



Dulles Direct Newsletter

November 2013

Welcome to the November Dulles Direct Newsletter. I hope that everyone has a safe and enjoyable Thanksgiving. I want to begin by thanking all of you for your support for the bond referendum questions on Election Day earlier this month. The Dulles District voted overwhelmingly in favor of all four questions that were requested by the Board of Supervisors. Most notably, we will now be able to move forward with construction of our indoor recreation center and senior center at the Dulles South Multipurpose Center, and with additions for Freedom High School and Mercer Middle School (more information below).

This month, I've provided updates on some ongoing traffic issues, and also discuss some financial issues that we're dealing with on the Board. **I also want to highlight my upcoming Dulles Direct Town Hall Meeting, which will be December 5 at Freedom High School.** As I approach the midpoint of my term, this will be my eighth town hall meeting, and for the most part they have been well attended with very good questions. I will continue to hold these meetings every quarter as I previously pledged, and of course will also continue to be accessible at various HOA meetings, public events and by email and [Facebook](#).

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

2014 Legislative Program

At our November Public Hearing, the Board approved the legislative program for the 2014 General Assembly session. Last year, we achieved tremendous success in Richmond and saw many of our priority requests adopted by the General Assembly. This year, we are continuing to push for the items that weren't passed, and we've also added some new issues.

One of the new items deals with clarifying the provision in the State Code for the misuse of public funds. As the result of an investigation involving a current member of the Board, it appears that only full-time government officials and employees are subject to ethics laws, and a determination was made that members of the Board of Supervisors are not considered full-time. I personally disagree with this determination (while it is true that many of us have other, full time jobs and our pay is not necessarily “full-time,” we are always on call and deal with aspects of our job at all hours of the day). Nevertheless, the decision was what it was, and it is now apparent that the law must be clarified so there is no question as to whether it applies to members of the Board of Supervisors in any jurisdiction.

Another legislative item is our support for state funding for additional VDOT Northern Virginia District staff. The transportation bill and the County’s commitment to road construction have meant a marked increase in workload. At the County level, we are both adding positions and hiring consultants for project management in order to deal with this increased workload, but it will do us no good if VDOT isn’t doing the same. While I appreciate the hard work of the VDOT employees that I work with, the amount of time it takes to get through VDOT processes on even simple road projects is a constant source of frustration for almost all of us.

Therefore, we’re asking the State to fund additional positions at VDOT, and we’re also asking VDOT to permit Loudoun County to fund a VDOT position at the Northern Virginia headquarters that would be dedicated to reviewing plans for Loudoun projects.

More information on the Board’s 2014 Legislative Program is available at http://www.loudoun.gov/documents/11/4146/2014%20Legislative%20Program_201311211454150439.pdf

Athletic Field Initiative Update

Included in the bond referendum that passed earlier this month is \$2.1 million to fund upgrades to athletic fields at elementary and middle schools in the County. The 25 fields were identified as the worst in the County by the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Board as part of my Athletic Field Initiative. Unfortunately, it became apparent that implementing these improvements using existing staff resources was not going to provide us with the kind of timeline that we wanted for improvements. In October, staff briefed the Finance Committee on several implementation options and made it clear that it would take about five years to actually improve the fields. That was not acceptable, and the Finance Committee passed my motion to instruct staff to come up with a hybrid model which would balance the need to make improvements faster, while not taking too many fields out of service.

The result of that work was a proposal to essentially create a roving field rehabilitation team using a combination of additional staff and contract labor. With this plan, 7-10 fields per year can be renovated, and will be out of service for a smaller period of time. Overall, the 25 fields should be completed within the next 3.5 years. The field improvements will include wells, irrigation, top dressing and seeding. This combined with the increased level of regular maintenance will help improve the condition of these fields for safer use at a higher level by our

County's youth leagues. The fields in or near the Dulles District that will see improvements include those at Liberty, Legacy, Buffalo Trail, Arcola and Creighton's Corner Elementary Schools.

Greenway SCC Case Update

On November 12, a round of hearings began on Delegate David Ramadan's case against the Greenway. As you might recall, the Board of Supervisors agreed to my motion to join the case, which was allowed by the SCC judge despite the Greenway's opposition. Our involvement allows the Loudoun County Attorney's Office to work on this case. Below is an update from Delegate Ramadan:

Dear Friends,

Last week I spent 5 days in Richmond for the Greenway trial along with our lawyers, experts and Loudoun County's lawyer. To my disappointment, the administrative judge denied our request to lift confidentiality on all documents obtained during discovery, therefore I'm limited to what I can share with you at this point.

We argued on behalf of our citizens that the current tolls on the Greenway violate all three requirements of section 56-542D of the Virginia Code which clearly specifies that the tolls shall be set at a level: (1) which is reasonable to the user in relation to the benefit obtained; (2) which will not discourage use of the roadway by the public; and (3) which will provide the operator no more than a reasonable return as determined by the commission.

Our lawyers and experts not only proved our position but also did a great job cross examining the Greenway witnesses on their flawed data and accounting measures –funny math to say the least. On day two of the trial, we pushed the Greenway into admitting on the stand that they do not have a definition for 'material discouragement' [My note: this is a reference to the SCC's rules which state that tolls should not "materially discourage" use of a toll road]; further they refused to define 'material discouragement' –although required for this investigative trial. On day three, the Greenway's CEO said it is not his job to study distance pricing –really! On day four of the trial, I presented the court with 9413 names of those of you who joined our online petition. Then our forensic accountant's testimony, which unfortunately remains confidential, raised major accounting issues leading the judge to suspend the proceedings and continue the case for few weeks to investigate.

The most absurd part of the trial was the continuous position of the SCC's staff legal team to protect the status quo instead of the interest of the citizens of the Commonwealth. Our uphill battle is not only against the Greenway but clearly against the SCC's staff who agreed to all the egregious toll increases over the years in violation of the code a set by the General Assembly.

We go back to Richmond on December 19th to continue the trial. Please keep spreading the word about this case and ask your friends, family members and co-workers to sign the on line petition: www.LowerGreenwayTolls.com

While in Richmond for the next phase of this trial I will be updating daily my official Facebook page (www.facebook.com/DelegateDavidRamadan) and Twitter feed (www.twitter.com/DavidIRamadan) with case developments and news. Please 'like' my Facebook page or follow me on Twitter to stay up to date.

I spent several hours with David discussing the strategy moving forward when the hearing reconvenes, he along with the County Attorney will be conferring further with the rest of the Board in early December.

Good Financial News: Bond Ratings

Once again, Loudoun's stellar bond ratings were affirmed by the three major credit rating agencies. Loudoun was ranked AAA by all three, putting us in elite company across the nation. A couple of quotes from the reports:

"County finances are well-managed, adhering to long-standing policy guidelines, and include detailed planning for capital and operating needs." –Fitch

"We view the county's management conditions as very strong with "strong" financial management practices under our Financial Management Assessment methodology, indicating practices are strong, well embedded, and likely sustainable." – S&P

The Board pays close attention to our debt ratios and management practices, and we are fortunate to have staff who works hard to allow us to maintain these ratings. There is a material benefit to taxpayers because these ratings allow us to obtain the best possible financing for capital projects.

Not-so-good Financial News: County Core Financial Systems Replacement

While I would much rather be sharing nothing but good news, it is my responsibility to also tell you when something is not going as well, and we are facing such a situation with the replacement of the County's core financial, HR and accounting systems.

First, a little background - In 2009, the previous Board of Supervisors initiated an effort to replace all of our core computer systems—which track and run most aspects of the County. It was a necessary decision, because the existing systems were over 25 years old and some modules were no longer supported by their manufacturer. At the time, the Board of Supervisors approved a budget of \$25 million for the project. Things were tough financially at that time with the recession, and staff did not request additional personnel to actually undertake the work. This would prove to be a costly mistake.

The project was broken into three separate initiatives: Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) financial and human resources systems, Integrated Taxation Systems (ITS) used by the Commissioner of the Revenue and Treasurer, and Computer Aided Mass Appraisal (CAMA)

systems for the assessment of properties in the County. It should be noted that these systems are also used by Loudoun County Public Schools, so the upgrade for some elements (like HR) is occurring on both sides.

Implementation of the new system has not gone well. At various points, staff has requested additional funds—totaling \$7 million—bringing the total project cost up to \$32 million to this point. The timeline for implementation of Phase 1 (ERP) was July 1, 2013. That timeline was met, but at a huge cost. Existing staff worked a tremendous amount of overtime in order to meet the deadline. Because they were so focused on getting it installed, not enough attention was being made to the training and operation of the new system. Therefore, now that it is installed, there are not enough employees on either the County or the LCPS side who actually know how to run it.

Following implementation of Phase 1, the project was halted so Management and Financial Services (MFS) could undertake an analysis of what was happening. The conclusion was that Phase 2 and Phase 3 cannot be undertaken in this fashion, and that additional work would need to be undertaken to properly train and operate the ERP system. One major thing that still needs to happen is the full integration of HR systems, which includes payroll for over 13,000 employees.

Earlier this month, MFS came to the Board's Finance Committee (on which I serve) and requested an additional \$9.4 million and 7 new full time employees to properly operate the new system and install and implement the rest.

Not surprisingly, the Board has been very concerned about this issue and this request. Unfortunately, we don't have many good options: it would not be a good idea to abandon the project midstream, and the existing technology is out of date and will not be supported by the vendor. The Board's questions have centered on lessons learned and what is actually needed to go forward. To make matters even more complicated, the window for deciding a path forward is limited, because LCPS cannot be in the middle of 2014-2015 recruitment and hiring while the system work is being done—it either needs to be delayed beyond this time or underway soon and completed by that time.

The Finance Committee held a special meeting to consider options on Monday, November 25. At our instruction, MFS has come up with a comprehensive set of benchmarks and waypoints that will allow us to conduct better oversight and release funds at various intervals dependent on progress. The Finance Committee will be recommending adoption of this approach, as well as adding the requested 7 FTE's. For budgeting purposes, we are recommending allocating the full \$9.4 million utilizing the County's expected FY13 fund balance (surplus), but placing the full amount in reserve pending the waypoints. The full Board will be considering this issue at our December 4 meeting.

If all the funds are expended, the total project cost will be \$41 million—far exceeding the \$25 million originally budgeted. My takeaway is that original expectations for how difficult this project would be were not realistic, and personnel should have been added at that time. Several surrounding jurisdictions have undertaken similar upgrades in recent years, and all of them have had the same issues, with the final project budget far exceeding the original projections. I was

not on the previous Board (and for that matter, our current Chief Financial Officer was not the CFO at that time), and there is limited value to Monday-morning quarterback the decisions that were made in 2009 other than to ensure that the same mistakes are not repeated. Moving forward, I am confident that the Board will be conducting vigorous oversight on the remaining components of the project.

Resolution Recognizing Diwali Holiday

I was pleased to welcome members of Loudoun's Indian American community to the Board Room earlier this month to present a resolution recognizing the Diwali holiday. Diwali—the festival of lights—is about celebrating peace. Loudoun County is fortunate to have a strong and growing Indian community. Over 34 percent of Dulles District residents are Asian, which in the census includes those of Indian descent. I look forward to continue to work with my Indian neighbors as well as those from all heritages to make our County great.



Resolution of Commendation for Eagle Scout Saurabh Ghulati

Over the past two years, I have participated in a number of resolution presentations for Eagle Scouts from around the County at Board meetings. I was especially pleased this month to recognize an Eagle Scout from the Dulles District. Saurabh Ghulati and his family joined the Board of Supervisors at our meeting earlier this month for a resolution honoring his attainment of the Eagle rank. As part of his badge requirement, he constructed a boardwalk at Claude Moore Park in Sterling. Saurabh is currently a student at George Mason University and plans to enter the Air Force in the future. Congratulations Saurabh!



DULLES DISTRICT UPDATES

Bond Referendum Passes

Thank you to all of you that supported the bond referendums earlier this month. After more than a decade since it was originally proposed, we will finally now have our own recreation center, as well as a full senior center. The parks and recreation bond passed 70.2%-27.7% in the Dulles District and 52.9%-44.7% countywide. Below, I have included information about an upcoming meeting to start planning the design of the senior center. Staff is already hard at work preparing to put these projects out to bid early next year and I will be providing updates on timeline once we've gone through that process. Generally speaking, we are aiming for mid-2015 for completion of the indoor recreation center and mid-2016 for the senior center.

Signal Issues on Rt. 50

We all know that commuting conditions on Route 50 continue to be terrible. The road is far over capacity to begin with and now drivers have to contend with lane shifts, barriers, and reduced width lanes. The good news is that we are now two years into a three year project that will provide an increase in capacity and synchronized signals from Stone Ridge to Rt. 28. The long awaited utility relocation is well underway and we are beginning to see glimpses of the final product in the completed half section of the Cub Run bridge and the curbing that has been installed in many areas.

I continue to hear from many of you about concerns with various aspects of the project and I am in almost daily contact with VDOT and the contractor. Most recently, there have been issues with missed light cycles for left turns from Rt. 50 onto side roads and general light timing problems along the corridor. To try to get everybody (contractor, signal contractors and VDOT) on the same page, my office recently held a meeting to detail all of our concerns and push for resolution.

The missed cycles are a detection issue for those vehicles approaching the signal in the turn lane. All signals are on temporary microwave detection until the final configuration of the widened Rt. 50 is in place. These detectors are much more difficult to work with than the

permanent loop detection employed at most intersections in the area. If a vehicle approaches too slowly or stops too far back, the detectors may not register. Sometimes they simply malfunction regardless of the vehicle.

The detectors have now been placed at their highest sensitivity setting, and the contractors are currently looking at different settings to ensure that left turn arrows at intersections, like Pleasant Valley, are triggered. This may mean that you will be sitting at traffic signals longer, even when there is no traffic crossing in front of you—however, it will also eliminate the possibility that the light will never turn, which has been happening to drivers at some signals (especially Pleasant Valley).

Shirley has also committed to have their signal contractor do an observation at various intersections at different times and days to ensure that we are not giving too much time to the side roads or for turning movements that are overly impacting the main lanes on Rt. 50. That includes weekends—I have observed (and also heard complaints) about the Fairfax Pleasant Valley intersection during the weekend and at night, which appears to be favoring Pleasant Valley traffic too much, causing delays on 50.

East Gate View Drive and Pleasant Valley Road Intersection

The intersection of East Gate View Drive and Pleasant Valley Road (Loudoun) continues to be a source of concern for many of you. Based on the regular feedback that I receive, I continue to work with the Sheriff's Dept. on targeted enforcement of aggressive driving at this location. In order to help get some additional resources to problem areas, the Sheriff's Office has begun a more robust collaboration with Virginia State Police. At the beginning of the month, State Police led a targeted enforcement operation at East Gate View Drive that netted 33 citations. I anticipate additional efforts similar to this at this intersection and others in the future. I appreciate the cooperation of the State Police in assisting the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office.

Tall Cedars Parkway Update

As you may recall in my September newsletter, I have been working on a plan to ensure that all four lanes of Tall Cedars Parkway will be built the entire length of the road between Stone Ridge and South Riding. Earlier this month, the Finance Committee approved a key component of that plan, which will amend the Loudoun County Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to include an additional two lanes between Pinebrook Road and Riding Center Drive to the County's project between Gum Spring and Pinebrook.

Currently, the County has a project to construct a four lane section of Tall Cedars from Gum Spring Road to Pinebrook Road near Avonlea. This design and construction plans have recently been approved by VDOT and the County is now preparing to acquire the needed right-of-way and send the project out for bid.

A two lane section of Tall Cedars between Pinebrook Road and Riding Center Drive is nearing completion by a developer proffer and is expected to open to traffic next month. The other two lane portion of this segment is under proffer by adjacent commercial properties that have yet to begin any of their approved projects.

Had we not moved forward with the current plan, at the completion of the County's project in 2015, we would have been left with a situation where Tall Cedars goes from four lanes down to two between Avonlea and South Riding and then back to four on the other side of Riding Center Drive. However, with approval of this CIP amendment, the County will use proffer funds to expedite the other two lane section and construct it at the same time as the project between Gum Spring Road and Pinebrook Road. The County would still be eligible for a cash payment to cover the construction when those commercial properties are developed and the proffer is triggered.

This means that when the project is completed in 2015 we will now have a four lane Tall Cedars Parkway from Stone Ridge to East Gate as a parallel road to Route 50 in those areas. I look forward to the Board's consideration of this item at our meeting next month and will update you on the final action.

Braddock and Pleasant Valley Intersection Update

Thank you to everyone that submitted comments on the Braddock and Pleasant Valley intersection project. While I am not able to release the final input numbers yet, the response has been far greater than VDOT receives for most projects.

The next step will be for VDOT to respond to public comments that were expressing concerns, and for the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to approve the design. I have been in touch with members of the Fairfax Board about this upcoming item and will continue to follow it closely. After that action, the next step will be for an RFP will be issued. It appears that the Fairfax Board may take the matter up in January 2014—and of course we will be closely tracking that item.

Center Street and Loudoun County Parkway Intersection Update

The intersection of Center Street and Loudoun County Parkway in South Riding has been the site of numerous accidents over the years. In the fall of 2012, I asked the Transportation Safety Commission to review this intersection and provide options for safety improvements. Following meetings with the public and the South Riding Proprietary Board of Directors, it was determined that a configuration change would be made that restricts Center Street traffic from making a left onto or crossing Loudoun County Parkway. Last spring, a traffic study was conducted on area roads and intersections to serve as a baseline of existing conditions. The intersection change was implemented in August with the plan to allow for a 90 day period for the traffic patterns to settle.

We have now reached the end of that 90 day period and it is now time to conduct the follow up traffic study. The new study will give us specific data on what effect this change has had on the surrounding road network and any changes or improvements that may be needed. I have heard from some of you about u-turn conflicts and left turn light timing issues at the intersection of Tall Cedars and Loudoun County Parkway. The consultant is aware of these items and will be reviewing them, along with accident data, during the follow up study. I expect to have the report sometime after the first of the year. I will be sharing that information with you and the South Riding Proprietary HOA as we consider options for moving forward.

In the meantime, I am pleased to report that the safety record of the newly configured intersection thus far has been excellent. There has been only one incident reported, and it involved a vehicle that hit a deer.

Tall Cedars Parkway and Elk Lick Road Update

Residents contacted me earlier this year with concerns about safety at the intersection of Tall Cedars Parkway and Elk Lick Road. At my request, VDOT Traffic Engineering performed a video analysis of the intersection. The video analysis did not show any specific operational deficiencies of the intersection, but they did note that some Elk Lick Road displayed aggressive tendencies on approach to the intersection. VDOT is planning to enlarge the stop sign and the stop ahead sign for southbound Elk Lick Road traffic at the approach to Tall Cedars and we are working with law enforcement to have some targeted enforcement areas at the intersection. We will continue to monitor conditions at the intersection and pay close attention to the safety record.

Snow Removal Information

My staff was recently briefed by VDOT about their snow removal plans for this winter. VDOT's policies bring the most focus on major roads first (like Route 50), then major local roads and finally neighborhood streets. During a snow event of more than two inches, you can view the status of plowing at www.VDOTplows.org. If you feel that your street may have been missed you can call 1-800-FOR-ROAD to report an unplowed road, or contact my office.

Among the tips from VDOT are:

- When shoveling driveways, leave the last 5 feet of snow at the curb until after the plow has passed.
- Shovel to the right facing the road
- Park on the odd numbered side of the street or in driveways
- Allow room for the plow to come through
- Call 511 for road conditions, or visit www.511virginia.org for traffic cameras

More information is available at www.virginiaDOT.org, www.YouTube.com/VDOTweb , @511northernva on Twitter.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dulles Direct Town Hall Scheduled for December 5

I will hold my quarterly Dulles Direct Town Hall meeting on Thursday, December 5, 7:00 pm at Freedom High School, which is located at 25450 Riding Center Drive in South Riding. I will give updates on current projects and other items of interest in the County and then answer any and all questions.

Dulles South Multipurpose Center Phase III- Senior Center Design Meeting

Public input meetings for the design of the Senior Center (Phase III) of the Dulles South Multipurpose Center will be held on Thursday, December 5. Sessions will be 2:00-4:00 pm and 6:00-8:00 pm at the Dulles South Multipurpose Center. Anyone interested in providing input on the design of the Senior Center project should plan to attend.

Welcome Amanda McLaughlin

I am fortunate to have two outstanding aides working in my Leesburg office. Tom Parker continues to serve as my legislative aide, but we have had a change in the other position. Jessica Echard has left to pursue another career opportunity. Her replacement is Amanda McLaughlin. Amanda will be working primarily on constituent issues. As a South Riding resident herself, she knows our district's concerns very well and I'm pleased to have her on my team.

Communications Commission Opening

I am now soliciting interest in the Dulles District seat on the Loudoun County Communications Commission. I have been informed that our current representative, Jim Botteicher, will be stepping down in the coming months. Jim has done outstanding work on the commission, both for the entire County and as our Dulles Representative. In particular, he was instrumental in our push to bring broadband service to the Cedar Crest neighborhood. His leadership on the commission has also led to a more active review of our franchise agreements with service providers to ensure that they are living up to the agreements that were made with the County.

Any interested residents can e-mail me with a statement of interest and a resume at matt.letourneau@loudoun.gov.

Volunteers Needed to Help Low-Income Families Prepare and File Taxes

The Loudoun County Department of Family Services and the Loudoun County Area Agency on Aging are joining together to help low-income families in the community file their taxes free of charge and in many cases obtain a tax refund.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program, locally known as the Northern Virginia CASH Campaign - Creating Assets, Savings and Hope – relies on volunteers to deliver tax preparation services at no cost to working families and individuals in the community who earned less than \$52,000 in 2013.

Volunteers contribute a few hours weekly during the tax season to help prepare tax returns, or serve as greeters, screeners, site coordinators and interpreters. Classroom and/or online training is provided to all volunteers from December 2013 through January 2014. All tax preparers and screeners must pass an IRS certification test. Successful tax preparers are computer savvy, have experience preparing a tax return, have a knack for working with numbers and spend a minimum of 20-30 hours to prepare for the IRS examinations.

To register as a volunteer, or for more information about the Northern Virginia CASH Campaign, please contact Karen Velez at 703-771-5718 or via email at karen.velez@loudoun.gov for evening and Saturday morning volunteer opportunities; and Debra Bressler at 703-777-0505 at debra.bressler@loudoun.gov for weekday opportunities. Additional information about the tax program is available at www.nvacash.org.

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