



HERRITY REPORT



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January 2009 “A Month in Review”

- **Board Opposes Budget Transparency Legislation**
- **Accelerating Classroom Renovation and Construction**
- **Fairgrade Success**
- **West Springfield High School Renovation Takes A Giant Step Forward**
- **South County Middle School A Huge Step Closer To Reality**
- **Four-Way Stop At Legato Road and Post Forest Drive Update**
- **Most Springfield Plaza Parking Spaces Saved**

Board Opposes Budget Transparency Legislation

Back in the January and November 2008 editions of the *Herrity Report*, I wrote about my efforts to achieve fiscal transparency. I feel strongly about this issue and the ability of our constituents to access the County's expenditures in an online searchable format. In this session of the General Assembly both Senator Chap Petersen and Senator Ken Cuccinelli introduced bills SB1129 and SB812 which would allow Fairfax County to put its expenditures online.

Unfortunately, a majority of my colleagues on the Board decided to oppose these bills at the Board's legislative committee meeting on Friday, January 23. These bills proposed by Senators Cuccinelli and Petersen only authorizes localities to implement budget transparency, it does not mandate it. This bill would allow us to make the decision to put our expenditures online once we have the details about the cost.

Fairfax County staff does have a nationwide survey underway which will determine the complexity and cost of implementing the initiative and is expected to have results in 4-6 weeks. This issue is very important to me and I will continue to keep you updated on any progress we make in the future on this initiative.

Accelerating Classroom Renovation and Construction

At the Board of Supervisors meeting on Monday, January 26, I asked the County Executive to examine the feasibility of increasing the capital transfer to the school system by \$25 million per year through at least 2018 and to determine the impact on the County's debt capacity. In FY 2013, the annual transfer of capital funding to the school system is scheduled to drop from \$155 million to \$130 million.

I first identified the seriousness of the problems in some of our schools after touring West Springfield High School (WSHS), one of the five legacy high schools in Fairfax County. Legacy high schools are those schools built in the 1960s and include Langley, West Springfield, Oakton, Falls Church, and Herndon. These schools are over 40 years old and have not been renovated. While walking through the halls of the school I once attended, I noticed the floor had sunk six inches in the hallway, the air conditioning unit only worked in part of the school, and the electrical system was substandard. These were only a few of the deteriorating conditions I witnessed on this tour. Last year, over 3000 work orders were needed to address maintenance and repair issues at WSHS alone.

I testified on these issues at two School Board Capital Improvement Program (CIP) public hearings. I was the only Supervisor in recent memory to do so. We can't let our school facilities get in the same condition as those across the river, we need to plan ahead to address these problems now and increase the County's capital transfer to the school system, and focus the funds on classroom construction and renovation. It is not only the high schools that need major renovations but many elementary schools are also facing severe deteriorating conditions. I am also pursuing creative partnerships with the private sector to address these issues. I will keep you updated on the results of this motion and my work with the private sector.

Fairgrade Success

In the December 2008 *Herrity Report*, I expressed my support for the county-wide effort to change the Fairfax County Public Schools grading scale. I attended the White-Out at the School Board meeting and am pleased to report that at the January 22 School Board meeting, the Board voted unanimously to take this initiative one step closer to becoming policy. The Board vote was 10-0 and will now be sent to Superintendent Jack Dale for a final approval with implementation scheduled for next September.

West Springfield High School Renovation Takes A Giant Step Forward

At the School Board meeting on Thursday, January 22, the School Board voted to place West Springfield High School (WSHS) on the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). This was a big step forward for SOAR (Spartans Organized for Action on Renovation) and the WSHS community. Having been a student at WSHS along with my brother and sisters, I was shocked that the school had not received any major renovations since the school opened in 1964. As I have stated in previous *Herrity Reports*, I found the existing condition of the school unacceptable. I testified at the School Board's CIP hearings the

last two years about the conditions at WSHS, our other five legacy high schools and numerous elementary schools. I have been an active member of a great team that accomplished something, that many say would take years, in one year (even though it was long overdue). Congratulations to School Board Member Liz Bradsher, SOAR President Erik Hawkins, PTSA President Leslie Carlin, Delegate Dave Albo, and the rest of the great team that made this a reality.

Unfortunately, these renovations are still not expected to occur until approximately 2020-23. That would mean the school will have gone 60 years without any significant renovation. A person born today would not go to school in a renovated WSHS. For this reason, at the Board of Supervisors meeting on January 26, I asked the County Executive to investigate the impact of increasing the capital transfer to the school system. The Board approved this request unanimously (see article above). We also need to look at other creative funding mechanisms.

South County Middle School (SCMS) A Huge Step Closer To A Reality

I think Christine Morin from the South County Middle School Solutions Group said it best in a recent e-mail: “4 and 1/2 years later, 3 motions, a 400+ person attended rally, a 4th of July parade march, endless school Board meetings and work sessions, several PTA presentations, meeting, phone calls, newsletter blasts, and letter writing campaigns later, South County Middle School is on the CIP.” It is with this kind of hard work and dedication from individuals like Christine that what seems like unrealistic goals to others become realities to those that never take no for an answer.

We still have a ways to go, including approval of the November 2009 Schools Bond Referendum, land exchanges involving the Fairfax County Park Authority, planning and zoning amendments as well as some demolition of existing structures. However, I am confident that we will overcome any obstacles and am committed to having SCMS open in a timely manner.

I am proud of the active role I took in helping reach this goal and those that worked so hard for the SCMS including, but certainly not limited to, former Congressman Tom Davis, School Board members Liz Bradsher and Dan Stork, Supervisor Gerry Hyland, Delegate Dave Albo, Senator George Barker, and the countless number of citizens involved with the South County Middle School Solutions Group.

Four-Way Stop At Legato Road And Post Forest Drive Update

In the October 2008 *Herrity Report*, I discussed my work with the Virginia Department Of Transportation (VDOT) to have a multi-way stop approved at the intersection of Legato Road and Post Forest Drive. Several of you have contacted my office asking why the multi-way stop has yet to be installed. I share your concerns as I am well aware of the safety issues that exist at this intersection. In addition to the installation of stop signs, the project requires a large amount of lane re-striping, as well as the re-addition of the previous crosswalk. The ‘paint’ that is used for the re-striping is a plasticized material

that bonds with the road. Unfortunately, if the road is re-striped when it is cold, it will crack and pop up when the road warms. Thus, the re-striping must be done in warmer temperatures. VDOT assures me that this intersection is at the top of its list of improvements to implement when outside temperatures warm. VDOT is especially concerned about the high number of crashes at this intersection and wants this multi-way stop installed to help prevent others from occurring. My staff will be keeping in contact with VDOT about this issue to help ensure any warm spell we may have is used to the fullest.

Most Springfield Plaza Parking Spaces Saved

Last week many commuters who park in the Springfield Plaza were surprised to find flyers on their windshields informing them that their commuter parking would no longer be available. These commuters, also known as sluggers because they pair up with riders to take the carpool lanes, were worried that they wouldn't find parking and would now have to drive themselves. When I first heard about this problem I was not only concerned with the immediate problem before these commuters, but also about the potential problem of dumping hundreds of more cars onto I-95 and Shirley Highway. Springfield was the birthplace of slugging in the early 1970s and has been a great solution for hundreds of people commuting into DC and elsewhere. In addition it reduces the congestion on our roads and increases the quality of our air.

Two property owners provide over 300 parking spaces at the Springfield Plaza available for commuters. Only one of them is pulling the plug on the slug. Over 200 some parking spaces will remain available for these commuters. Since most of the parking spaces are taken by 7:30 a.m., the loss of 75 spots is still a problem. Some commuters may be able to find parking at other nearby lots (see locations below). Although this parking lot is in the Lee District, a large number of Springfield District residents use this lot as part of their commute to work. By working with Supervisor McKay's office we were able to save the majority of these spaces. We will continue to work for better solutions for the Springfield Plaza sluggers. For the Fairfax County Department of Transportation's official news release on this issue visit its website:

http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fcdot/news/2009/09_030.htm.

I've also uploaded a map on my website which will help clarify which parking spaces are still available for the commuters:

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/springfield/images/parking.tif>.

Other parking lots available for commuters/sluggers:

- Springfield United Methodist Church; 6501 Spring Road, Springfield, VA 22150; 56 spaces; served by Fairfax Connector routes 310, 321, 322, 331, 332 and Metrobus routes 18E,G,H,J,P on Old Keene Mill Road
- Backlick North Park and Ride; 6831 Backlick Road, Springfield, VA 22150; 279 spaces; served by Fairfax Connector routes 310, 331, 332

- American Legion; 6500 Amherst Avenue, Springfield, VA 22150; 100 spaces; served by Fairfax Connector routes 310, 321, 322, 331, 332 and Metrobus routes 18G,H,J,P
- Gambrill Road Park and Ride; 7321 Gambrill Road, Springfield, VA 22153; 223 spaces; served by Fairfax Connector route 305 and Metrobus route 18R

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