



Dulles Direct Newsletter November 2017

Welcome to the November edition of the Dulles Direct newsletter. I hope you all had an enjoyable Thanksgiving and are enjoying the holiday season. This month, I've had the opportunity to visit with a number of you at the Annual Meetings of Stone Ridge, Kirkpatrick Farms and Loudoun South Little League. We covered a lot of topics from transportation and retail to upcoming park facilities.

Earlier in November I was pleased to cut the ribbon and open the long awaited missing link of Tall Cedars Parkway. This segment of road between Pinebrook Road and Gum Spring Road really serves to better connect the communities of South Riding, Avonlea, and Stone Ridge. It also serves as an alternative to Route 50 and Braddock Road. The signal at Gum Spring and Tall Cedars was activated with the opening of the road and helps navigating what had proven to be a tough intersection.

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The County is currently working with Peterson Companies on a proffered signal to replace the existing all way stop at Pinebrook Road and with Toll Brothers on updating the warrant study for a proffered signal at Riding Center Drive.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Silver District West

Earlier this month, I attended a community meeting with the Westwind HOA to hear a presentation on a land use application called Silver District West. The property is located on the south side of the Greenway between the Ashburn and Loudoun Gateway Metro stations. The mixed-use proposal would bring 3,325 multifamily units and 381 townhomes to the property which is currently zoned Planned Development- Office Park. It is also proposed to bring 630,000 square feet of office space; 240,000 square feet of commercial and retail space; 56 acres of parks, fields, and open space; and a nine-acre site for an elementary school.

Those in attendance had many concerns related to the proposal including transportation improvements needed in the area. This application is currently working its way through the Planning Commission and there are several items to be sorted out before it would be ready for review by the Board of Supervisors. Given



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the proximity to Metro, this property is important in fulfilling the vision that the County has for the type of development around the Silver Line. For that reason, my message was that this type of development is likely to occur, and in fact is being encouraged by the County. Major employers are no longer attracted to suburban office parks-they want mixed use developments with amenities built in. However, whether the exact proposal from the developer is the right one in terms of that mix is another matter, and one that I'll be working on as this makes its way through the process. Also, just from preliminary review, I think that the initial transportation proffers are not adequate-however, I know that the applicant is working on a revised package. I will want to see substantial improvements to Loudoun County Parkway, as well as commitments to help on alternative routes such as Shellhorn, Barrister and Westwind Drive.

For more information on the application or to comment online, [click here](#), then click on searchable list and enter ZMAP-2013-0006 in the Application Number field.

True North Data Center

The Board of Supervisors next week will be voting on an application to build a 750,000 square foot data center complex in the vicinity of Sycolin Road and the Dulles Greenway. This application has proven to be somewhat controversial because it is located in the Transition Policy Area, and near the Goose Creek. Concerns have been raised about the impact of the project on the creek, as well as on an apparently rare form of moss located on the property. There have also been concerns about the implications for the Transition Policy Area.

I appreciate and understand those concerns. I've taken the time to read numerous emails the Board has received on this project, and listened to the speakers at our public hearing. However, I think most of the concerns are unfounded, and that overall this is a good project.

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The context for this location is key for me. In the immediate vicinity are a very large natural gas power plant, Loudoun Water's new water treatment plant, and a large data center campus (Stonewall Business Park). Across Sycolin from this site is the Academies of Loudoun campus opening next year. That school project will have a far greater impact on traffic and conditions for residents in the immediate vicinity than the data centers will. This project is directly abutting the Dulles Greenway. While I understand that it is proximate to the Goose Creek, we cannot escape the fact that a 6 lane highway is next to the property, with all the noise and issues that come with that. I could make a very strong case that data centers are better suited next to highways in areas with existing industrial development than in some of the suburban areas that we currently have them in.

The arguments about the Transition Policy Area are a bit extreme. I've gone back and looked at the creation of the TPA, and had discussions with those involved at that time. The landowners who gave up land for the Greenway always had an expectation that there would be development along the highway. However, when the Board put in place the TPA, they didn't go back and do a small area plan around the Greenway, which originally was the course of action that had been discussed. The transition area is supposed to be between the suburban areas of the County and the rural. This location is not rural. It's between Ashburn and Leesburg-suburban and suburban. Therefore, I have always believed that it never really should have been in the TPA, and that a fairly narrow corridor around the highway between Ashburn and Leesburg should be designated for commercial development.

That is exactly what is being considered as part of the Envision Loudoun process. In an ideal world, that process would be complete before the Board considered this application. But the Envision Loudoun process has had some real issues and delays, and it cannot be said with any real certainty when it would be complete. Meanwhile, the applicant has a contract for

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a major technology firm that needs the data center space within a certain timeframe. Without it, they'll move on to a different County. Some have questioned that, and said that they could move within Ashburn, but my question is-where? There aren't areas left of this size and scope that aren't already spoken for that could be stood up quickly. There are several other large proposals for projects, but those are from different companies with different clients.

The data center developer itself is considered the industry leader in environmental sensitivity. That shows in the attention to detail in the project. They are taking great care with how they are handling the Goose Creek, and I think there's a very good chance the Creek will be healthier and better off with the project than without. They are also providing public access which currently doesn't exist, and won't exist because this is private property.

If this property doesn't develop as data centers, it currently has a by-right use for light density residential. Even at the light density, the moss will be destroyed and there are no provisions for care of the Goose Creek and other environmental concerns. However, at some point in time, I expect developers will be back with plans for higher density residential in this location, and who knows what a future Board might do with that.

Finally, there is the matter of revenue. This one project is projected to generate about \$22 million a year in tax revenue for the County. That equates to almost 3 cents on the tax rate. The reality is that we are going to continue to grow, and we are going to continue to have needs such as schools, roads, parks and libraries. We need this kind of development to help offset costs on residents.

So, for those reasons, I am supportive of this project.

Elderly Tax Relief Expansion

Loudoun County currently has one of the most generous tax relief programs for senior citizens in the

nation. Under the current system, seniors (over age 65) with an annual income of \$72,000 and a net worth of up to \$440,000 (not including the residence and up to three acres of property) are eligible for 100% real property tax relief.

The logic behind this program is that as property values increase, those on a fixed income may have trouble keeping up with the tax burden. However, there have been concerns that the current system is not equitable, because those with less income every year but a home that they have owned for a long time may find themselves ineligible, while those with a higher income could still qualify. For that reason, the Board has looked at some changes over the years to try to change the system.

The latest proposal would essentially expand the program to also provide 50% real property tax relief to those over age 65 that fall within the following income and net worth limits:

- Annual income does not exceed \$65,000 and net worth is greater than \$440,000 but does not exceed \$560,000; or
- Annual income does not exceed \$59,000 and net worth is greater than \$560,000 but does not exceed \$680,000; or
- Annual income does not exceed \$52,000 and net worth is greater than \$680,000 but does not exceed \$800,000; or
- Annual income does not exceed \$46,000 and net worth is greater than \$800,000 but does not exceed \$920,000.

The Board voted 8-1 to send the proposal to a Public Hearing. I was the 1 opposing the proposal. I am not against the concept of the program, and certainly not against fixing inequities within, but I don't support a full scale expansion that is not offset. In addition, because financial information about individuals is not publicly available, County staff cannot provide a reliable fiscal impact. Given all the pressures on the County budget, I am not comfortable moving forward without knowing better what this will cost.

The reality is that this program is a wealth redistribution exercise. The forgone tax revenue is not free, it has to be made up. It is made up by everybody else. There are many individuals in this County who have trouble meeting their financial obligations. There are single parents who have to pay for daycare and may be underemployed, or those who are caring for a family member. I get very uncomfortable when we start deciding that certain people are worthy of a tax break, and others aren't. I have looked carefully at our demographics, and the reality is that we are adding more seniors every year than we are losing, and many of them are going into higher value (expensive) age restricted communities. There is very little evidence to suggest that there is a wide scale problem.

I am extremely supportive of doing all we can to encourage a strong, growing senior population. Getting the Dulles South Senior Center built has been a top priority of mine. We spend a lot of money on younger populations, and comparatively less on seniors. But this is really a different issue-for me, it's a matter of fairness, and attempting to use the property tax ordinance to favor one group excessively over others who have just as legitimate needs. So, while I don't like to be the lone "no" vote on something like this, I can't support a policy change that I don't think is fair to the rest of our population.

ERP Project Completed

I am pleased to share that the County has completed implementation of the new ERP financial system that serves both County Government and Loudoun County Public Schools.

I have shared with you in past newsletters that this difficult project was initiated prior to my first term on the Board. It became clear that there were issues with implementation and the County ended up having to change contractors to get things back on track. We were just advised this month that the final phase has completed implementation for LCPS and although there are some minor tweaks we are fully operational.

DULLES DISTRICT UPDATES

Dulles South Recreation and Community Center/Senior Center

The project is progressing with punch list work continuing concurrent to the completion of the contract requirements. The contractor has achieved the building final inspection and is in the process of submitting for the occupancy permit.

A significant tie-in connection to the chilled water system to the existing Phase 1 building has been completed and this will allow Commissioning and Testing and Balancing (TAB) of the building systems to progress further.

Comcast has been onsite to begin installation of the public internet and television service. Furniture installation is expected to begin this week and continue for several weeks into mid-December. Meanwhile, Parks and Recreation has been moving forward with recruitment for new positions at the facility.

Brambleton Library Update

Those of you that frequent the Brambleton Town Center have likely seen that the shell of the commercial building that will house the future Brambleton Library is in place and work is well underway. The 40,000 square foot library will occupy the first and second floors and is being constructed through a proffer with the Brambleton developer that the Board recently worked to expedite. The library is currently expected to open in summer of 2018.

Elk Lick/Route 50/Defender Drive Update

The County recently submitted plans to VDOT for the interim closure of the median at Elk Lick Road and Route 50. The temporary plans would include the use of concrete barriers to close the median and flex posts to create a right-in and right-out at Elk Lick Road. By doing the temporary closure, we can accommodate the change quicker than waiting for the approval of full construction plans. We are already working on those

plans and hope to be submitting them for approval next year. The striping of Defender Drive will likely have to wait for temperatures to be appropriate for the application of pavement markings in the spring.

Once I have confirmation from VDOT on when the closure will be implemented, I will share that on my Facebook page.

Proposed Residential Parking District Adjacent to John Champe High School

The County is proposing to implement a Residential Parking District in the Village Run neighborhood adjacent to John Champe High School. The proposed parking district is a result of a request made by the Stone Ridge HOA on behalf of residents in the area that are experiencing extreme overflow parking from the school. Residents also completed the required petition process to show support from a majority of homeowners in the identified area. The proposal will be included in the Board's next Public Hearing on December 13, beginning at 6:00 pm.

If the Board approves establishing the parking district, parking on the neighborhood streets next to the school will be by resident permit only. Sacred Mountain Street would not be included in the district, though VDOT is considering parking restrictions there due to limited space for buses using the street to access the school.

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](#).

RETAIL/COMMERCIAL UPDATES

I have added a section to the newsletter that will provide information related to ongoing retail and commercial development in the Dulles South area. That seems to be the most frequently asked topic, especially updates on Avonlea.

Avonlea

Peterson Companies continues efforts to recruit tenants for Avonlea. They have told me that they are moving closer to getting the commitments needed to restart work at the site. There has been some leasing activity for smaller tenants, and they are closer to gaining the commitment for the larger tenant needed to move forward with construction. I expect that there will be more concrete news to announce in the March 2018 timeframe.

Arcola Center-Wegmans and Google

Arcola Center, located on the north side of Route 50 has seen its share of changes over the years. The project was approved just before the Great Recession hit and all of their major retailers pulled out. So far, they have developed some flex commercial areas on Evergreen Mills Road and the residential component that has been permitted. Earlier this month, Supervisor Buffington and I confirmed rumors that Wegmans has signed a contract contingent on a large rezoning. The rezoning is primarily related to conversion of property for a major Google data center. Wegmans has stated that they are not providing any timelines for construction of a store there as it is dependent on any approvals and site preparation that may be needed before they can begin. They also allow a minimum of two years between the opening of stores in the same area and the Chantilly store will not open until mid-2018. All in all this is a good news and sign that activity will hopefully be jump starting on that project.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Loudoun Symphony Holiday Performance

The Loudoun Symphony Orchestra will present *Joyous Sounds of Christmas* at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 2 at the Community Church in Ashburn and a one-hour family concert at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 3 at John Champe High School. Both concerts feature holiday favorites including *Believe* from *Polar Express*, *O Holy Night* and an audience singalong of all your favorite carols. Visit www.loudounsymphony.org for details.

VDOT Snow Removal

When the snow begins to fall this winter and we have an event of at least 2"; VDOT's goal is to have at least one passable lane on every road within 24 hours when snowfall is 2-4", 48 hours for 4-6", over 6" is expected to be at least 72 hours. If you feel that your street is missed after these timeframes have passed, you can use the resources below to get more information on plowing status and/or report your issue directly to VDOT:

- www.virginiadot.org/novaemergency: for news releases, important messages, frequently asked questions and links to many other resources, including:
- [@vadotnova](https://twitter.com/vadotnova) on Twitter
- www.511virginia.org for road conditions and traffic cameras
- www.vdotplows.org for neighborhood status and locations of plows
- www.my.vdot.virginia.gov or 800-FOR-ROAD (367-7623) to report issues

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. United States passport

- United States passport card
- Certificate of United States citizenship
- Certificate of Naturalization
- Foreign passport

- Alien Registration Card with photograph
- State-issued Driver's License
- State-issued Identification Card
- Uniformed Services Identification Card.

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 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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