



January, 2010

Since 1919 Dedicated to Responsible Citizenship and the Improvement of Local Government

BULLETIN



Next Meeting

**12 noon – Wednesday
January 6, 2010**

**The Colony Club is located at
10 East Franklin Street**

There is free parking in the rear or on the street. Directions — Approach headed East (one way street) on Franklin Street; left on Foushee; right into the Colony Club lot off of Foushee (this right turn is into an alleyway that runs parallel mid-block between Franklin and Grace Streets). Colony Club spaces are marked & are on the perimeter of lot. Proceed into Colony Club entrance —green awning leads into courtyard; proceed up courtyard to double glass doors.

Lunch is \$16 for members and \$20 for nonmembers.

You must make your reservation by calling (545-6656) to make your reservation.



Ms. Denslow

Suzette Denslow, the Penultimate Insider, On Whither Richmond and Virginia

Suzette Denslow, knows more about not only local government but state government than maybe anyone else in Virginia.

The Chief of Staff to Mayor Dwight C. Jones served in a similar capacity as Legislative Director and Deputy Director of Policy under Governors Mark Warner and Tim Kaine.

She has been at the governing table, state and local government, at high levels since she served as Deputy Secretary of Education for Governor L. Douglas Wilder in the early 90s.

Ms. Denslow will speak at the Wednesday, January 6, meeting of Richmond First Club.

From her unique vantage point as not only an observer but a participant at high levels in both the state and, now, City of Richmond government, Ms. Denslow has been invited to expound on what she would do if she had a magic wand and could make government successful, workable and, at the same time, meet the needs of the public.

Not only has she worked in government but for 11 years, she was the Deputy Director and Research Director of the Virginia Municipal League, the nonprofit, nonpartisan association of city, town and county governments that assists local governments with advocacy, research and education.

She served as a senior analyst with the General Assembly's highly respected Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission.

DENSLOW Continued on page 2 . . .

Reminder: To help us coordinate our planning with the Colony Club dining staff—

***Please RSVP for the monthly meeting
in a timely manner!***

Pat Ryan — 545-6656 — or email: info@richmondfirstclub.org

DENSLOW from page 1 . . .

While at JLARC, Ms. Denslow established background in educational funding and policy.

For two years, she was executive director of the Tennessee Municipal League.

Ms. Denslow's service with Governor Kaine gave her the opportunity to view firsthand Virginia's and the nation's economy slide into skids. She brings that experience to the City of Richmond which, like other local governments, is dealing with resource losses unequalled since the great depression.

She also served for many years on the Richmond City Library board. Ms. Denslow is a native of Richmond and has a B. S. degree in urban studies from Virginia Commonwealth University and a masters in public administration from the University of Virginia.



— Reflections —

*—If you missed the November 2009 meeting —
Here is what our speaker had to say!*

Limitations on Virginia Governor And Government Hurt the State

"Virginia's governor has about 18 months to accomplish anything."

And that isn't long enough, according to Bernie Niemeier, the new owner and publisher of Virginia Business magazine.

As the only state in the nation that doesn't allow the governor to succeed him or herself, Niemeier told the Richmond First Club December 2 that Virginia's governors have control of their own budgets for only two of their four years in office.

Niemeier and Dr. Mike Brooks, professor emeritus of urban planning at VCU, spoke about handicaps to governing in Virginia.

"But," Niemeier asked, "Is there the political will to take it (allowing two terms) on?" If two-term governor legislation had passed last year, the first time a governor could succeed himself would be 2017. Some fear the lengthier term would give too much power to the governor.

Career politicians, career lobbyists and bureaucrats hold too much power now, he said.

Niemeier believes the one-term limit stymies accomplishment and leadership.

He also believes that the moratorium on annexation, now extended to 2018, creates financial challenges for cities that have led some, such as South Boston, to become towns to operate under county governments. Fairfax County, he said, is exploring becoming a city because it is larger than any of Virginia's independent cities. The independent city and county system creates unfair collection and distribution of resources, Niemeier said.

In response to a question about the seeming ability of Hampton Roads governments to work together more cohesively than the Richmond region, Niemeier agreed. "Hampton Roads is different because

of its diversity. That is probably the influence of the military."

Virginia Business has an office in Hampton Roads so he is there frequently. He cited a regularly sponsored Hampton Roads regional meeting that attracts about 1,100 attendees. Compare that to Richmond's second Crupi report presentation that drew about 300 people. "We don't see the same level of civic engagement that you see in Hampton Roads."

They would say that they don't have regional cooperation, he added. "But Mayor Paul Fraim (Norfolk) has done a wonderful job. They have a very, very impressive downtown."

Mike Brooks Laments Failure to Use Survey Results

A former president of Richmond First Club, Brooks reviewed the results of a study on the Dillon Rule (resulting from an 1868 court case that local governments have only those powers given them by the state) by the Club in cooperation with the Virginia Municipal League and the Virginia Association of Counties.

Conducted eight years ago, Brooks said the results were never made available to the public. The 19 per cent response rate was low. However, the 131 responses were revealing. Surveys were sent to local governments across Virginia.

"We got a long list of things they wanted to do but couldn't do," Brooks said. "The list was the most valuable part of the report." The list included such items as the inability to make local laws on guns in bars or signage.

Asked about preferences for home rule or sticking with the Dillon Rule, 49 percent preferred home rule, 39 percent had no opinion and 12 percent wanted to retain adherence to the Dillon Rule. They were mostly small town governments, Brooks said.

The Dillon Rule has long been praised by the state Chamber of Commerce and it is highly favored by lobbyists, he said. On controversial issues, it is much easier for lobbyists to deal with one entity—the state—rather than individual local governments. Brooks used gun legislation as an example. The National Rifle Association can kill state level legislation much more easily than would be possible if gun bills could be handled by local governments.

Dysfunction in Virginia is a result of the Dillon Rule, Brooks said. Leadership and advocacy for change is required to eliminate Dillon. That hasn't surfaced.



*If you would like to refer to
earlier issues of the
"BULLETIN" — please visit
our website — you will find
them there!*

www.richmondfirstclub.org

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**Have you checked out our
NEW website?**

The Richmond First Club at AGE 90 has joined the 21st century with a spiffy new website that will be used to keep YOU and the rest of the world informed about what we are doing!

If you missed the meeting last month, read about the (November 4th) speaker (former Delegate Terrie Suit), on the website.

So . . . take time to visit; stop at all of the tabs, buttons and links!

Then — Let us know what you think!

Be advised that our mailing address to send dues of your comments is:

**Richmond First Club
P.O. Box 344 – Richmond,
VA 23218-0344**

Changes of name, address, telephone number or email address go to

***Pat Ryan—Membership Director
info@richmondfirstclub.org***

who is charged with sending monthly e-mail meeting notices and producing the membership directory.

Thank you!

**Application for Richmond First Club Membership
(or use this form for your annual renewal if already a member)**

I am familiar with and will subscribe to the purposes of the Richmond First Club. I understand that members are expected to participate actively on a club committee and are encouraged to attend the club meetings as often as possible. I certify that I am a registered voter in the Richmond metropolitan area; and by signing this application, and upon being accepted for membership by the Board, I agree to fulfill the membership obligations set forth above.

Name: _____ (Name or Nickname used) _____

Home Address: _____

Business Address: _____

Name of Business: _____ (Position or Title) _____

Home Phone: _____ Business Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____ Preferred mailing address (please check one): Home Business

Signature of Applicant _____ Date: _____ Enclosed \$ _____

Annual Membership Dues \$85 (plus paying separately for each of 10 monthly luncheons attended.) — OR select the “Gold Star” membership with dues of \$210 annually (\$210 includes the fee for 10 monthly luncheon meetings as well as your dues). — If you attend all meetings you realize a savings of at least \$35 per year and don’t need to remember to bring a check each month for your lunch! *Look for the members with a gold star on their badge — they took advantage of the “Gold Star” membership benefit!*

Please mail to Richmond First Club — PO Box 344 — Richmond, VA 23218-0344.

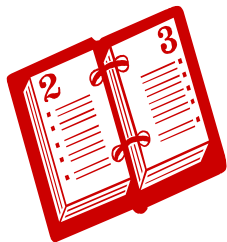


2009-2010 Board of Directors

President: Fred Fisher 804-786-1929 fsfisher@aol.com
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At Large: Rayford Harris 804-321-7944, vsuteach@verizon.net
At Large: Len Morrow 804-358-7355 lmorrow3@verizon.net

Website Committee: Nancy Finch, Brenda Finley, Mike Brooks

The public is welcome to attend membership meetings, which are generally held on the first Wednesday of each month. Please call or email Pat Ryan to make a reservation — 804-545-6656, info@richmondfirstclub.org.



**Mark your calendar now
for the monthly luncheon
meetings of the Richmond
First Club's 2009-2010
Fiscal Year.**

- January 6, 2010
- February 3, 2010
- March 3, 2010
- April 7, 2010
- May 5, 2010
- June 2, 2010

The Club meets on the first Wednesday of the month. Members are welcome to attend the monthly meetings of the Board of Directors — usually held on the Monday afternoon following the Wednesday membership luncheon meeting.

If you plan to come, you will be provided with an opportunity to offer your ideas, concerns, and/or other areas of interest. You may be looking for a way to become more involved in the club, or head up a committee. Please call or send an e-mail message to the President (above) for directions and to be included on the agenda.

Richmond First Club

Our Mission

The club's founders shared a common vision of a permanent organization that would inform the public and political leaders about a broad range of civic issues, policies and solutions.

The spirit of enlightened activism that initially inspired the formation of the Richmond First Club in 1919 carries on today in its active study of and involvement in issues currently affecting the Richmond metropolitan area.

During its 80-plus year history, the club has provided leadership on a number of issues critical to the quality of governance in the metropolitan areas. All the region's citizens have benefited from the club's energy and diligence.

The club pioneered the idea of cooperation among the political jurisdictions in the metropolitan areas. The club completed comprehensive studies advocating regional cooperation as early as 1981.

The lifeblood of the club is its committee structure, where members focus on and research civic issues vital to continued development in the region. Thorough and nonpartisan studies have been published by these committees, assisting in many high-profile accomplishments over the years.