



Below is a copy of my annual address to the Springfield District Council on the major issues impacting Fairfax County and the Springfield District and my thoughts on them. I welcome your feedback and comments.

Supervisor Pat Herry

Annual State of the District Address

Looking Back

As I start the last year of my first term as Springfield District Supervisor, I thought it would be a good time to reflect on some of the promises I made in my campaign and some of the ways I have performed against those promises.

Cutting Spending and Homeowner Taxes – In the seven years before I joined the board taxes on the average homeowner doubled from \$2,400 to over \$4,800. We have made some progress; taxes on the average homeowner in 2011 budget are \$ 4,713, lower than when I took office. Some of the leadership roles I took in making that happen include:

- Standing up to the majority in my first year on the Board and presenting an alternative budget that would have cut spending by over \$60 million and provided a substantial tax cut to our citizens.
- Sending a message that the years of unchecked, prolific spending were over, I laid the groundwork for the FY 2010 budget where I lead a bi-partisan effort that resulted in approximately \$100 million in budget cuts and a tax decrease for the average homeowner

- Leading the effort to put the County’s checkbook online so taxpayers can see how their tax dollars are being used.
- Getting my colleagues to agree to end the county’s misguided affordable housing program where the county was spending \$200 plus million dollars to become the largest landlord in the county and was subsidizing housing for families making over \$100,000 a year.
- Leading the effort to “Change the Equation” on the school budget by insisting that our education dollars are spent on our students, classrooms and teachers and not on administration and to consolidate county and school functions.
- Leading the fight against the County implementing a “meals tax” and purchasing the Gatehouse II school administration building.

There is much more work to be done in this area to give our homeowners relief from the enormous tax burden placed on them in the seven years before I was elected to the Board.

Reducing Government Regulation -I have worked hard and been successful at reducing some of the regulations on our businesses and homeowners. These regulations result in increases to the county budget, increases in costs to homeowners and businesses and increases in the cost of housing. Some of my specific accomplishments include:

- Making sure that the county considers the true cost of any new regulation before they are adopted, including the impact on the county budget, homeowners and businesses.
- Reducing the requirement on homeowners to submit grading plans for minor home improvements and additions. In many cases these requirements increased the cost of improvements 20 – 40%. These regulations were hurting many of our home improvement contractors (small businesses) who were losing business and putting people out of work. I expect further revisions and relief in the Spring/Summer.
- Bringing common sense to the tree ordinance, 125 pages of regulation that were expensive, time consuming and hard to understand. In short, an administrative nightmare for many of homeowners and businesses. We adopted common sense revisions that help relieve the burden while still protecting our tree canopy.
- Revising our Zoning Ordinance Regulations to protect our riding and boarding stables.

Protecting Our Neighborhoods -There is a lot of focus on Fairfax becoming more urban. While I believe we should urbanize in certain corridors of the County, it is our suburban neighborhoods that make Fairfax County great. I have continued to fight for our neighborhoods.

- I have pushed to have the County look at our immigration policy, something that had been ignored by previous Boards. Due in part to my efforts to make sure the Board held to its campaign promises to address criminal illegal aliens, Fairfax County now participates in the “Secure Communities” program which is a comprehensive plan to identify and deport criminal aliens.
- I have held town hall meeting on gangs, the crime spree, sexting, internet safety, Lyme disease and other topics important to our communities.
- I was a strong supporter of the County’s efforts to add strike teams to address boarding houses.
- I have been a vocal supporter of our teachers and schools and the need to focus resources into the classrooms and on kids. I worked to hold the school capital funds at their current levels when they were slated to go down and pushed for the schools to take advantage of current low construction costs and interest rates.
- As the chair of the 50+ committee I am engaging citizens and the Board in reexamining our plan to be ready for the “Age Wave” as the baby boomers reach 65.

Making Transportation a County Priority - Our residents spend far too much of their time stuck in traffic. As a transportation advocate for the last 25 years I have pushed to make transportation a county priority and for commonsense transportation solutions. A small number of my successes include:

- Finding short term and long term solutions to the congestion on I-66 has been my top transportation priority. When I took office in 2008 no one was pushing for solutions on I-66 outside the beltway – one of our most congested corridors. In 2008, I developed a 4 part plan to begin solving the problem.
 - ✓ Extend HOV hours – this has been accomplished
 - ✓ Open the slip ramps at Monument and Stringfellow for non HOV drivers in non HOV times – this will happen this Spring
 - ✓ Open the shoulder lane at any time I-66 is congested – this is now a County priority and is on the Governors priority list to be funded.
 - ✓ Getting the Environmental Impact Statement restarted. This is the first step in the process of identifying a long term solution for I-66 congestion.

- Successfully sidestepped bureaucracy and got the Fair Lakes/Fairfax County Parkway Interchange schedule moved up by 1-2 years.
- Proposed the creation of a Multimodal Interconnected Mass Transit network to encourage the development of a cost effective, consumer oriented, interconnected and time advantaged solution to getting cars off the road. The Board approved a study to take this idea to the next level.
- I worked to get improvements to Rolling Road which are on the Governor's list of priority transportation improvements.
- Successfully added the North Rolling road loop ramp to the County's transportation priority list.
- Implemented safety improvements on Hunter Village Drive.

Communications – I have worked hard to maintain an open line of communication with my constituents. From the regular Herrity Reports, to numerous open town hall meetings, to attending numerous civic association and community meetings, I have worked hard to be available to citizens.

Looking Forward – the County

While I believe Fairfax County has made progress in the last three years despite the national economy, our future success is not preordained.

While some want to have the Board of Supervisors focus on energy conservation, sidewalks and building a conference center, I think we have some major challenges ahead of us that must be addressed. Let me share with you what I think some of the challenges are and what we should be doing to address them.

Preparing for Cuts in Federal Contracting -We have been largely insulated from the “Great Recession” because of the federal government. But as Congress looks to scale back the size and scope of the federal government our local economy will surely feel the effects. There is a debate on how significant the impact will be but we need to start preparing for the inevitable because we will suffer the consequences if we don't. Some of the ways we can prepare are:

- Increasing the funding of the Economic Development Authority and have them continue to focus on diversifying the types of businesses we attract to Fairfax County.
- Ensure our airports remain strong.
- Look for ways to make the County more business friendly.
- Ensure we continue to have the best educated workforce in the nation.

I have been meeting with the County's large employers to find out how they feel about Fairfax County and there are many things we can improve on.

Updating the Tysons Corner Plan -The Board approved the Tysons Corner Plan last summer. While the plan was a good start I voted against it for several reasons – most notably we were not given a chance to address the over 50 public comments that evening, the cap on commercial development, and the lack of a transportation plan. At the January Board meeting I proposed, and the Board agreed, that we need to update the plan to deal with the commercial cap and transportation.

- Increasing our commercial tax base is one of the ways we can reduce the tax burden on our homeowners and provide a high level of services. The Tysons Corner plan currently caps office space development at 45 million square feet. Based on the applications received and in process this cap will soon be reached but much of this office development is expected to remain in the pipeline, will not be built in the near future and will not add to our commercial tax base. My fear and the fear in the business community is that this cap will discourage applications that might be built earlier and end up discouraging actual commercial development in Tysons's Corner, our economic engine.
- The Tysons Plan was approved without a transportation plan or a way to fund it. We need to make transportation a priority in the plan. The plan includes significant requirements for affordable housing (double that required elsewhere in the County), stormwater, public infrastructure (potentially now conference centers), etc. but no real funding for transportation. We need to hold the developers accountable for a large piece of the transportation funding but relieve them of many of the other requirements so that the Tysons Plan will actually work.

Continued Tax and Regulatory Relief - I have spoken much already about the need to further reduce regulation and the tax burden. Taxes doubled from 2000 to 2007 and I believe there are still areas where we can cut spending and I have laid these out in my Herrity Reports on the budget.

Recently, I have been receiving an increasing number of calls about the regulatory requirements on our homeowners. We need to work some common sense back into the process. I will continue efforts on both of these fronts this year.

Decisions on Dulles Rail Phase II– Early predictions are for a \$1.2B overrun on Phase II of Dulles Rail. The primary source of revenue for the project is the Dulles Toll Road. Tolls are already projected to exceed \$10 – excluding the Greenway. The Dulles corridor and Tysons represent the economic engine of Fairfax County and the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is past time to look at the impact of the tolls on the future of our economic engine.

Halting the Risky Purchase of the \$400 M Trash Incinerator - Fairfax County staff has recommended moving forward on a proposal to spend over \$400 million to buy a waste-to-energy facility currently owned by Covanta Energy, a private sector company that has owned and operated the plant since 1988. The County is recommending the purchase instead of accepting Covanta's offer to extend the lease for another 20 years at similar terms to the last 20 years. County staff's own analysis shows the lease option to be a better deal for the County for the next 20 years than their own optimistic projections under a purchase. We need to trash this risky \$400M proposal and let the private sector continue to successfully own and operate the plant.

Developing a Cost Effective, Consumer Oriented, Time Advantaged, Interconnected Mass Transit Network - In May 2009, I proposed the Board study the creation of a cost effective, consumer oriented, time advantaged, interconnected mass transit network. Such a network would consist of BRT or express bus running in dedicated or semi-dedicated lanes that would give people what they need to get out of their cars - a time advantaged commute. I believe this network could link our employment centers with our population centers and be designed so that it would be cost effective. We currently have Fairfax Connector bus express routes in the County that require no subsidy – riders pay the full fare because it is a direct route that gives them a time advantage.

Late last year the Board approved a study of the concept. I hope we will be taking important next steps in making this network a reality in 2011.

Looking Forward – Springfield District

In addition to the challenges we face across the county, we also face some significant challenges right here in the Springfield District.

Renovating West Springfield High School - West Springfield High School has not been renovated since it was constructed in 1966 and the building is in dire need of repair. It is essential that West Springfield, the pillar of the West Springfield community, be fully renovated as soon as possible.

When I took office in 2007 WSHS was not even on the renovation queue (the CIP) but over the last three years I have worked with our local elected officials, *SOAR* (Spartans Organized for Action on Renovation) and other WSHS alumni, like Delegate Dave Albo, to get the school onto the CIP - this is a good start, but we need to continue to push and have it moved up even farther.

Despite the problems with the physical structure, it must be noted that WSHS has an outstanding staff and is an amazing school that has realized enormous success both academically and athletically in the past couple of years.

Executing a long term plan for I-66- The short term improvements are under way but we need to stay focused on getting the Environmental Impact Statement done so that we can move on to on a long term solution. Once the EIS is done there will be a few companies interested in doing a PPTA project similar to the 495 Hot Lanes.

Funding the Fairfax County Parkway north loop and safety improvements- With NGA relocating from Reston to Springfield our already stressed infrastructure will see an additional 8,500 users. This will have a massive impact on the Fairfax County Parkway.

One major problem is the inadequacy of the Rolling Road/7100 single loop ramp that drivers will have to use to continue north on 7100 (the Ffx Co. Parkway). There is simply no way this single loop ramp will be able to handle the influx of cars and I am working hard to find money to expand the ramp.

A solution has been identified and the engineering is progressing but there are no funds identified for construction. I had this project added to the Board's priority list for local, state and federal funding. I have also discussed the project with the Secretary of Transportation, our local delegates and members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board. I hope some of the \$1.4 billion in funds identified by Governor McDonnell's audit of VDOT can be allocated quickly to this project.

I'm also working to address safety issues on the Parkway. I recently met with VDOT regarding an in-depth review of crashes along the Parkway. We are looking at a variety of solutions like wider shoulders and rumble strips, and median barriers to prevent crossovers.

Southwestern Boundary Study/ Clifton Elementary School Closing - The Southwestern Boundary Study has shown again just how bad the decision to close Clifton Elementary School was. Rather than leave the second best elementary school in the County open, school staff and the School Board have compounded a limited overcrowding problem by creating the need for an additional 400 seats.

It is clear why they separated the decision to close Clifton from the boundary study – it makes no sense to close Clifton when you are trying to solve overcrowding in the same area of the county.

The rush to close Clifton before a new school board can revisit the decision will mean that many of the 1,400 plus students that now must be relocated will end up in schools that are promised as yet un built additions, insufficient cafeteria and gym space and significant transportation and parking issues. In the greatest irony of all rather than leave Clifton open until the additions are built they will transfer children to schools that are unable to meet the County's educational specifications.

A majority of the PTAs of schools impacted by the study have signed a resolution against the results of the study – this is bigger than just Clifton. It makes no sense to put children in trailers

just to close a well-functioning school before a new School Board is elected. The motives for these moves are unclear but what they are doing makes no sense.

The public hearings on the boundary study will be February 7th and 8th.

Lyme disease- Lyme disease is on the rise in Northern Virginia and Springfield District has been hit especially hard. Last year, I held a joint town hall meeting on Lyme disease with Congressman Frank Wolf and Supervisor Mike Frey that was attended by over 200 people. Out of that town hall came a three point action plan:

- The Health Department is now working with local health care professionals to make sure they are up to speed on this disease. The “bulls eye” rash occurs less than 50% of the time and the test for Lyme disease is only about 50% accurate.
- A pilot study of the 4-poster deer bait station which kills ticks on deer.
- I called for legislation at the state level that would allow doctors more flexibility when prescribing long term antibiotics to treat Lyme disease.

I will continue my efforts to raise awareness and look for solutions to reduce the impact of this horrible disease.

Conclusion

It can't be said enough: our future success is not preordained. We certainly have the ability and resources needed to keep Fairfax County the envy of the rest of the country but without strong leadership on the key issues facing our County; our next few decades will not be as successful as our last few decades. Personally, I think we are up to the challenge and I look forward to working with our citizens, businesses and the Board of Supervisors to keep Fairfax County the best place in the country to live, work, play and raise a family.