



Dulles Direct Newsletter September 2017

Welcome to the September edition of the Dulles Direct newsletter. It certainly has been a busy month! We've been dealing with terrible traffic, new routines, and all the usual stress. I hope it starts to settle down as the cooler weather comes.

Thank you to everyone that attended this week's Dulles Direct Town Hall meeting. I always enjoy the opportunity to meet with constituents and talk about some of the things I've been working on, especially in our current political climate which seems like it is full of tension. I know that it is impossible to be in public office and always please everyone. On many issues, there are a variety of viewpoints and people will probably disagree with mine once in a while. Certainly, if you think outside of a political context for a minute, it is totally normal to not agree all the time with people in your life-your family, coworkers, etc. So my goal is never to make everyone happy, because that's impossible. What I do want to do, however, is make sure you know what I'm doing and why I'm doing it, even if not everyone always agrees. I also want to give you straight answers and set realistic expectations. The dialogue must always be respectful and factual. And I hope that if you disagree with me at some point, you will at least know where I am coming from, and we can

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have a good discussion about whatever the issue is and then move on.

As for the meeting itself, I provided some updates which I will share below. School Board Representative Jeff Morse also had a presentation about school construction and the upcoming attendance boundary changes. I have posted the calendar he shared about the upcoming Dulles South Elementary School Boundary Change process on my website, at www.loudoun.gov/dulles. In under two weeks, the School Board will begin the process of drawing new boundaries for Goshen Post Elementary School next to John Champe, and the School Board is reviewing boundaries for all the Dulles South schools, which could mean changes.

If you weren't able to make the Town Hall meeting this week, I will have a booth this Saturday at the South Riding Fall Fest and Business Expo. Feel free to stop by to discuss County issues or ask questions about ongoing and upcoming construction projects. The Business Expo will be located at the South Riding Center (42420 Unicorn Drive) and runs 1:00-5:00 pm. I hope to see you there!

The Route 606 widening project reached a major milestone this month with the opening of the Loudoun County Parkway missing link and intersection. One of the first things the Board of Supervisors did when I took office in 2012 was conduct a "missing links" study that guided our prioritization for the local road network. This missing link was at the top of the list. Getting this project to fruition required a great deal of effort from a lot of people. The road was constructed as a proffer from Brambleton, but that proffer was adjusted and had to be renegotiated during the last Board's term. At the time, I took the position that I would oppose any applications from Brambleton until the County had a firm commitment to complete Loudoun County Parkway. As a backstop, I even pushed for the road to be included in the County's budget, which fortunately wasn't needed because of the new proffer.



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In addition, the initial design for the intersection was clearly going to be inadequate for traffic volume, so then-Chairman Scott York and I halted everything and forced a redesign to allow for 3 left turn lanes on the westbound side. Once the Route 606 widening project kicked off, Shirley Contracting committed to having this intersection open in September 2017, and they delivered. The full project is expected to be completed by the end of 2018. The new configuration has caused some real challenges for 606 eastbound traffic, and I have an important update on some upcoming changes that should help below.



I was pleased to sponsor a Proclamation to recognize September 2017 as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in Loudoun County. This is the second consecutive year that the Board has recognized this important cause. We were joined for the presentation by representatives from Smashing Walnuts, Team Mathias, and Gavin Rupp #15. I appreciate the work that all groups working to raise awareness and funds for this are doing and encourage you to support their events if you are able.

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Congratulations to Gateway Community Church on the opening of their new church facility. I was pleased to be able to attend the ribbon cutting earlier this month, which was just one part of a weekend long celebration. The County is getting close to opening Tall Cedars Parkway (more on that below) which will provide an additional access point for their property. The Gum Spring access will be receiving a turn lane when the church constructs it.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Blight Abatement Ordinance

For close to two years, I've been working with County staff to try to come up with a way for the County to address properties like the stalled hotel and former United Rentals building on Route 50. The result of those efforts is a new ordinance on blight I proposed earlier this year that will give the County a greater ability to address blighted properties.

Staff drafted an ordinance and brought it before the Board earlier this month. The Board approved moving the draft ordinance to our next Public Hearing on October 11. The Public Hearing begins at 6:00pm and is held at the Loudoun County Government Center in Leesburg. In addition to speaking at the hearing, you can also weigh in with your support by emailing bos@loudoun.gov.

I do want to note that the County has been in regular contact with the current owners of the former Sheraton hotel site. They have been seeking to develop it as a full service hotel and have made some progress with a commitment from a national hotel chain for a "flag" on the property. Their biggest hurdle is obtaining financing, and they are working on that now. Hopefully they can get that deal done.

The United Rentals building in front of this property remains a real concern, with no prospects for development that I'm aware of. Should the County adopt this ordinance, I believe it would be a prime candidate for enforcement.

County Employee Classification and Compensation Study

Over the past year, I have spoken about the need to address compensation issues for employees of Loudoun County Government. Every year since joining the Board, we have focused much of our attention on LCPS employees while County employees have fallen behind comparable jurisdictions. While we certainly want to keep our teacher pay competitive, other County employees now deserve some attention.

The Board funded the first phase of a classification and compensation study during last year's budget, and we just received the final report for that first phase. The report found that our existing classification system, while innovative when introduced in the 90s, no longer worked for an organization of our size and complexity. We simply have too many employees now, and not enough job classifications and pay bands. The existing philosophy of paying our employees at 95% of comparable salaries from our comparator jurisdictions has also made us less competitive in the marketplace, and perhaps even worse, we have not met our goal and are really at about 86%. It is not a surprise, then, that some County departments have seen large turnover and have difficulty recruiting replacements.

The report had several recommendations; some I agreed with and some I did not. When looking at comparator jurisdictions, the report recommended including some obvious competitors such as Fairfax, Alexandria, Prince William and Arlington Counties like we currently do. They also recommended including some neighboring counties in Maryland. I did not agree, and proposed to keep the existing comparators. The Maryland jurisdictions have a different form of government, different governing philosophy, and collective bargaining, which the Virginia localities do not.

The report also recommended, and the Board supported, switching public safety employees to a step and grade system that helps to logically show growth during their career since they typically will stay with the same employer for the length of their career. This is an important change for our public safety employees, and something they have been asking for.

We had a good bit of discussion on pay philosophy and I felt that we needed to provide our Human Resource staff the most flexibility in this area. I proposed and the Board agreed to set that philosophy at a range of 95-105%. There are some positions that we have no problem recruiting for, and others we have big

problems. We need to be able to have the flexibility to increase those salaries to meet the market and attract quality employees to the County.

The next phase will seek to classify all of our existing positions and propose pay ranges. It will take about a year. In the meantime, we are going to begin working on our compensation problem in the FY2019 budget. It will likely take us at least an additional \$20 million to bring salaries up to where they need to be, so my plan is to split that into three years, beginning this next fiscal year. We'll discuss that in more detail when we get into budget discussions.

DULLES DISTRICT UPDATES

Route 606 Merge Configuration Changes

Having the new direct Loudoun County Parkway link to Brambleton and the southern part of Ashburn is helping to relieve some of the traffic that currently uses the Stone Springs/Evergreen Mills/Belmont Ridge corridor to access the area. But, it also appears to have exacerbated 606 eastbound congestion in the morning. I have spent considerable time with VDOT trying to work on this new merge area. Unfortunately, cars are using the left lanes intended for northbound Loudoun County Parkway traffic and then cutting in to the right lane at the last minute.

Last night, I announced that as a result of our discussions, VDOT and the 606 construction team are going to bring the pavement between Evergreen Mills Road and the Loudoun County Parkway intersection into its final eastbound configuration, which is four lanes. Two of the lanes will continue straight, and two will continue right as a ramp to 606 Eastbound. The ramp will be 2 lanes for about 500 feet, and then merge back to one until the end of the year, when the remainder can be opened. The advantage of this new configuration will be a longer merge area, and a more traditional "zipper" type of merge in which cars will approach the merge from two lanes equally, and simply be able to take turns moving into one. You will see

work between now and October 20 to get the road into this configuration, and we'll provide updates for any potential disruptions for striping. I appreciate VDOT recognizing that keeping the existing configuration until the end of the year was untenable, and working with us to accelerate some improvements. Obviously, things will improve when the entire ramp will have 2 lanes at a later date, and then incrementally from there as the widened portions of 606 are brought online, leading up to the project's completion by the end of 2018.

Route 50

As I referenced earlier in this newsletter, we have entered a difficult traffic period regionally and Route 50 has been no exception.

I have been sharing your concerns and my own observations from my commute with VDOT on a regular basis. We are well aware that the hot spot is between South Riding Boulevard and Stonecroft Boulevard. At this point there aren't a lot of options, as both Pleasant Valley signals are running at the maximum light cycle of 240 seconds to try and move as much Route 50 traffic through the corridor, but it just isn't enough due to the traffic entering at the feeder roads. VDOT has adjusted signal timing at all the intersections several times over the last week, but nothing has provided much relief.

I have attempted to engage Fairfax County on a taskforce to look at these issues and jointly plan future improvements. Their Board of Supervisors was not interested, so we are doing this at the staff level instead. We initiated our own study of the corridor that I expect to come back in the next couple of months with recommendations. Ultimately, the issue is larger than signal timing and we may need to look at larger changes to streamline traffic and perhaps reduce signals or certain movements at those signals.

Dulles South Recreation and Community Center/Senior Center Update

We are continuing to work hard with the contractor to complete the Dulles South Recreation and Senior

Center. We have a new proposed schedule from the contractor that calls for completion next month, but that is dependent on successful inspections of all items and punch list corrections. From that point, we will need at least 90 days for County staff to be hired and placed in the new facility. Therefore, I still anticipate the facility opening in the first quarter of 2018.

Tall Cedars Parkway Update

A project that has moved much faster than estimated is the construction of Tall Cedars Parkway between Gum Spring Road and Pinebrook Road. The first element of the project you will see come online is the traffic signal at Tall Cedars and Gum Spring, which will only serve the existing open roads at first. That signal had some delays due to power issues, but I am expecting it to move to flash mode next week, and to be fully operational by October 10. Drivers on Gum Spring Road need to pay special attention at this intersection and be ready for the change. The road itself is undergoing an inspection and punch list process by VDOT before it can be opened for use. We had originally anticipated it would open to traffic in spring 2018, but it looks like we will be able to beat that date. I will share more details as soon as we have a final date available.

Elementary School Boundary Changes

The School Board is going to be taking up the issue of attendance boundary changes for the new Goshen Post Elementary under construction next to John Champe High School. This school is set to open in fall 2018. As a reminder, the Board of Supervisors has no role in the topic of attendance boundaries. My role is to help secure needed sites and appropriate the funding for construction of new schools.

The attendance boundary work sessions will begin on October 16 and run until the School Board is expected to adopt new boundaries on December 12. These boundaries could impact Aldie, Arcola, Buffalo Trail, Cardinal Ridge, Hutchison Farm, Liberty, Little River, and Pinebrook. For more information, [click here](#).

Slurry Work Continues

The Slurry sealing project is continuing around Dulles South. (My street got it last week). We have received lots of complaints about the material, especially how it looks and feels. I will remind you that it is not paving, but a different substance designed to protect pavement, and that it does look and feel a lot better with time. VDOT likes the substance and seems willing to put up with the initial difficulties. This is VDOT's project, not the County's, and the contractor put together some information on the process [here](#).

RETAIL/COMMERCIAL UPDATES

Every time I publish a newsletter and I don't include a section about Avonlea, I get a bunch of emails asking about it! I had long ago promised to let you know when we had updates, but I've decided that from now on, we're just going to keep a section in here every month, even if there is nothing new to report. I have some other retail updates to share this month as well.

Avonlea

The developer of Avonlea, Peterson Companies, came before the Board this month seeking approval of a signage plan that would permit signage that is larger than that already allowed by ordinance. They are also seeking several monument signs for the Route 50 frontage for certain tenants. They feel that having this signage would allow retailers to feel more comfortable with the visibility of the retail center given the required 100 foot setback and buffer requirements along Route 50. Also, when Route 50 becomes limited access in the future, that commercial center will lose its direct access to Route 50. The sign plan is up for a vote at our October 3 meeting. This is an unusual sign package, and has a lot of design features and elements. Staff is concerned that the number of signs (7 along Route 50) sets a precedent that we wouldn't want. I think that the signs are very tasteful and help compensate for the lack of visibility the buildings will have to Route 50. I am working with staff and the County Attorney on findings for approval that will protect the County down the road.

At this point, Peterson Companies is not announcing any tenant activity other than Cineopolis. However, they continue to work to sign additional tenants, and we remain in regular contact. They have not given up on the project, and still believe they will be moving forward in the near future. The retail and restaurant market is very tough and they face a lot of competition.

Hotel Site on Defender Drive

Many of you have inquired about the development of a hotel on property adjacent to the Chick-Fil-A on Defender Drive. That site is under construction for a new Hilton brand called [Home2 Suites](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Race Against Childhood & Canine Cancer

Smashing Walnuts Foundation and Canines-N-Kids Foundation are joining forces to "Crush Cancer at Both Ends of the Leash!" Lace up your running shoes, grab a leash and join the fun on Sunday, October 1st, 2017 in Brambleton. Two and four legged athletes will compete in the inaugural Two By Four Race Against Childhood & Canine Cancer. This unique race will feature a timed 5k race and an untimed 1-mile Kids Fun Run/Dog Jog. More information is available at www.caninesnkids.org.

Hernia Education Event

Join StoneSprings Hospital for a FREE Hernia Screening event to hear from their expert surgeons, as they provide education on this common but often misunderstood condition. The event will be held on October 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at StoneSprings Hospital.

There is no cost to attend. Space is limited. RSVP online at <https://herniascreening.eventbrite.com> or by calling 855-226-7344.

Loudoun Symphony Orchestra

The Loudoun Symphony (LSO) goes into its 27th season this fall with major news. Their season will

feature concerts by each of three finalists to succeed recently deceased Maestro Mark McCoy as conductor of the Symphony. The audiences will be asked to help decide the successful candidate. Also - the LSO will be adding a younger, "feeder" tier to its youth symphony. See www.loudounsymphony.org for details on both of these developments as well as details and ticket information for all concerts.

Notary Services

Loudoun County Public Library now offers free notary services at its eight branches. Licensed professional notary publics are available by appointment. Walk-in appointments may be accepted, but customers are strongly encouraged to call ahead.

For more information, visit library.loudoun.gov/Services/Notary.

Dulles South Food Pantry

The Dulles South Food Pantry provides food assistance to any person who resides in the school attendance zones for Freedom High School, John Champe High School or the upcoming Independence High School in Brambleton. The food pantry is open Wednesdays in the historic white chapel at Arcola United Methodist Church, 24757 Evergreen Mills Road, Dulles, VA 20166. Call 703-507-2795 or email info@dsfp.org to schedule an appointment. See the Dulles South Food Pantry's website at <http://www.dsfp.org/> for information on how you can help the food pantry fight local hunger. Donations to the Dulles South Food Pantry, Inc. are tax deductible.

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