

County Leaders Pledge Support for Recreation

Improved recreation opportunities sought for Route 1 youth.

BY ED SIMMONS, JR.
THE GAZETTE

In the packed multipurpose room of Bethlehem Baptist Church Monday night, June 11, as 400 parents, students and coaches waited and listened, Supervisors Gerry Hyland and Jeff McKay committed themselves to improving after-school recreation facilities and transportation to keep the community's young people productively occupied, nurtured and out of trouble.

"This is the most people I've seen come out to advocate for athletic recreation facilities in my 30-plus years in being involved in the county," said McKay, Lee District Supervisor, as he welcomed the challenge along with Hyland, Mount Vernon District Supervisor.

Organized by V.O.I.C.E. (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Com-

munity Engagement), the meeting was the result of months of community organizing and preliminary meetings. Follow-up meetings are planned.

Also committing themselves to action were School Board member Dan Storck and Park Authority board members Lynwood Gorham and Edward Batten.

Their commitments were preceded by testimony from parents, teachers, coaches and students that characterized after-school recreation opportunities for young people along the Route 1 corridor as deplorable to sadly lacking, particularly in comparison to wealthier sections of Fairfax County. Most neglected are the lower-income Route 1 communities of Audubon and Murraygate where children must play in the street and have no transportation

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PHOTOS BY TODD PANOLA

Supervisor Jeff McKay (in front, with glasses) listens as testimony is given stating that recreation facilities and transportation for Route 1 corridor youth are not acceptable.

Hundreds Support Improving Recreation

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home from after-school activities.

The county leaders were presented with a "Route 1/Mount Vernon Youth Agenda" of improvements to be made.

- ❖ At West Potomac and Mount Vernon High Schools, synthetic turf fields must be built.

- ❖ At Muddy Hole Farm, organizers called for grading so the field does not slope, holes filled, grass seeding, bleachers built, goal posts erected, lights, trash cans and the repaving of the parking lot and tennis and basketball courts.

- ❖ Similar improvements must be made at Mount Vernon Woods Park, and in particular the removal of a dangerous sewer drain in the middle of the field.

- ❖ At Martin Luther King Park in Gum Springs, the field needs crowning so water will drain, a scoreboard built and press box.

- ❖ At Bucknell Elementary School, underutilized space needs conversion to a baseball field and a playing field.

- ❖ At Audubon and Murraygate, a parking lot needs conversion to a playing field and a recreation and community center built.

Furthermore, Fairfax Connector service must be established running between Route 1 and Carl Sandburg Middle School where an after school program with tutoring and mentoring must be established.

"We've got a lot of work to do to get there," said the Rev. Tuck Bowerfind, pastor of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in his concluding remarks calling for attendance at V.O.I.C.E. follow-up meetings June 26 and July 9 at 7 p.m. "No one's going to do this for us. We have to fight this battle for ourselves."



Supervisor Gerry Hyland pledges his leadership to improving recreational opportunities and after school transportation for Route 1 corridor youth.