

BRADDOCK DISTRICT COUNCIL of Community Associations Minutes for April 12, 2017

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“Legislative Forum” Wednesday, April 12, 2017

Chair:

- Called to Order at 7:30 p.m.
- BDC Chair welcomed Delegate David Bulova, 37th District, Delegate Vivian Watts, 39th District, Senator Chap Petersen, 34th District, Senator Dick Saslaw, 35th District, and Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn, 41st District.
- Next BDC Meeting – May 10, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.
- Reminded Attendees of BDC website: <http://www.bdcfx.org>
- Began with Pledge of Allegiance as is our custom.

The following are summaries of remarks from each guest. Audience questions followed each guest’s presentation:

Senator James Saslaw, 35th District

This fiscal year there will be a \$1.2 billion shortfall. Part of the reason is that The Braddock District is 2.5 percent below predicted growth. The gap consists of \$1.4 million employee compensation which includes teachers. It is a fact that teachers are leaving Fairfax County to go to neighboring counties because salaries and overall compensation is higher elsewhere. This problem not only applies to teachers but also includes the Virginia State Police with salaries starting at \$44,000. The salaries and compensation deficit is a deterrent to work in the County which is further exacerbated by difficult cost of living demands including affordable housing. Another gap is in the human resources area. The estimated amount is \$32 million. The K-12 education budget will not be cut. But higher educations will be cut by \$5.5 million. There is a great deal of concern that because of the budget cuts for fiscal year FY 18 that many rural hospitals will have to shut down. Commerce and trade is improving. A program called Go Virginia will encourage different regions around the state to help develop business in Virginia. An example is the INOVA group acquiring the Mobil site as a research facility. They will be researching such diseases as cancer and researching the genome with the target being DNA information that can lead to better treatments for individuals.

Senator Chap Petersen, 34th District

The main issues I see before Virginia now is higher education, criminal law and the environment. There is strong investment happening in Northern Virginia such as the INOVA research facility. However, our universities have been increasing their out-of-state students each year to make up for budget deficiencies. The University of Virginia (UVA) now has an enrollment of 35% out-of-state students because the increased ratio results in higher tuition totals. However we are now at the point that out-of-state students are taking priority over in-state students. As a result the State Government is now pushing Universities to give more transparency for the enrollment process. On another subject our State criminal justice system spends over \$2 billion a year incarcerating prisoners. I recommended to update the laws including reclassifying felonies and misdemeanors and did introduce a bill which did not pass. I have also recommended a 5 cent tax on plastic bags to help

improve the Chesapeake Bay's environmental issues. There are several issues about Dominion Power. They wanted to lock in rates higher with earning where they could add on rates. The bill tried to take off the cap and give back monies to the state. I recommend that Virginia go back to regulating the industry. Redistricting is a topic of discussion now since the ruling by the Supreme Court to send the law suit back to the judge to reconsider his decision regarding redistricting.

Delegate Dave Bulova, 37th District

The budget will be over \$1 billion short for what the current needs are in Virginia. But the current budget has no cuts to the K-12 education programs. Mental health programs need an additional \$34 million this year but will not be in this year's budget. The universities will need to increase their out-of-state students due to budget constraints despite attempts to push them toward greater transparency. The Virginia International Organization has been put on hold due to uncertainties in the present global climate. The Parks and Recreation environmental education program was taken out of the budget. Proffer legislation concerning the terms of development in Fairfax County is permanently changed. A developer used to be approachable to discuss/include such items as building a senior center, improving roads, adding schools, etc. – that is no longer allowed after a bill was approved effective July 1, 2016. Fairfax County wants to redesign the educational structure in high schools to include career and technical development.

Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn, 41st District

This year's budget includes a 3% salary increase for state employees and two new circuit judges to be located in Fairfax County. I have continually pushed for the expansion of Medicaid but was not successful this year. I introduced bills concerning public safety, transportation, and education. A change in the practice concerning campus sexual assault is now placing emphasis on educating students about learning how to develop healthy relationships. Bill HB1709 has been passed which notifies parents when cyberbullying is occurring at school. Public safety concern is relooking at the penalties for crimes. House bill HB2258 concerns suicide prevention.

Delegate Vivian Watts, 39th District

The Supreme Court sent back the 2011 law suit back to the judge to look again at his decision about redistricting. Senate bill passed now allows Virginia to collect state tax on purchases made online. Transportation needs are continually being looked at for northern Virginia. I will continue to support having the tax structure in Virginia changed so that Counties have as much authority as Cities. Currently the Cities can establish taxes without referendum while Counties have no-where near as much freedom. Mental health reforms need to be done with services to people instead of 20% with mental health problems in jail instead of getting treatment. This year's budget contains more funds for same-day screening - a very important element in treating mental health problems.

Questions and Answers

The questions and answers were very good following the presentations. This was a very informative session with our State Legislators and we thank them for attending.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:20 PM

Submitted by
Barbara Varvaglione, Secretary, BDC

Approved by
George Klein, Chairman