County. Not only does this pose a threat for motorists and the pedestrians, but it often slows traffic. Earlier this month, the Board approved an item I supported to hold a public hearing (no later than April 2013) on a proposed ordinance change which would “prohibit the solicitation of contributions of any nature from the occupants of motor vehicles on highways located within its boundaries, or on public roadways and medians.” A byproduct of this item would be that it would impact the Fire Department’s “Fill the Boot” campaign on behalf of the Muscular Dystrophy Association. While this is an outstanding cause, there have been some issues in the Dulles District with solicitation at busy intersections that have created problems. As part of the item, the Board has asked staff to look into alternatives so that the campaign could be continued in a different way—perhaps at shopping centers of other locations that would be safer and less disruptive.

Diwali Resolution

This month, I authored a resolution approved by the Board of Supervisors to recognize the Indian holiday of Diwali. Loudoun County is fortunate to have a vibrant Indian community. Over 34 percent of Dulles District residents are Asian, which in the census includes those of Indian descent. Diwali—the festival of lights—is about celebrating peace. You’ll find brightly colored lights in communities throughout Loudoun. I presented the resolution to four groups representing segments of the Indian population in our county. I have worked to establish a good working relationship with the Indian community and I’m looking forward to continuing that for the betterment of all our citizens.

DULLES DISTRICT UPDATES

Buffalo Trail ES Traffic

Since mid-September, it has been clear that the morning traffic situation at Buffalo Trail Elementary School is unacceptable. My office has been working with VDOT, Supervisor Clarke’s office, LCPS staff, and School Board Members Morse and Turgeon to find a solution. To provide immediate relief, I worked with Sheriff Mike Chapman to obtain a discount for LCPS to secure a sheriff’s deputy to direct traffic at least through December, at which time LCPS will evaluate. The eventual solution will be the completion of Seven Hills Drive and a traffic signal at the intersection of Gum Springs Road. However, this traffic signal is not funded by the developer until 490 housing permits are issued (under 100 have currently been issued.)

As it stands, the developer, Woodlawn, is constructing the new two lane section of Gum Spring Road from Braddock Road to the south as part of proffer agreement for the Dawson’s Corner and Virginia Manor developments. It will run from Braddock Road south to the Dawson’s Corner

subdivision entrance. Currently, they are removing trees in the section near Ticonderoga Farm. We have been told by the developer that they expect the complete stretch to be open in the spring of 2013. The timing has a lot to do with weather and the final paving/striping availability. Woodlawn is also working with LCPS to provide an additional barrier on the northern side of the school where the road will curve.

My discussions with Woodlawn have led us to believe that Seven Hills Drive will be extended to connect with Braddock Road by the beginning of the next school year. This should improve traffic flow quite a bit as drop offs and buses could go in one way and out the other. We'll be working with LCPS to make sure that plans are in place to take advantage of this next year. We're also working with VDOT to better utilize some of the widened stretch of road near the school through an acceleration lane.

Greenstone Drive and Mineral Springs Circle

I have been contacted by many constituents regarding the intersection of Greenstone Drive and Mineral Springs Circle near Mercer Middle School. Some of you may have been made aware that the stop signs could be removed. This was a major concern to me as well and I have been working with VDOT and Delegate David Ramadan to find a solution.

Currently, this intersection is still controlled by Van Metre. Van Metre is in the process of turning over these roads for VDOT control, now that this developed area has matured. In this process, Van Metre discovered that a 4-way stop was not consistent with the original site plan filed with VDOT. Because of that inconsistency, VDOT requires a warrant study to justify keeping the signs.

In the transfer of road circumstance, while the warrant study must meet VDOT's standards, it is actually conducted and paid for by the developer--who generally contracts with a qualified firm to do the study (as Van Metre has done).

The initial warrant study came back negative for a four-way stop in most criteria, based on VDOT's formula. VDOT then requested that a new study be done by Van Metre in September, with school underway. My understanding is that it did not materially change the results of the first warrant study. It is important to note that the studies done to date have been privately funded, so taxpayer dollars have not been expended.

Van Metre has submitted the updated warrant study to VDOT and it is currently under review. Delegate Ramadan and I have already expressed our position that the pedestrian traffic numbers should be the main criteria considered in this situation given the proximity to Mercer Middle School. I have established a good working relationship with the VDOT team in Northern Virginia, and David has made similar inroads in Richmond and here. It has been my experience so far that a unified front, in this case with the developer and state and local elected officials, can make a difference in achieving the right outcome.

Pleasant Valley Road (Loudoun side) Intersection Improvement at Route 50

My office has also been working on a particular bad traffic tie-ups in the area of the Ridings at Blue Spring community on the eastern side of Poland Road. Traffic is using local routes as a cut through to get to Route 50. VDOT has sent traffic engineers out to study the situation and at my request has decided to accelerate a planned improvement at the intersection of Pleasant Valley Road and Route 50 (on the Loudoun side). This improvement should allow traffic to better merge onto Route 50, which will in turn help alleviate delays on local roads such as Middlesex and Paramount Place. I have also made the Sheriff's Office aware of these traffic concerns and they are doing their best to increase patrols in this area.

Center Street and Loudoun County Parkway

A few months ago I mentioned that a recent accident at Center Street and Loudoun County Parkway prompted me to ask the Sheriff's Office for a review of data for that intersection. I discovered an unusually high number of accidents over the last several years and asked my Dulles District appointee to the Transportation Safety Commission (TSC), Shawn Sutherland, to take a look and present it to the committee. Shawn has a law enforcement background and did a thorough review of the intersection. After discussion at two meetings of the TSC, the group voted to recommend extending the median on Loudoun County Parkway to prevent traffic from crossing straight across at Center Street. I am now working with VDOT and South Riding to assess the impact of this change on neighborhood driving patterns. While I understand it will be less convenient for some folks, it should also make it much safer and reduce accidents at the intersection. However, if you have thoughts on this please feel free to email me.

Reminder: New Absentee Voting Option

Those of you who have read previous updates know that I was able to obtain funding for a new absentee voting location in the Dulles District for the first time this year. **The County has now announced the dates and hours that in person absentee voting is being conducted at the Dulles South Multipurpose Center.** You may vote absentee at the Multipurpose Center this Wednesday-Friday from 4 pm-8 pm and this Saturday from 9 am – 5 pm. I hope residents who will have trouble making it to the polls on Election Day will take advantage of this new opportunity. This year is essentially a pilot for in person voting at this location. However, if turnout is strong, I will have an easier time keeping the absentee precinct here in future elections.

Reminder: Bond Referendum

With Election Day just a few days away, I wanted to take a moment to discuss the school board referendum that will be on your ballot when you vote. A question will appear at the end asking whether the county should take out bonds to design and build 1) Loudoun Estates II High School (HS-6) at a cost of \$81,215,000 (this school will be located next to Rosa Lee Carter Elementary and is needed to relieve Briar Woods High School); 2) a new Dulles South Elementary (ES-21) at a cost of \$28,820,000 (his school will be located next to Lunsford Middle School and is needed to relieve overcrowding at Pinebrook and Liberty Elementary Schools) and 3) Loudoun Valley High School renovations at a cost of \$26,115,000.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously supported each of these items and voted to put them on the ballot. A common misconception is that school bonds decide whether to build the schools or not. In fact, the ballot question concerns only the method of financing. The County is able to get lower interest rates when bonds are approved. Either way, we will be moving forward with each of these projects because they are needed. **However—if you want them to cost less taxpayer money—please vote for the school bonds!**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Military Appreciation Event

John Champe High School and the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program will be hosting a military appreciation event. They invite you to Champe's final home football game of the season against Madison County on Friday, November 2 at 7:00pm. Admission for veterans and their families is FREE! (Non-military \$5 admission). For further information contact David Galloway of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program at 571-258-3900 or Joe Breinig, Jr., Athletic Director for Champe HS at 703-722-2690.