

Friends of Lancaster County LLC Meeting August 8, 2005 7:00PM

President Charlie Costello called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

Approximately 35-40 members were present.

Guests at tonight's meeting were B. Wally Beauchamp, Supervisor District 5 and Butch Jenkins, Chairman and Supervisor from District 1.

The Friends of Lancaster County (FOLC) heard an overview of county structure, function, and issues August 10 when District 5 supervisor B. Wally Beauchamp. Beauchamp focused on county demographics; significant changes and concerns, including building growth, rezoning requests, and declining groundwater aquifers, and his experience as board representative for emergency services during Hurricane Isabel.

Beauchamp began with some general statistics indicating Lancaster's characteristics and changing landscape. Currently about 30 percent of the population (now estimated at 12,100, including perhaps 2,000 part-time residents) is over age 65, compared to 11 percent statewide. About 15 percent of the population is below poverty level, and a like number have a disability. Regarding recent growth, permits for new homes increased from 48 in 2000 to 140 last year, and 123 through July of this year; the corresponding values also jumped from \$8.8 million in 2000 to \$21 million in 2004 and \$24 million so far in 2005.

Beauchamp said he had been prepared to vote against the proposed planned unit development (PUD) ordinance that was tabled following a planning commission hearing in February, and against the recent high-density rezoning request for Quarters Cove, which has since been withdrawn, and had opposed the High Banks development on the Rappahannock, as he felt it set a dangerous precedent for zoning changes on the waterfront.

On other issues, he said the county must begin focusing on its water supply, since groundwater aquifers are declining dramatically due to water withdrawals in southern Maryland and at the mill in West Point, each of which are much larger than what all of the Northern Neck withdraws for its own use. He mentioned reservoirs or desalinization plants, or both, as the most likely solutions. He said that growth cannot be controlled, but we must do the best we can.

He also said that at the meeting last month of the Northern Neck Planning District Commission, where he serves as the board representative, a report was given that assured wireless broadband Internet access would be available across the Northern Neck by October.

On Isabel, Beauchamp said none of the localities in the path of the storm was prepared for the extensive damage and disruption of services. Isabel was a major learning experience and it pointed out the inadequacies, he said, noting that generators are now in place and tested at the radio station, the sheriff's office and the Kilmarnock Rescue Squad building, assuring that communications would remain open in the community and among emergency personnel. Another is planned for the new YMCA building, he said, where those with life-threatening disabilities would be sheltered in the future. Nearly 500 used the Lancaster County shelter during and after Isabel (until then, the highest number had been double digit), and the county is working to assure the infrastructure is in place to better serve those with special needs.

Jim Sapione, outgoing chair of the FOLC's Comprehensive Plan review committee, provided a thorough update on suggestions so far reached among some FOLC members in their review of the county's comprehensive plan.

Sapione said the plan overall is a good one, and contains a number of suggestions that haven't been undertaken but should have been. A mechanism needs to be in place to make the plan a working document, he said, including a standing committee suggested in the current plan that would provide for accountability. The Friends group, he said, is well positioned to help fill that role.

He noted that potential reservoir sites already are designated in the plan and that the county should consider zoning around them to assure their protection and future viability. He also recommended up zoning, or increasing minimum acreage requirements in certain zones, as an effective tool in controlling build-out, and the need to safeguard the waterfront overlay zone, calling it an important asset in county regulations. He also recommended developing a zoning matrix to show zones and regulations and uses.

Joe Urban, FOLC secretary and Web Master, discussed rezoning actions on the agenda of the August 18 Lancaster County Planning Commission. He also briefly discussed the status of FOLC's proposed draft R2 replacement.

Ken Julian, a member of FOLC, who is a candidate for the District 1 seat, spoke to the group on his platform and county issues, and asked for FOLC's endorsement. After some discussion, using a secret ballot the majority of the dues-paying members present voted on a motion from the floor and seconded not to support any candidate. The vote was 21 for the motion, 8 against the motion .