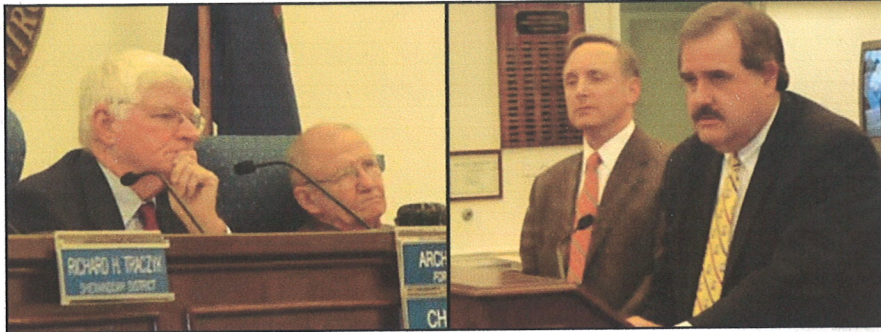


County-town

Finally at issue for Warren County and its primary population center Front Royal are two basic questions: like death and taxes, is growth inevitable; and if so, how do we cooperate in establishing the best approach to future growth at the least expense to everyone??

The great 'UDA' debate continues at county level *'Don't tread on me' or 'don't make me do anything sensible'?*



Del. Clay Athey and Coalition for Smarter Growth Executive Director Stewart Schwartz, at right, were playing to a tough audience at the Dec. 21 Warren County Board of Supervisors meeting. Chairman Archie Fox and Vice Chairman Glenn White appear unimpressed by what they are hearing.

By Roger Bianchini
Warren County Report

The ongoing community debate over a state-encouraged move toward what is believed by proponents to be a step toward smarter growth continued at the Dec. 21st Warren County Board of Supervisors meeting.

At the end of his Richmond General Assembly Legislative Report, 18th District Del. Clay Athey was asked by fellow Republican Tony Carter about possible misconceptions some may have about the Urban Development Area (UDA) directive most counties and cities statistically deemed "high growth" must comply with by July 1, 2011.

Athey, who has been deeply

involved in the UDA initiative headed by state Speaker of the House William Howell since 2007, said he was aware of the local debate. That opposition side of that debate has been spearheaded by former Front Royal Mayor and Town Councilman Stan Brooks. Brooks addressed his personal concerns about the UDA plan at the Front Royal Town Council meeting of Dec. 13 (see related story).

Athey pointed out that the UDA plan, attached to the Commonwealth Transportation Plan in an effort to reduce statewide road costs, received bipartisan support at the state level, having passed the House by a 99-0 vote and the Senate by a 39-0 vote. Athey briefly revisited the ratio-

nale of focusing future growth around already developed growth centers such as towns and cities so that the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) will have less future transportation expenses helping fund new road construction to development spread across rural areas of the county. Athey asserted the UDA plan is not only viewed as "smart growth," but also supports conservationist efforts to preserve Virginia's rural farm lands.

Athey then deferred to someone he indicated brought less political baggage to the discussion. That was Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director of The Coalition for Smarter Growth. Schwartz told the supervisors that a coalition of sponsoring groups of

the UDA plan, including his, the Virginia League of Conservation Voters, the Southern Environmental Law Center, the Piedmont Environmental Council and the Shenandoah Valley Network had issued a joint statement directly addressing questions generated in Warren County and explaining their support of UDAs, as well as the reasoning behind that support.

"I call myself an environmental, fiscal conservative – maybe that is the true definition of conservatism," Schwartz said. He then quoted Piedmont Environmental Council President Chris Miller

from the referenced statement to the Warren County Board of Supervisors. "We have always supported the effort to provide local governments with the tools to manage growth, the costs of providing infrastructure, and the incentives to conserve rural lands," Schwartz stated.

Shenandoah Valley Network Interim Executive Director Megan Gallagher added in that statement, "Warren officials who object to specific requirements for designating growth areas and density requirements might look to its neighbors for guidance." Shenandoah County was cited as

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So Virginia is not telling municipalities they have to plan "smart" — they are simply telling them if they don't, they can look forward to funding their own road improvements in the future.

one of those examples.

Saving money & land?

"Earlier this month, the Shenandoah Board of Supervisors passed a rural areas plan that would direct up to 90 percent of new residential development to the county growth areas around its historic towns, where public services exist or can be expanded, a great savings for county taxpayers over time," Gallagher stated in the joint statement to the Warren supervisors. "The Shenandoah County plan will preserve up to 40,000 acres of productive farm land through zoning, a purchase of development rights program and other options for rural land-owners. Their planning works because residents, town officials and supervisors are cooperating on the plans that will retain their farm sector and strengthen their towns."

The UDA sponsoring agencies statement to the Warren County Supervisors in preparation for the Dec. 21st meeting added this observation on the financial impacts of the type of growth being sought by the state. — "A summary of 40 years of fiscal impact studies across the U.S. showed that more compact development typically consumes 45-percent less land, costs 25-percent less for roads, 15-percent less for utilities, and 5-percent less for housing than sprawling development. A comparison of two future development futures — one spread out and the other compact — for the rural areas east of Charlottesville showed that the compact village

pattern and rural land conservation would save \$500 million in transportation infrastructure alone."

Tough crowd

But Schwartz and his quoted colleagues were playing to a tough crowd.

One of three primary skeptics on the board about UDA compliance, Linda Glavis (Archie Fox and Glenn White are the others) asked Schwartz if any consideration had been given at the state level to geographical differences in municipalities across Virginia in establishing the UDA directive that will cut off nearly all VDOT

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County-town

matching transportation funding to non-complying municipalities.

Schwartz replied that Warren was no exception to how UDA's should be implemented anywhere in Virginia. "For consideration of your particular needs, you can exclude and work around the mountains, rivers and parks that you have, just as you always could in comprehensive planning," Schwartz noted that the minimum density of four units per acre for single family, six units for townhouses and 12 units for multifamily offered flexibility for accommodating growth, including by what he termed "Historic Town Scale."

During a later conversation with Schwartz following the meeting, he said from a preliminary look at Front Royal's existing layout and building pattern, that such a higher-density "Historic Town Scale" UDA designation within the town limits utilizing four, eight and 12-unit plots might be a viable, if partial alternative to the now proposed UDA's largely focused on county land adjacent to existing town development around Happy Creek Road.

How long do you think it would take this town government to agree to such a plan, we wondered aloud? Schwartz replied that I probably knew more about the dynamics of local govern-

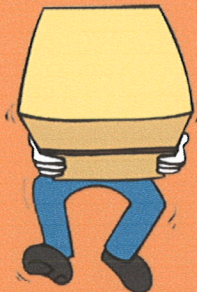
"The alternative of little subdivisions all over the county and having to drill wells, extend a road system, run power lines and pump more raw sewage into the ground does not seem to be the answer either." – Shenandoah District Supervisor Richard Traczyk

ment here than he did. My point exactly – so much for any July 1 compliance deadline being met.

Chairman Fox broached the subject of a planned request for a

See **DEBATE**, pg 32

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First Santa encounter



Two-and-a-half month old Skylar Jade Elizabeth Coleman gets some tips from six-year-old brother Jason on how to best approach Santa with her first Christmas wish list. My advice is to have grandparents Sam and Sandy Cooksey eavesdropping nearby – and maybe proud parents Jennifer and Jason Sr. for backup.



REPORT FROM RICHMOND

Greetings from your 18th District Delegate to the Virginia General Assembly. On behalf of my wife Stacey, and our busy twins Madagan and Clayton who are anxiously awaiting Santa

Claus' arrival on Christmas Eve, the Athey family wishes all of our constituents throughout Frederick, Warren, and Fauquier County a Merry Christmas filled with the blessings of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

In keeping with my commitment to keep you informed about what is going on in Mr. Jefferson's Capitol, this weekly column serves as the first of many subsequent columns discussing legislation to be considered during the 2011 General Assembly which begins in Richmond on January 12, 2011.

On December 17, 2010, Governor McDonnell will start the process by filing his proposed Amendments to the Biennial Budget. I anticipate that the Governor's Amendments will reflect a continuation of the commitment to holding the line on any tax increases while shifting resources to incentivize new job creation to assist unemployed and underemployed citizens throughout Virginia to keep or secure a new job. This strategy of balancing Virginia's budget through belt-tightening was supported during the last Session on a bipartisan basis by the members of the Virginia General Assembly. This "Virginia Way" of dealing with the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression has helped Virginia to move to second

place among all 50 States in new job creation behind only Texas. In addition, our current State unemployment rate is now over three percent below the national average of 9.8 percent.

Although, we must do more to create new jobs for our citizens, I believe that the bipartisan "Virginia Way" is the best economic strategy going forward to attract businesses to Virginia which should create new jobs for my constituents. I will therefore only support amendments to the Biennial Budget which hold true to last year's agreement to dig out of this Great Recession through a limited government philosophy, lower taxes and a balanced budget with tax incentives to attract new small businesses to Virginia and to help existing Virginia businesses to create additional jobs for my constituents. Only by working to stabilize the lives of my constituents who are still fortunate enough to be working while also providing my unemployed constituents an opportunity to become employed in the future, will we emerge from the worst economy in my lifetime.

As always, my family thanks you for the opportunity to serve during this difficult time for so many of our family, neighbors and friends throughout the 18th District. If you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at delclathey@house.virginia.gov, Front Royal: (540) 635-2123 until January 11, 2011, or Richmond: (804) 698-1018, afterwards

Delegate Clifford L. "Clay" Athey, Jr.
18th Legislative District
Virginia House of Delegates

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designations is the result of the failure of those like Warren, who have not followed such nationally favored planning concepts in the past. In fact, Athey stated that Virginia is one of only five states nationwide that primarily funds road construction and maintenance, while localities make planning decisions. More common is for municipalities to be responsible for the cost of their own road improvements necessitated by their planning decisions.

So Virginia is not telling municipalities they have to plan "smart" – they are simply telling them if they don't, they can look forward to funding their own road improvements in the future.

Finally at issue for Warren County and its primary population center Front Royal are two basic questions: like death and taxes, is growth inevitable; and if so, how do we cooperate in

establishing the best approach to future growth at the least expense to everyone?? These seem to be questions that have been left unanswered by past town and county governments. Citizens may soon be asking themselves if anything has changed.

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