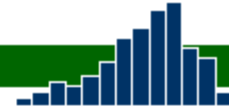


Chesapeake Watershed Forum
October 2007

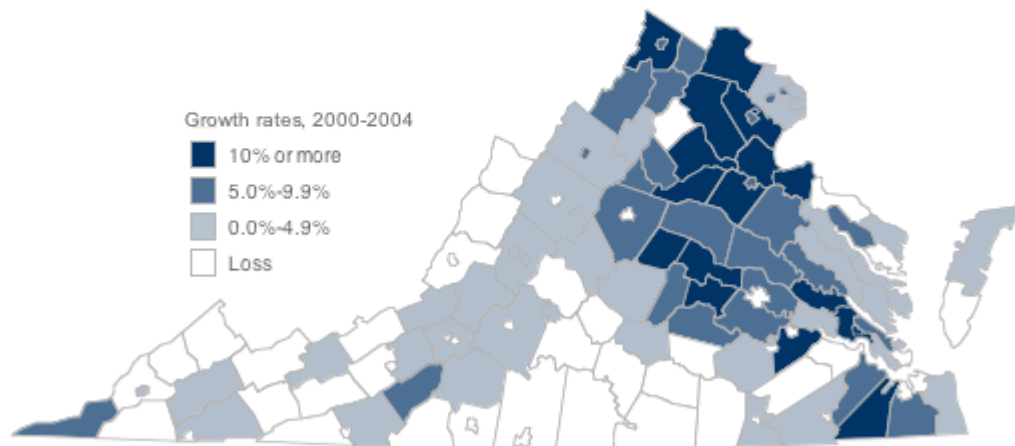
“Getting Things Done Locally”
Information for the presentation by Marvin Moss

Demographics & Workforce Section, Weldon Cooper Center, UVA

Cooper Center Demographics



2000-2004 Growth Rates in Virginia's Localities



Weldon Cooper Center
University of Virginia
January 2005

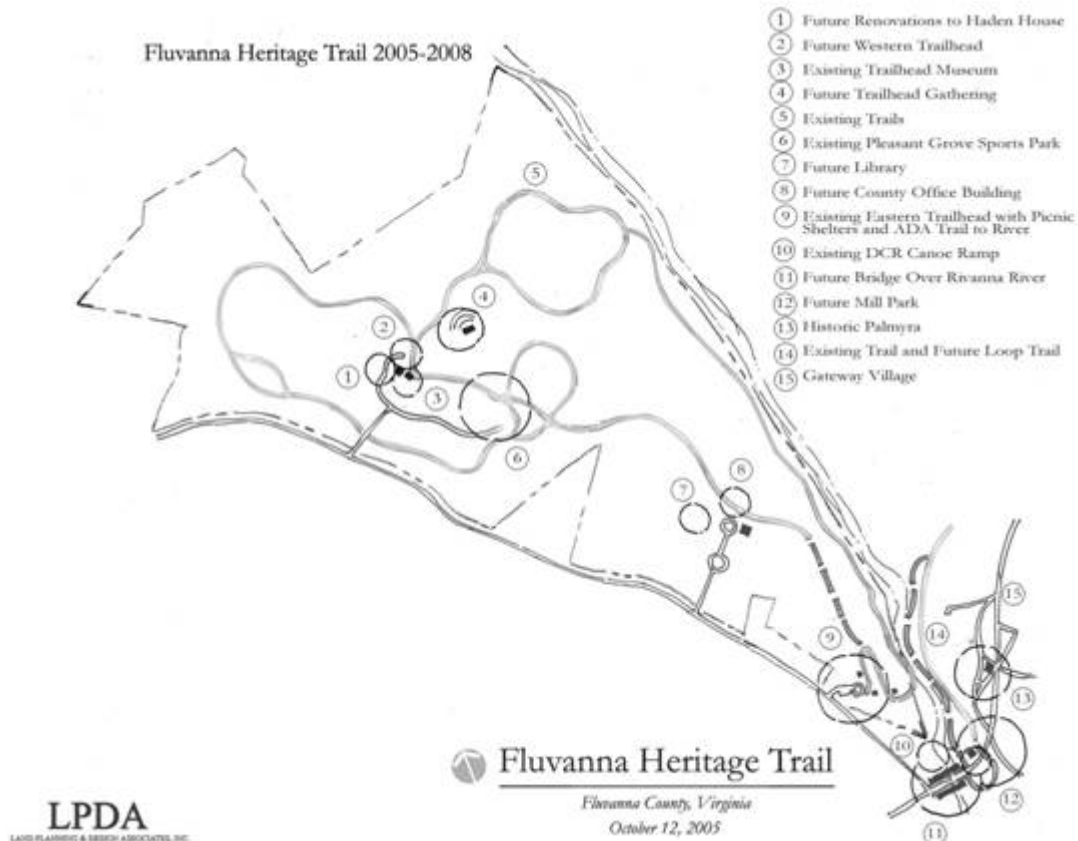
Catalysts for Change – Incentives for Advocacy

- **Sudden Population change**
- **New Major Industry or Governmental Installation**
- **Loss of a Major Industry or Governmental Installation**
- **Wal-Mart or Other Big Box Stores**
- **Proposed Highways, Water & Sewer Systems or Other Infrastructure Changes**
- **Government Programs**
- **Natural Disasters**

Community Organizing Principles

- **Ascertain who makes the crucial decisions and how**
- **Anticipate & take advantage of governmental process**
- **Recognize that some organizations allied with your conservation efforts may need to broaden their mission and change their approach to community involvement**
- **Develop a strategy for involving the public in the effort from the outset**
- **Make government a partner & not an adversary**
- **Recognize & appreciate that all of this is a political process**
- **Demonstrate success early on**
- **Dispel skepticism**
- **Take advantage of your community's human resources**
- **Introduce innovative community programs such as heritage forums**
- **Develop working partnerships between like minded non-profits and the public sector**





RESULTS

1. Over 9,000 acres in permanent conservation or historic easements
2. Five new properties added to National Register
3. Over 20,000 acres temporarily protected under Virginia's Ag/Forestal District program
4. Community plans developed for 5 community planning areas
5. Historical Society and Heritage Trail have become active partners in all conservation initiatives and increased membership and community outreach
6. Fluvanna Friends of Rural Preservation, an informal coalition of 250 citizens, formed in 2004 to work for the establishment of a Rural Preservation Zone
7. Development of a far sighted Master Plan for the county's 1,000 Pleasant Grove facility
8. Success in retaining highest design standards in all new county buildings

Design Examples from Fluvanna County



New Fluvanna County Courthouse



New Fluvanna Public Safety Building



Current Building Elevation
prepared by
Nichols, G. P. & P. Assoc. Architects



Previous Building Elevation
prepared by
K&K Engineering



Land Planning and Design Committee
Dorothy Bennett Oyster, Arlene Anderson,
Helen and Lyellie

Palmyra Volunteer Fire Company
Fluvanna County, Virginia

Conceptual Elevation
June 2005
Scale: 3/16" = 1'-0"

New Palmyra Fire Station – County Funded

Getting Things Done Locally
Tom Dernoga
October 12, 2007

POLICY MAKING REVOLVES AROUND POLITICS

Big Money v. Big Votes

Information is the Currency of Success – Information Exchange is Key

NIMBY – What’s your Point? Don’t be Afraid to Defend your “back yard” (within reason).

UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS AND THE PLAYERS

Not to minimize the importance of your efforts, but public policy has many aspects of a game: there are rules (written and unwritten) (which may change during the game), there are players, and there is an objective. Your success is enhanced by greater understanding of each component.

NOTE: Strategy May Depend on whether you are interested in a long-term policy effort or a short-term (“shorter-term”?) effort focused on a specific proposal or government action. For example, seeking to promote watershed protection as compare to fighting a development that will impair a watershed.

The Local level tends to involve more implementation, and thus, case-specific efforts; however, if you are interested in a long-term policy project, you may have State and local needs and you can try to make long-term planning or legislative changes that do not involve a specific property.

PROCESS

Long-term Policy Effort is more likely to involve Legislative Process, and thus, lobbying of legislators.

Short-term focus on a proposed action is more likely to involve Administrative process, and thus, evidence and adjudicatory hearings.

Specific criteria and the mechanics of the process become critical.

Read the County or Municipal Charter.

Review the County Code for existing laws.

Whether Long-term or short term, know where your issue/project is in the process.

If you are involved in a specific land-use matter, one of the first questions to ask is which process are you in and where in the process are you. General Hierarchy is: General Plan, Master Plan, Zoning, Concept Plan, Subdivision, site plan, permits.

Comprehensive Planning Process is the best way to enhance chances of success in the long run. Find out about your jurisdiction's Comprehensive Planning and get involved *now* so you can impact it as it moves forward. Comprehensive Planning is always evolving, although at certain points in time it may be hard to tell.

PLAYERS

To understand the Players, you first have to know the form of government and limitations on the Players Role (County Executive, County Council, County Commissioners, Weak Mayor Municipality, Strong Mayor Municipality, Appointed Boards, Hearing Examiners)

Read the County or Municipal Charter to find out the roles or limitations.

Elected Officials

Recognize that At-Large Legislators may have a different world view than District Legislators. Depending on the government structure, this may have major implications.

Compare Prince George's County and Montgomery County.

Recognize whether the jurisdiction has an Executive Branch (many local governments do not).

Elected officials are driven by many motivations, so generalization is not good; however, you can generally expect that public opinion and future electability are important factors.

Try to do someone background homework on relevant elected officials.

- Read their bio.
- How long have they been in office?
- Which party and is it the majority party?
- Which issues did they campaign on?
- Review the Campaign Finance Database to see whom they may be beholden to or have close ties to.
- What have the results been in their elections? Close? Uncontested?
- What are their future aspirations?

Enhance your political position with legislators by getting "involved" in local politics – failure to do so is a major mistake. NOTE: Look at the table below about lack of political involvement.

- Attend a fundraiser.
- Host a fundraiser.
- Volunteer to work a booth – either a political booth at election time or an information booth in a non-political setting.
- Work the polls for a few hours on election day.
- Help canvass.

Become acquainted with legislators' aides and secretaries. These are the confidants, information filters and door wardens. Elected officials are very busy and can have a hard time focusing. Getting info to them through their staff is critical.

Recognize that an effort focused at the "local" level may be heavily influenced (for good or bad) by State or Federal officials (elected or administrative). You can use this to your advantage if you see road blocks at the local level. Elected officials higher up the political food chain may be able to bring political pressure to bear, or they may be willing to propose legislative changes at a higher level that alter the landscape you are working on.

Appointed Officials

Appointed officials can be tough because they do not answer directly to popular opinion and *ex parte* rules often prevent you from getting to know them or to converse with them on a topic. It is easier to engage them in discussion (before or after a public meeting) about a broad policy issue than it is about a specific project.

- Find out who appointed them and what their background is.
- Try to learn if they have political aspirations.

Media Players

Adopt a Reporter (they require lots of care and regular feeding, but they can be your best friend).

- Local reporters are usually young (or at least, inexperienced). Many just moved to the area to take this low-paying, high demand job.
- Turn-over is very high, so there is always someone new coming on.
- They have no historical or political background. Help them in their new job by providing them with background.
- Their job is not just to write stories, but to *find* them, too. Giving a reporter a story eases their work load. They often need help writing the story. Be nice and help them.

Business Community or Property Owners

Often, this is the opponent, but not always. In long-term policy changes, the business community can become a partner. Often, the business community's biggest concern is consistency. They will play by new rules as long as they know what the rules will be and that they will not change haphazardly. If possible, get the business community involved in a positive way.

If the business community or a property owner is truly the opposition, be aware that they are usually experienced in these matters or have hired people who are experts in these matters. They are better financed, have more time, more history, more connections and... well, more of everything (except votes). The one thing you probably have more of is votes, so be sure that you do not carelessly give up your chief advantage.

Staff Players

Adopt Staff members (they might require stroking but they can be invaluable in many ways).

There are often two types of staff – professional agency staff that review proposals and make professional recommendations, and administrative staff that make government work. Both are important, although in the bigger scheme of things, the professional agency staff can be truly invaluable.

The professional agency staff are in touch with State and Federal staff, and with other local agencies. They often know where multiple projects overlap or where multiple issues overlap.

They can give you heads-up on things on the horizon that are not publicly known.

They often are frustrated that their best professional judgment will be undermined because an elected official has worked something out with an applicant. The staff cannot complain – however, if YOU know the right information, you can raise the same issue. Thus, staff is sometimes willing to share professional analysis so that you know how to tackle an issue substantively.

The Public

Capture public opinion through the flow of information at civic associations, through newsletters, letters to the editor in local papers, and by getting reporters to write your story and by getting editors to agree with you.

PLAY OF THE GAME

Ascertain *your* Objective and develop a strategy – short-term and long-term. Understand that attaining your Objective may have different looks and understand that your Objective will probably evolve over time.

Do not expect to cover all points at one time. You have to develop a lot of the information suggested here over a long period of time.

Do not expect quick wins – it happens, but it's rare.

Having made preliminary assessments of which process you are in, where you are in the process, what criteria is relevant and whom the main decision-making players are, the rest is simple. ☺

You develop your argument in favor of your policy objectives (or your case against an application). Meeting with staff early on is important, and up-date meetings are very important.

You communicate your positions to the public via the media, community meetings and newsletters.

It is very important in local policy matters to meet with those opposed to you to attempt to reach common ground.

You communicate with the elected officials. Try to meet early and often, but getting on schedules can be tough. Try to show up at public meetings where they will be at so that you can make contact. (this is where the work in the political field really pays dividends).

Your success is driven by have a good policy proposal, with a strong message, communicated broadly and clearly, and with the strong impression to the local officials that there is public support (read: voters) for your position.

Communications & Information

Community Outreach

Community & Environmental Groups

If possible, join an existing group. Generally, there are more advantages to this. If it's not possible, create your own group and try to coordinate with other existing groups.

Media

- Washington Post - Local Reporter or Topical Reporter
- Gazette – Local Reporter, Editorials or Letters to the Editor
- Other
- Television – Local & Cable

Flyers & Newsletters – Keep a regular flow of information to your membership so you do not become an “Army of One”.

Phone Calls – Time consuming but can be effective in getting people to a hearing.

Contact Info to Access Government Officials

- State of Maryland: www.md.gov
- Maryland General Assembly: <http://mlis.state.md.us/>
- Maryland State Board of Elections: <http://www.elections.state.md.us/index.html>

- MNCPPC: <http://www.mncppc.org/>
- MWCOC: <http://www.mwcog.org/home.asp>
- Maryland Assn of Counties (MACO): <http://www.mdcounties.org/>
- Maryland Municipal League: <http://www.mdmunicipal.org/mmlhome/index.cfm>

- Prince George's House Delegation: <http://www.princegeorghousedelegation.com/>

- Prince George's County Council: <http://www.co.pg.md.us/council/>

Courts

If it's worth fighting for, then you had better expect to have to go to court eventually (including appeals).

Line up a good attorney early (just in case). Make contact with local civic groups or environmental groups about who might be a good choice.

If it's worth fighting for, then it may be worth getting legal advice early just to get the lay of the land and learn what to expect.

Even if you *never* want to go to court, never let anyone know that. Talk about how your brother-in-law works at a major law firm and he's looking to take on a major *pro bono* case.

Do not expect that a lawyer will provide you with *pro bono* legal services. If you expect a legal battle to ensue at some point, start raising funds early.

CASE STUDY – BELT WOODS

Belt Woods, MD

Photo by: David W. Harp

Fifty years ago, a young federal biologist seeking to confirm reports of a "last virgin forest" just outside Washington, DC, was directed to the home of an elderly banker and gentleman farmer named Seton Belt. Today, the 515-acre Belt Farm is set in a sea of encroaching development. The farm features some of the deepest, richest soils in Maryland and, at its heart, the last stand of virgin hardwood forest on the Atlantic coastal plain--white oak and tulip poplar, many trees more than three feet in diameter and soaring straight up more than a hundred feet before branching. It was here that *National Geographic* photographers chose to shoot a story on what America was like before Columbus. The property also is internationally recognized as a critical nesting area for neotropical songbirds. When development threatened the land in the mid-1990s, TPL worked with community groups, the landowner, and the state of

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Maryland to protect it. Now owned by the state, the old growth portion is managed as the 109-acre Belt Woods Natural Environmental Area.

Why getting involved in politics matters:

Population			
841,315	Total Population		
26.8%	Under 18		
615,842	Eligible Voters		
73.2%	Eligible Voters		
Registered Voters		County Council District 9	
348,755	Registered Democrat Voters	43,250	Total Registered Democrats
53,795	Registered Republican Voters	14,859	Voters Turned Out
70,595	Registered Other Voters	14,170	Voters Voted in this Contest
473,145	Total Voters	32.8%	Democratic Voters Voted
76.8%	Of The Total Eligible Voters		
		5,346	Bland (12.4% of Registered Democrats)
2006 Primary Voters		4,156	Washington
103,494	Democratic Voters Turned out	2,772	Harley
29.7%		1,100	White
101,068	Democratic Voters for US Senate	477	Hayes
29.0%		319	Silver
99,960	Democratic Voters for County Executive		
28.7%			
12.3%	Total adults Voting in Democrat Primary		