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12-18-10

City of Alexandria, Virginia – City Council Meeting of December 18, 2010
Public Discussion Period - Comments of Donald N. Buch (389 Livermore Lane)

I don't suppose it will surprise any of you to find that my focus today is on BRAC. More specifically, I am requesting that you provide this community a cost/benefit analysis of the development you encouraged to locate here. In recent months there appear to be more and more project costs likely to be borne by this community.

We recently learned that the short and medium-term roadway improvements will cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$17-20 million – a number that just escalated by a third in the course of a week. One might note that, despite the beneficial impacts of those improvements, our worst performing intersections will no longer be 2 Level of Service Ds but will become 1 LOS E and 2 LOS Fs. In addition, consideration is being given to an \$80-100 million off-ramp from I-395 to Seminary Road. Based upon a waiver which City Council gave the developer in January, 2004, none of these expenses will apparently be borne by the developers although the SUP had previously called for them to do so.

Council Meeting, January 24, 2004: "An earlier condition of approval required that the applicant work with the city to investigate alternatives for providing a direct connection into the project from the existing I-395 interchange with Seminary Road. The city has concluded that this direct connection is not feasible or desirable. Further consideration of the direct ramp connection alternative is not advisable. Therefore, the applicant has fulfilled the intent and obligation of the previous condition to explore the possibility of an interchange ramp or construct comparable road improvements."

In January, 2008, the City wrote the Mark Center owners advising them that, if the City were to support this site as a location for BRAC, it faced the loss of an estimated \$60 million in real estate taxes over the next 20 years. In turn, the City stated that such support would be contingent upon the City receiving significant financial compensation. Despite the City having supported the location, we now understand that the City has not, and likely will not, receive any compensation whatsoever for the \$60 million in lost real estate taxes.

Mayor Euille to Howard Middleton, January 4, 2008: "... any city support of the Mark Center site... is contingent upon the city obtaining significant financial compensation to offset its multiyear loss of future real estate taxes." "... We have calculated... the net present value of foregone real estate taxes over a 20 year period... would be about \$60 million."

More recently we've heard the Fire Chief estimate that it will cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$2 million per year to provide acceptable fire and emergency services to the BRAC neighborhood. Despite that, in March of last year the City entered into the Northern Virginia Emergency Services Agreement relative to the provision of these services. Both Alexandria and Fort Belfour are parties to the agreement which says no party will be compensated by another for any services rendered. In turn, one can understand DOD's position that they do not intend to compensate our city for the services. Consequently, it appears the cost of providing them will fall on city taxpayers, of which DOD is not one.

Northern Virginia Emergency Services Mutual Response Agreement, March 2009: "Each party... when needed or requested, will automatically dispatch the most appropriate response resource(s) available to an incident location without regard to jurisdictional boundary lines." "... A party to this agreement shall not be indebted to another party for the cost of any usual and customary emergency services rendered by the other party..."

Given just these three examples, it appears we could well be out of pocket more than \$150 million as the cost of having appealed to BRAC to locate at Mark Center. I believe the citizens of this City are overdue an explanation of why you were so eager to attract this terrorist target to a site that VDOT consistently asserted was "not viable" from a traffic perspective. In addition, I believe we are long overdue an accounting of the cost/benefit of this development and would ask you to let us know when one might be forthcoming.