

Fairfield Civic League Meeting

October 5, 2015

The meeting was called to order by Matt Maxwell at 7:05pm with 67 attendees.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance Matt introduced the program for the evening, meeting the two candidates for the 7th district State Senate seat, Gary McCollum and Frank Wagner.

Jeremy Waters was the moderator for the program. Each candidate would be able to make a 5 minute opening statement. Jeremy would then ask each candidate four questions which were submitted by citizens at large. Any time remaining after answering the final question could be devoted to a closing statement. There would be a brief period for questions from the attendees. Each candidate had the floor individually for approximately 30 minutes. Gary McCollum spoke for the first segment followed by Frank Wagner

The four questions

1. The Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Development is currently licensing individuals to run private group homes for people with disabilities. These private homes are funded by federal, state and local taxes paid by us. I understand that the Fair Housing Act prohibits discriminating on the basis of disability, but how does the state allow or even encourage homes to be run in neighborhoods by private businesses? What provisions are in place to keep parole boards from approving sex offender group homes in our neighborhoods? There are already several in Virginia beach, including one in Charlestown neighborhood.
2. Given the details released on the light rail in recent weeks, what is your position on bringing Light Rail to Virginia Beach? Specifically the \$155 million appropriated by the state and the \$120 million for light rail cars that proved not to be even compatible with the Norfolk system.
3. What is your position on gun control?
4. If elected/reelected what would be your legislative priorities?

Gary McCollum

Mr. McCollum's introductory message focused on his biography, his qualifications for the office (military service, successful businessman, family) and the critical issues that he feels need to be addressed – diversifying the economy, transportation, education, and veterans' concerns.

Answers to questions

1. Mr. McCollum stated he was not familiar with the specifics of this issue regarding group homes. However he did state that his stance on issues effecting citizens and their neighborhoods was always to listen to citizens and obtain their input as part of the generation of new policies.

2. Mr. McCollum stated that he was a part of the Virginia Beach Envision 2040 Committee, which was tasked generating a vision for what Virginia Beach would be like (population, economy etc.) in the year 2040 and determining the needs of the city at that time. Mass transit like Light Rail is a requirement for the future. The question is not if we will have Light Rail but how can we develop Light Rail without wasting tax payer dollars.
3. Mr. McCollum stated that too often guns are getting into the hands of people who are not responsible and the mentally ill. The measures to control guns are in place, but we need to do a better job enforcing those measures and have more options for mental health treatment.
4. Mr. McCollum's main priority if elected would be to regain citizen trust. He would be a public servant not a politician serving special interests. He would like to restore citizen trust and citizen involvement in government. He pledged that he would not take any contributions from special interest groups. Mr. McCollum reiterated those concerns stated in his opening remarks (economic diversity etc.)

Mr. McCollum then answered a few question from the attendees. He stated he is not concerned about 4 year term limits, he believes there is a great need for our port to be revitalized with new equipment. When asked about tolls on the tunnels he stated "tolls are a piece of the funding pie." The cities of Hampton Roads must work together as a region so one area like Portsmouth is not burdened.

Frank Wagner

Mr. Wagner's introductory remarks concentrated on his Naval Academy education, military service, experience as an engineer, development of shipbuilding/repair businesses and his success in the Virginia State Senate in passing the Transportation Bill.

1. Mr. Wagner stated that Virginia was found not to be compliant with the Olmstead Act. The United States Supreme Court held that unjustified segregation of persons with disabilities constitutes discrimination in violation of title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Court held that public entities must provide community-based services to persons with disabilities. That is the reasoning behind the group homes for disabled persons that are now in Fairfield. He stated that in many situations a mental health patient may feel more comfortable in a more controlled environment. Issues that can be explored regarding the privately operated group homes are zoning issues and that these group homes are private businesses.
2. Mr. Wagner is opposed to bringing Light Rail to Virginia Beach. He believes transportation dollars should be spent on road and bridge projects to reduce gridlock.
3. Mr. Wagner believes that the current laws in place regarding gun control are adequate; however, they need to be enforced.
4. If reelected to the Virginia Senate Mr. Wagner would continue to serve on the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC). This body is responsible for determining

how transportation dollars will be utilized to fix the traffic problems in Hampton Roads. This includes widening the exit lanes from I-64 West onto I-264 East into Virginia Beach and widening of the Lesner Bridge on Shore Drive.

His education initiative would incorporate into our school system technical and vocational skills. The current education focus is to prepare all students for college. Many students don't go to college. For some students, teaching a trade allows the opportunity for a good income as a skilled tradesman.

Mr. Wagner answered questions from the attendees. He feels his greatest accomplishment as a member of the Virginia State Senate was the passage of the Transportation Bill. He asked to discuss the Dominion Power bill that the Senate passed which stops the State Corporation Commission from conducting biennial reviews of base rates to determine whether Dominion's profits are higher than allowed. Those excesses in the past have been returned to customers. Mr. Wagner stated the bill was necessary because the state doesn't know whether Dominion will need to close coal plants to comply with new federal regulations on carbon emissions. This bill provides rate stability for Dominion customers by locking in the cheapest electric rates of any mid-Atlantic state.

Civic League Business (after candidate session concluded)

Matt introduced the Fairfield Civic league Officers

Matt Maxwell – President

Doug McLiverty – Vice President

Treasurer – Betty Virok

Secretary – Barb Conyers

The motion to approve this board of officers was made, seconded, approved by the voting attendees.

Activities

Sunday, October 25th – Civic League Activity in the Park (Leya Macchi 407 967 6214 or leya.macchi@gmail.com)

Saturday, November 14th – Battle of Kemps Landing at Emmanuel Episcopal Church

New Business

Group Homes for disabled persons in Fairfield

Jacqueline Kotvas provided information regarding a recent development in Fairfield. Several homes are being rented/sold to individuals/businesses in order to provide group homes for people with disabilities. Currently there are 3 group homes in Fairfield. One home on Largo Drive was specifically mentioned.

This has come about because the state is federally mandated to provide community environments whenever possible for people disabled and not institutionalized these people. The state is closing 3 of the Training Centers where many disabled people were housed.

Southeastern Virginia Training Center is an Intermediate Care Facility which provides highly structured habilitation services located in Chesapeake has reduced the number of residents. The concerns mentioned/discussed at the Civic league meeting

- There has been no notification/communication from the city to residents
- Zoning – designated as single family homes
- Who is the contact for these facilities if a resident has a concern
- How do we know the residents of the group homes are not a danger to the community; specifically mentioned were violent persons or sex offenders? Jacqueline stated that a parole officer told her that on Driver Road in Chesapeake is a group home in a community where 4 sex offenders are living

There will be a special City Council meeting about this issue at 7pm on October 27th. Matt and Jaqueline encouraged everyone to attend because it is important that we all understand the policies and procedures that govern this neighborhood concern

Old Business

Steven Mannix gave a brief update on the road project

- Walgreens, planned for the area next to Emmanuel Episcopal Church, has withdrawn from the deal. The city is now looking for a new entity
- Work has begun on the apartment complex at old Kemps Landing school at the end of Lord Dunmore and Kempsville Road
- Street lights will be coming soon at the intersection
- Request for Information (RFI) went out for the Northeast quadrant of the Kempsville/Princess Anne/ Witchduck intersection. This is the area by the fire station.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.