

Minutes of the September 19, 2017 Meeting of the Greater Wilton Woods Citizens Association

GWCA President Larry Dempsey brought the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

From the Treasurer's Report: Since the last meeting, \$897 has been spent on items including a donation to Edison's Grad Night Party, new signs, and badges for GWCA board members. The complete report is available upon request.

Delegate Mark Sickles was the guest speaker. He addressed several items what the state legislature has been working on this year. The general election is in November and he is running unopposed.

He is a member of the Appropriations Committee (Health and Human Resources subcommittee and Transportation subcommittee); the Privileges and Elections Committee (Elections subcommittee) and the Health, Welfare and Institutions Committee.

The Privileges and Elections committee is looking at redistricting reform (OneVirginia2021.org) and the committee is also looking into allowing the governor to run for re-election once.

Infrastructure:

The amount of funding for new asphalt has been doubled therefore; many streets in our area have been repaved or will be repaved shortly. There is twice as much money for maintenance as there was in 2013.

I-395 toll lanes will be extended to S. Eads Street (almost to the 14th Street Bridge) and will run south to the Rappahannock River bridge at Fredericksburg.

Due to heavy freight train traffic, additional railroad tracks will be added through Alexandria to prepare for the anticipated addition of another railroad bridge (by the current Long Bridge) over the Potomac.

The managed lanes on I-66 will be extended inside the Beltway by the state. The lanes outside the Beltway are managed by a private company (Cintra). \$500 million is being given to the state by Cintra for the new managed lanes. Drivers will be able to pay to drive on 66 inside the Beltway without HOV restrictions.

Health care:

Repeal and Replace is being used as a way to get entitlement programs (Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, etc.).

The Cassidy Graham Obamacare repeal bill would require Virginia to hire more people to run the healthcare program, costing the state more money.

Social Legislation:

One hundred twenty bills were introduced.

Vetoed bills were concerned with such issues as guns, religion, and labor.

Miscellaneous:

The Governor is trying to diversify the economy.

Virginia is number 1 recipient of defense spending.

Unemployment in Virginia is 3.8%.

The state's rainy day fund is now in the hundreds of millions.

The state is losing sales tax income from internet sales.

State employees will have raises this fiscal year.

"Go Virginia" is a program to diversify our economy. Each region will have access to funding for universities and technology companies to work together. For instance, UVa has a partnership with Inova.

Answers to questions from the audience:

Q: Can anything be done about the heavy traffic heading to the Wilson Bridge?

A: The traffic is already overwhelming the bridge. It was designed to be expanded and may have rail and/or bus lanes added at some point. People need to get back on Metro to alleviate the traffic congestion. Metro management is trying to figure out how to fix the system and are working to make it safer. It is no longer difficult to find parking at the Huntington garage. Metro is "a creature of local government," not the state. Fairfax County gets 70% of transit funding in Northern Virginia.

Q: What is the government doing about the opioid issue?

A: About 5 bills concerning this issue have been passed. Stricter regulations on the database used by pharmacists are needed to keep better track of the drugs. The state's Health Commissioner is very worried about this. This brought up the topic of mental health issues. Twenty percent of the inmates should not be in the jail system, but in a mental health facility. The corrections system is working with sheriffs and the police to keep the mentally ill out of jail. A bill was passed requiring state hospitals to take the mentally ill, but has resulted in overcrowding at the hospitals. Supportive housing is needed for those with drug problems.

Q: Charter schools?

A: The legislature vetoed the bill. There is no funding. Sickles opposed it until funds can be found rather than taking them from the current school funding. There is some support for charter schools. The Fairfax County school system does not have enough staff. The pay is too low. 85% of their budget is spent on personnel. Some of the lottery money was coming to the schools, but no longer. Sickles is trying to get 40% of lottery funds for FCPS. Currently the county gets 10% of funds for schools, but has 60% of the students in the state.

Q: How can we get more young people (ages 25-40) interested in public service?

A: Super-internships paying \$40k per year have been created to give the interns the opportunity to see different parts of the state government.

After thanking Delegate Sickles, Mr. Dempsey covered a few more issues:

He reminded attendees to join Nextdoor.com if they haven't already. One hundred new members from Greater Wilton Woods have joined since the last GWWCA meeting.

The next GWWCA meeting will be on Tuesday, October 24. This is due to the regularly scheduled meeting is 3 days before Thanksgiving. Board members will be elected and Mr. Dempsey requested those interested in running contact him. The guest speaker will be Charles Forbes, Chief, Recycling, Compliance and Planning for the county.

We have 15 new meeting signs that have been placed around the neighborhood. One attendee commented that he was new to the neighborhood and found out about the meeting from one of the signs.

Two free little libraries will be installed within GWWCA boundaries – one on Shaffer Drive and one on Shannon Hill Road.

A request was made for suggestions for future topics or speakers.

Crime report: Since May 12 there have been 13 police events within our boundaries including assaults, breaking and entering, thefts from vehicles and thefts of vehicles. This information can be found at crimereports.com.

Short term rentals (30 days or less) were the subject of a recent meeting. Currently B&Bs, hotels, motels and boarding houses are allowed as short term rentals, but AirBnBs are currently illegal. A copy of the survey results summary can be found at: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/shorttermrentals/strsurveysummary.pdf. For additional information, go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/short-term-rentals.htm (review pages 2 and 3). The county is still gathering information on this issue, so citizens can call 703-324-1314- or e-mail ordadmin@fairfaxcounty.gov to express their opinion on the subject. There will be additional hearings before the ruling is finalized. AirBnBs are currently a zoning issue, so enforcement is initiated only go by complaint-based reports.

Starting in October, 2 updates a month about tips for using Nextdoor.com will be sent out. Mr. Dempsey encouraged all to use either the Nextdoor website or the Nextdoor app.

An update on the development at Penn Daw was provided by Melissa Lakey of the GWWCA Community Improvement & Welfare Committee. She contacted the developer, Combined Properties, to ask why construction seems to have stopped. Combined was waiting for a permit for a retaining wall, which they now have so work will resume later this month. They will be selling the townhouse lots at the back of the property to a residential developer. Combined is close to signing a grocery store for the main part of the development, but there is no definite word yet as to which store it will be. They will not have financing until the grocer signs up.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.