



The Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations, Inc.

P.O. Box 203, Mount Vernon, VA 22121-9998

<http://www.mvcca.org>

April 16, 2021

To: Chairman Jeffrey McKay

Cc: Supervisors Dan Storck and Rodney Lusk

Subject: Undergrounding of Utilities in Fairfax County

Dear Chairman McKay:

We are grateful for the attention the Board of Supervisors has given to transforming one of the nation's oldest highways (Rte. 1) into a Main Street serving Mount Vernon and Lee districts. And we particularly appreciate the strong support you have given to this project both in your former and current responsibilities.

However, time is moving on, and we feel it is essential to write to you once again to urge that the Board not let the opportunity go by to put Fairfax County roads on the path to a 21st Century appearance. It is past time to get away from the ugliness of overhead utilities that mar our streetscape and that project a vision of a county stuck in its rural past.

We know the Board of Supervisors is dedicated to revitalizing our county's oldest commercial and residential areas. Undergrounding is an important element of this effort, and the Mount Vernon Council, the Fairfax Federation, the South Fairfax Development Corporation, and the Mount Vernon/Lee Chamber of Commerce have all supported it. Those of us that were around at the time remember that Alexandria Mayor Beatley's decision in the 1970's to put the wires underground on King Street led the way for the revitalization of Old Town. It's time for a similar forward-looking approach in Fairfax County.

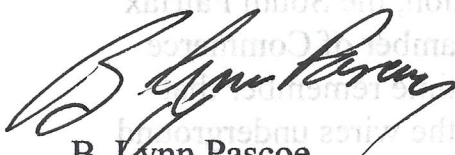
Prince William County, Alexandria, and now Arlington have all decided to put the utilities along busy sections of Richmond Highway underground. They understand that this is an important part of their economic development plan. It seems foolish for us to squander the opportunity provided by the Embark plan and highway widening from Jeff Todd Way north and have our Main Street end up marred by the usual tangle of ugly utility wires. We frankly see undergrounding as a test of whether the county is serious about carrying forward with its Embark vision.

We believe the bill recently signed by the Governor which your office helped to shape gives us a possible way forward. It would provide the income to support a county-wide fund for undergrounding utilities as major revitalization projects go forward with a modest one dollar meter charge. A second approach would be to bond a utilities undergrounding fund. There are, of course, numerous examples throughout the County for bonded projects in all districts: Libraries, community centers, fire stations, stream restorations, and most recently, the dredging of Lake Accotink. The Board might also consider asking our Congressional representatives to include funding for undergrounding in Fairfax County in the Infrastructure Bill now under consideration by Congress. Whichever route is taken, we do believe there are adequate ways to fund this project.

Time is of the essence as design planning for the Richmond Highway road-widening project moves forward. We know that the Board has supported undergrounding in certain other parts of the County. We believe this approach should be implemented across the County as revitalization projects move forward. For those of us in the Mount Vernon District, transforming Richmond Highway from a dangerous, high-speed thoroughfare with a 20th Century commercial strip and a maze of overhead wires into an attractive Main Street with dynamic commercial and residential facilities is of vital importance. We ask that you and the Board make this vision a reality.

Thank you again for all you do from the citizens of the Mount Vernon District.

Sincerely,



B. Lynn Pascoe
Co-Chair, Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations