



Find me on
Facebook 

View my profile on
Linked 

Follow me on
twitter 

July 12, 2012

- [Comments on the Aftermath of the June 29th 2012 Storm:](#) My thoughts on what we did right, and what we did wrong.
- [Governor McDonnell Looks into 911 Problems from the Storm:](#) Governor sets up panel to look into what went wrong, I am honored to have been asked to serve on the panel.
- [Update on Illegal Road Signs:](#) July 1st gets rid of the Fairfax loophole - the County is not moving fast enough to address the problem.
- [Town Hall Meeting on Child Care Providers' Permitting Changes:](#) I will be hosting an informational meeting to guide you through the changes in providers' permits and solicit your input.
- [Public Meetings Scheduled for Countywide Transit Network Study:](#) Study will determine the most effective way to serve the County's long term mobility needs.
- [Design Public Hearing for Northbound Ramp Improvements on the Fairfax County Parkway:](#) Learn about plans to widen the ramp where northbound Fairfax County Parkway traffic exits to continue north on the Parkway, just past the Franconia-Springfield Parkway.
- [VDOT Compromises on EZ Pass Monthly Fee Issue:](#) VDOT reconsidered its proposal to charge a \$1 monthly fee to existing E-ZPass users for each transponder

Comments on the Aftermath of the June 29th 2012 Storm (Derecho)

Obviously a lot of things went very wrong during the June 29th storm, but I want to start by mentioning some things that went very right - I would like to thank my staff who joined me in our office on both Saturday and Sunday to communicate important information to residents and to open up our office to the public as an unofficial cooling center over the weekend.

I would also like to say thank you to police District Commanders, Captain Joe Hill and Captain Purvis Dawson, who did an excellent job of keeping us up to date on what the police were doing in the Springfield District and were more than helpful responding to our requests. Similarly the folks at VDOT, Dominion and NOVEC were extremely responsive to requests from the district, and I think they have done a good job considering the circumstances - I have tremendous respect for the linemen who have come from as far away as Canada and Texas to work in 100 plus degree heat in a protective suit for 16 hours a day.

I also want to thank the countless residents that went out of their way to help their neighbors in little and large ways. As I travelled the district on Saturday I saw firsthand neighbors helping clear downed trees, checking on elderly neighbors and sharing important information with those without communication.

Obviously the biggest and most critical failure was the loss of 911 services for 4 days. One thing is clear, 911 going down left many feeling abandoned and vulnerable, and Tuesday at the Board of Supervisors' meeting the Board unanimously approved my renewed call to look into 911 texting as we look to improve the 911 system. We must also look at further redundancies within our communications network. (see related article below)

It is easy to be critical of others but I think we need to take a very hard look at the County's response to the storm. I understand that circumstances were difficult with the loss of some of the County's communication infrastructure but that is the norm in most emergency situations. I believe we had failures in several areas and need to use this experience as an opportunity to improve. Some, not all areas I see room for improvement include:

Failure to open and advertise shelters. Despite the extreme heat, extended power outages and the age of many of our residents, the County did not open cooling centers. In this a potentially deadly situation where 911 was not functioning, we told our residents to go to Rec Centers and libraries, but we were unable to give them a list of the ones that were open, instead requesting that they call ahead. This was a problem for a number of reasons. First, all of our surrounding jurisdictions opened cooling centers that were being advertised by the media, leading to people asking why we were not doing the same. Second, it should not be the public's responsibility to find out which county facilities are open, we should have known which ones were

open and directed them there. Third, with the phone problems we had I do not know how we can assume that those vulnerable to the heat also had access to a working phone. We need to improve our process for identifying and communicating shelter information be it for hurricanes, blizzards or whatever else Mother Nature throws at us.

Important information did not get to the public. On Saturday and Sunday when my staff and I were putting together our updates we had a hard time finding information from the County, and relied mostly on information from the power companies, our police, and VDOT. All too often in the aftermath of the storm I heard from residents saying they heard of other Counties' plans but none of our information was on the radio. I believe too much of our focus was on a blog that wasn't even given priority space on the County's website. We should have also been getting information to WTOP, WMAL and WNEW. Our elderly rely on the radio more than the internet. The Federal Government and Commonwealth as well as our own disaster preparation suggestions include a battery powered radio. Both need to be covered.

Citizen support in the storm's aftermath. I believe there are a number of areas that we need to look at in terms of support for our residents in the storm's aftermath. Three of these areas are access to bathing facilities and fresh water, provision of ice and water and assistance in the cleanup. I believe we were one of the few jurisdictions not providing ice and water to residents during the extended power outage. In addition there are hundreds if not thousands of tons of food waste and tree limbs that need to be disposed of. The County is currently directing people to visit one of the transfer stations rather than providing local support.

I was told last weekend by a representative of a power company that Hurricane Isabel in 2003 was one of the biggest learning experiences they had and that it helped to improve the way they do business. It is clear to all after this last week that there is still much work to be done, and that we should be leading the way. The Board has asked the staff to prepare an after action report. If you have any comments or suggestions or areas that should be addressed please forward them to me so I can make sure they are addressed in the report. I have included many of your suggestions as well.

We need to ensure we are better prepared for the next crisis. One thing I heard from constituents over and over was "What if this had been a terrorist attack?" It is obvious we have work to do.

Governor McDonnell Looks into 911 Problems from the Storm

We absolutely need to determine what happened and how it can be prevented in the future. I would like to thank Governor McDonnell for starting investigations that are already underway into the failures. He has organized a Subpanel of the Secure Commonwealth Panel to focus on 911 issues, which I am honored to have been asked to join.

This group will review failure issues, protocol for operating 911 centers, equipment requirements for these centers, service provider issues, and relations/communications between power companies and telecom companies.

Additionally the State Corporation Commission has also started an investigation, and as Verizon's regulator have ordered their total compliance in finding out the cause of the multiple outages in their service. Preliminary findings are scheduled for September 14th with a final report due in December.

The Board also approved a motion to participate in a COG task force on the 911 issues and the FCC has started its own investigation.

Update on Illegal Road Signs

As Herrity Report readers know I have been pushing to end the blight of illegal road signs on our medians and highways. In my last update I noted that the Fairfax loophole that Delegate Albo and I worked to get removed from state code would be eliminated on July 1st. Well it is past July 1st and the loophole is gone. The next step is to have the County enter into an agreement with the State's Transportation Commissioner to allow the County to enforce the State's law.

I have been relentlessly asking and was hoping that both the agreement and a plan of action for the County to start removing signs would have already been presented to the Board of Supervisors. This is now not scheduled to happen until September which is very disappointing.

I will stay on top of this issue as it is important to me, and I know that it is important to many of you. I have asked VDOT to remind the campaigns that putting signs in the medians is now illegal, and I hope that we will be presented with options in the near future.

Town Hall Meeting on Child Care Providers' Permitting and Regulation

Changes

In the recent months, several changes have been implemented and discussed regarding child care permitting and regulating. In response, I am hosting a town hall meeting to discuss these proposals and to hear your feedback. These issues include new licensing requirements handed down by the Virginia Department of Social Services as well as new regulations being created by Fairfax County. These issues will affect both state and county licensed child care providers.

**Child Care Provider and Parents' Town Hall Meeting
Monday, July 23rd at 7:00pm
Board Auditorium, Fairfax County Government Center
12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA**

Fairfax County staff will be on hand to answer your questions. I hope you can attend this important meeting. My office has received many calls and letters about these changes and hopefully this town hall meeting will help provide you information, address your concerns and questions, and provide an opportunity for you to have input into the process.

If you have any questions, or to RSVP, call my office at 703-451-8873 or email Kyle McDaniel at kyle.mcdaniel@fairfaxcounty.gov

Public Meetings Scheduled for Countywide Transit Network Study

The Fairfax County Department of Transportation will hold two public meetings in July about the Countywide Transit Network Study. The study will determine the most effective way to serve the County's long term mobility needs and accommodate planned growth through a network of high quality transit corridors. The public meetings provide the opportunity to discuss the study's purpose, scope and schedule, and to help refine the proposed goals and objectives as well as to identify possible modifications to the Comprehensive Plan designation of Enhanced Public Transportation Corridors.

The public meetings will include an open house from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., with a presentation at 7:00 p.m. and workshop discussions regarding the study following the presentation.

The meeting schedule is:

Monday, July 16 at 6:30 p.m.

Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax
Conference Rooms 9/10

Thursday, July 19 at 6:30 p.m.

Hayfield Secondary School, 7630 Telegraph Road, Alexandria
Middle School Cafeteria

A project web site is available to keep residents updated about the study: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fcdot/2050transitstudy/>. The web site is also an opportunity to provide feedback by completing an online survey. The online survey will remain open for comment until August 10, 2012.

For information about the public meetings, call Tom Burke at 703-877-5600, TTY 711.

Design Public Hearing for Northbound Ramp Improvements on the Fairfax County Parkway at the Franconia-Springfield Parkway (Rolling Road/Fairfax County Parkway "North Loop")

VDOT has scheduled a Design Public Hearing where residents can learn about plans to widen the ramp where northbound Fairfax County Parkway traffic exits to continue north on the Parkway, just past the Franconia-Springfield Parkway. It has been set for:

Wednesday, July 18, 2012, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Rolling Valley Elementary School
6703 Barnack Drive, Springfield, VA 22152

Residents are urged to stop by anytime between 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. to view displays of the project and VDOT staff will be on hand to answer any questions that may arise. View [VDOT's public hearing notice](#) or visit its [website](#) for more information.

VDOT Compromises on EZ Pass Monthly Fee Issue

In response to your concerns, VDOT reconsidered its proposal to charge a \$1 monthly fee to existing E-ZPass users for each transponder. Starting on September

1st current customers with open accounts as of July 9 will not be charged a monthly fee until they replace their transponder or add a new one to their account. They will then be charged a 50-cent monthly fee per new transponder or a \$1 monthly fee per new Flex transponder. New E-ZPass customers opening accounts after July 9, 2012, will be charged a 50-cent monthly fee per standard transponder or a \$1 monthly fee per Flex transponder.

VDOT claims this new fee structure is needed to cover the increasing cost to administer Virginia's E-ZPass program.

According to VDOT Commissioner Greg Whirley, "We considered several options and chose the one that was the most reasonable, splitting the costs between the customers and the toll facilities."

For additional information, view the [news release](#) on VDOT's website.
questions.

Web: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/springfield

Email: springfield@fairfaxcounty.gov

Phone: 703-451-8873