

Remarks at VDOT hearing held March 25, 2009 at Southwest Virginia  
Community College

Gentlemen:

I am Mike Hymes and I am here representing the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors and the 44,000 residents of Tazewell County.

During the March 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors we unanimously passed this resolution opposing the closure of the Tazewell residency and the evisceration of the transportation services provided to our county residents by the Tazewell residency. In addition, our PSA, IDA and planning commission passed similar resolutions. I therefore speak for all these groups.

Tonight we will hear a lot of discussion regarding this plan. Let me provide you with some facts and figures about Tazewell County

- Tazewell County is the second largest county in the Bristol District with 44,000 Virginians calling Tazewell County home.
- According to a recent study conducted for our Industrial Development Authority
  - 5,471 resident commute daily outside the county for employment in neighboring counties
  - 4,191 residents commute daily into Tazewell County for employment in Tazewell County business
  - our residents understand regional thinking and the necessity of well maintained highways.
- Three Colleges are located in the county serving 4,450 students who are commuting daily on Tazewell county highways
- Our average elevation is 2,500 feet above sea level with many peaks rising above 3,500 feet and we have an average annual snowfall of 39.8 inches
- We have more Primary roadway miles 1,314 than any other county in the Bristol district
- We also have 472 miles of secondary roads
  - 83.5% have a traffic count of less than 750 vehicles daily
  - These roads will be in the category which get plowed and opened within 48 hours of the snow or ice event.
  - Most of the commutes live off these secondary roads

- Students in the Tazewell county school system must travel significant distance to school daily
  - Tannersville to Tazewell is 19.03 miles and a 33 minute drive one way with the student traversing Rich mountain over 3,000 ft
  - Burkes Garden to Tazewell is 14.5 miles and 30 minute drive one way and the student must traversing a mountain over 3000 ft
  - Pocahontas to Tazewell is 28 miles and 54 minute drive one way with students traversing Stoney Ridge over 3,000 ft
  - Our students missed 13 days this year due to weather
    - while Russell County missed only 11 days.
    - I am sure our students attended school on late schedule many more days during this year
    - This process allows our system to get in more required days but short days negatively effect instructional time.
    - SOL tests occur at the same time across the state
    - Any days missed for inclement weather are added to the end of the year
    - These days are lost for the purpose of SOL testing.
- Most of this school bus travel is on the same secondary roads that fall in the category of less than 750 vehicle daily
  - The travel times reflect dry road travel and not snow covered travel so times will be doubled for student
  - Reduced maintenance will also significantly increase the number of days missed by our students
- Lebanon is 38.7 miles from Tazewell and 25 miles from the Tazewell county line and Wytheville is 44.2 miles from Tazewell and 27 miles from the county line.
- Anyone that travels in the Russell county and Wythe county area knows that Tazewell County weather is significantly different than Lebanon and Wytheville. Therefore, determining road conditions from afar will likely be a best guess a so the closure of the residency is a significant safety issue for our county school system and our residents

I submit to that closing the Tazewell residency is a bad idea based on all these facts and figures.

Finally, The number 49 is a number we all must remember 49 is the number of employees receiving direction from the Tazewell office. These 49 individuals will be forever affected by your decision.

I suggest we think outside the box

- consider across the board pay reductions or hours reductions and maintaining all employees in the system. That is the approach my employer is following.
- This type plan reduces cost without reductions in services and we keep individuals working.
- If people lose their jobs they can't help us work out of our financial crisis , a job is of critical importance in these economic times ,
- Without a job I can't pay my taxes , or buy gasoline and if I don't buy gas and pay my taxes the state lose the gas tax and other payroll taxes that fund our road systems.

Closing the Tazewell residency will create gross inefficiencies in servicing roads that are vital to transportation, business, education and medical services in Tazewell County and create an undue hardship on our tax payers of the area. I request you reconsider closing our residency