



The Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations, Inc.

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<http://www.mvcca.org>

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Mount Vernon Gazette
1604 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: MVCCA Response to April 2, 2009 Editorial

In the April 2 edition of the Mount Vernon Gazette, an editorial letter appeared disparaging three recent resolutions of the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations (MVCCA). Given the signatories, who included many from the Mount Vernon business community, a past co-chair of the MVCCA, a past chair of the MVCCA Planning and Zoning Committee and many persons that have advocated positions before the MVCCA and its committees, we assumed this was a slightly delayed April Fools Joke. Imagine our shock to learn that these people were serious.

The MVCCA was created in 1969 and for the past forty years has continuously advocated the interests of the citizens of the Mount Vernon Magisterial District on matters before the County, state and federal governments. The members of the MVCCA are citizen associations, homeowner associations, condo associations and similar associations of at least ten households located in the Mount Vernon District. No individuals, businesses or organizations other than citizen associations can join the MVCCA. Currently the MVCCA has 53 member associations. The MVCCA has eight standing committees and two special committees. Every member association can appoint a representative to every committee. The committees develop expertise in their subject area, study issues and develop resolutions recommending positions for consideration by the MVCCA member associations at the General Council meeting. The MVCCA is one of the oldest and by far the most active organization of its type in Fairfax County. We encourage everyone to visit the MVCCA website (www.mvcca.org), look at the breadth and depth of the MVCCA's activities and attend Committee and General Council meetings. All of the MVCCA's meetings are open to the public and our proceedings are transparent and democratic. Copies the "RECORD", the monthly document that records the MVCCA's activities, actions and resolutions can also be found at Supervisor Hyland's office building and the Sherwood Hall Library.

Each year the MVCCA names a Citizen of the Year and an Organization of the Year to honor people and organizations who have made significant contributions to improve the Mount Vernon District. This year's honorees are Virginia Williams and the United Christian Ministries. We invite everyone to fill out the reservation form included

on our website or at the libraries in the District, with the March 2009 Record and join us in honoring these outstanding contributors.

But enough about us, back to the editorial. The MVCCA was warned last year that FY2010 and FY2011 would be a difficult budget years. Funding from state and federal sources were falling simultaneously with a 12% decrease in the average assessed value of homes. With that warning, the MVCCA committees began an intensive review of the County budget to identify areas for spending cuts and to evaluate the County's list of possible spending cuts. This review took four months and required the effort of many of your neighbors who serve on the committees. The only agenda was the agenda of the MVCCA – represent the interests of the citizens of the Mount District. We are unaware of any other civic group that engaged in such a thorough and extensive review of the budget. That effort culminated in three resolutions incorporating the committees' recommendations that were adopted by the MVCCA general council and sent to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Now those resolutions are attacked in a editorial. Your neighbors who spent many hours of their personal time to analyze the County Budget recommendations now feel that able bodied by-standers, who did not participate in this exhaustive process, are now providing criticism.

The substance of the criticism is that the MVCCA is recommending a tax increase. In fact, the recommendation is for the property tax RATE to increase to roughly the level where tax PAID is the same as last year. The rate increase would only be offsetting the reduction in assessed property values.

Dealing with the County budget is in some ways very difficult and in others very simple. The simple side is that the County must have a balanced budget which means that revenues equal expenditures. Once expenditures are calculated, it is easy to determine the residential tax rate, because the only significant revenue source available to the County is the real property tax. Divide the County expenditures by the assessed value of taxable real property and Bingo, that's the tax rate. This also means that the only real tax decrease is an expenditure decrease. The difficult part is calculating the expenditures. This is where the MVCCA Committees devoted their efforts. Your fellow citizens and members of the MVCCA toiled over two thick volumes showing every county program and the budgeted expenditures for each program. They gave concrete suggestions to the Board of Supervisors on what was important regarding the services and expenditures as they relate to the actual available funds the county has to operate with. The editorial signers merely gave the unhelpful advice of cut the "fat" and cut the "meat. Furthermore, MVCCA representatives went before the Board of Supervisors to testify about the budget and responded to the Boards questions. We encourage the signers of the editorial to get off the sidelines, and work within the defined structure of the county hearing process and identify the specific programs that they want to cut.

The editorial describes the MVCCA as a taxing juggernaut that wants to raise every tax available to the County. Specifically, the MVCCA calls for reinstatement of the car sticker fee, increasing the business license tax and establishing a restaurant

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meals tax. What the member associations of the MVCCA want is to reduce the residential real estate tax, which touches each and every one of the 123,905 Mount Vernon District citizens, by relying on alternative taxes. Every other Northern Virginia locality has a restaurant meals tax, the car sticker tax and higher rates of the business license tax.

Finally, the editorial signers urged each of you to sign-up to testify before the Board of Supervisors about the County budget. You should have done that--- this is your county and your budget. The MVCCA Committee chairs did stand up and they were counted for the hard serious work they did in analyzing the budget, the services provided us all by the county and how our tax dollars should be spent...

The Co-Chairs of the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations, Inc.

David Dale

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