

Minutes – Friends of Lancaster County Meeting – September 12, 2007
School Superintendent Addresses Friends of Lancaster County

Susan Sciabbarrasi was welcomed by the Friends of Lancaster County at their September meeting Wednesday night at the library in Kilmarnock. Recently appointed as Lancaster County Public Schools Superintendent Ms. Sciabbarrasi comes to her new assignment from Rangel, Alaska, but she promptly informed her audience that she really is a Virginian.

She spoke positively, in general terms, of the Lancaster County school system's potential to educate its children. She sees a need to stress both an academic curriculum and vocational training such as accounting, woodworking and welding. The immediate key to success, she told the Friends, is in a partnership with the universities. Lancaster High School already has a dual enrollment program that is working quite well.

She sees a need to explore ways to begin educating earlier than the traditional grade system does: age four. That means pre-school, an area not presently supported by public funds. Getting money for that kind of schooling is the problem.

Ms. Sciabbarrasi spoke frankly about the challenges facing County schools. Aging school buildings, low reading abilities in certain grades, and the energy consuming requirements borne in meeting Standards of Learning administrative requirements were only a few. She encourages citizens to help the schools serve the community. In advocating volunteering by adults who have the time and backgrounds, she said, "Take the time to contact the schools. Drop by to say, 'Hi,'" she suggests.

A long, lively session of questions from the audience left little time for a business meeting. President Charlie Costello summarized the proceedings of a County Board of Supervisors working session called to consider revisions of Chapter Seven of the Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan. That chapter deals with land use policy, a topic that has recently evoked much highly-emotional public comment at County Board of Supervisors' meetings. Other members of the Friends attending the meeting opined that citizen interest in the development of land use policy has caused the Supervisors to take a fresh approach to the issue in a series of working meetings focused tightly on that topic.