

*Steve Corneliussen submitted this e-mail report on the evening of August 29, 2007:*

**To the Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park board and other friends of Fort Monroe**

**(With bcc to the two candidates for the Virginia senate seat representing the district containing Fort Monroe, to Fort Monroe Authority Chairman Preston Bryant, to Virginia Tourism Corporation President Alisa Bailey, and to Fort Monroe Authority Executive Director Conover Hunt)**

On Cathy Lewis's noontime "HearSay" local NPR talk show today -- as some might already know -- five people talked a lot about Fort Monroe. I need to hear it again on the Web tonight, but I thought it was a big plus for the cause of a future Fort Monroe that enriches Virginia economically and in other important senses of the word *enrich*.

With Gov. Wilder slated as Cathy's guest for general discussion of lots of issues, I had earlier told both Gerri Hollins, president of the Contraband Historical Society, and Sheri Bailey, leader of Virginia's Juneteenth movement, about the opportunity to call in, given Gov. Wilder's connections to slavery-era history. (Still earlier, I had told Cathy, when she sent me a brief e-mail note, that I'd be asking people to call in; I had asked her to stop me if that wasn't constructive.) Both Gerri and Sheri did indeed call the talk show today, and in both cases there was some nice discussion with Gov. Wilder about improving civic understanding of the slavery era, and about Fort Monroe.

Gov. Wilder, by the way, called the Fort Monroe planning a "local issue." In my view that's a bad misconception, and is almost an intellectual virus among leaders of both parties -- even now including Sen. Warner -- and among most of the Virginia media. (Even after two years, I'm newly astonished every time I see again how little understanding there is, among some of Virginia's leaders, of just how national and indeed international this national treasure is.) But more important were the good things that Gov. Wilder said. Those included -- twice, I believe -- the assertion that Fort Monroe must remain entirely for the public.

(As Manny Puma advised long ago, CFMNP needs to visit Gov. Wilder. I'll take it on myself to see if I can get us an appointment. I'll ask for just before or just after our Sept. 10 Richmond visit to Secretary Wagner. The potential connections of various kinds between Fort Monroe and Gov. Wilder's Fredericksburg slavery museum need discussing, it seems to me.)

Later, after Gov. Wilder was gone, Cathy kindly gave me a good bit of time to talk about the Historic Quadrangle. I hadn't originally planned to call in, but after Sheri and Gerri, the time was perfect for talking about the HQ (as Joel Rubin immediately dubbed the Historic Quadrangle the first time I told him about it). I thought Cathy and her call screener would agree. They did agree, and so Cathy brought me on and introduced me. I felt like I got in a lot of good stuff over the course of a few minutes.

I started by making sure that the audience knew that it wasn't just Sheri and Gerri they had heard from earlier, but Sheri Bailey and Gerri Hollins, a pair of important cultural leaders for African-American history. I said that they and Gov. Wilder had talked about cultural matters, but that those cultural matters had an obvious and highly potent economic implication: the Historic Quadrangle.

Then I presented the HQ as the real economic opportunity for post-Army Fort Monroe that "real men" actually care about. By dragging in that crass phrase, I was trying to josh the people who think that the national park outlook is sentimental, artsy and impractical, when in fact that outlook beats the governor's predetermined plan. It beats the governor's predetermined plan even for people with views so narrow that they think only about economic effects, and not about the other senses in which post-Army Fort Monroe could enrich Virginia.

(As to predetermination, which is a volatile thing for me to mention: Remember what Secretary Bryant, the Fort Monroe Authority chairman, insisted on Wed., Aug. 15, on Coy Barefoot's show in Charlottesville. (See several summer 2007 entries at <http://www.cfmnp.org/multimedia.htm> .) He asserted that there will be residential development and that there will be commercial development. Powerless citizens can only assume the secretary means that these things will come regardless of any judgment about their actual merits or necessity made by any hierarchy of any hybrid Fort Monroe National Park, assuming there even is a national park. The predetermined Kaine plan, to greater or lesser degree, is starkly obviously assumed at some level already among the nearly all-powerful combination of Hampton leaders, with their inherent conflict of interest, and Kaine administration people, who energetically emphasize their partnership with those Hampton leaders. Surely that's why the year-long Kaine-Hampton negotiations were so secretive. Those were the negotiations that led to an MOA and bylaws that look forward to piecemeal privatizing of Fort Monroe, and that were presented peremptorily for

immediate approval to the Fort Monroe Authority, with no chance for the documents even to be read. And remember that Secretary Bryant has publicly scanted the national park option -- the very option that he told CFMNP Vice President Mark Perreault was "impractical" in Richmond last winter, that he characterized as placing a "boulder in the road" earlier this summer, and that he didn't even so much as mention in his 17-minute Charlottesville radio interview, <http://www.cfmnp.org/multimedia.htm> , on June 26. Those are some of the things I mean by *predetermination*. It is indeed a volatile term, but it's nowhere near as volatile as this: as someone who offered himself for public office as a loyal Democrat in support of the full Kaine agenda, I worry that the governor will botch his Fort Monroe legacy.)

When talking about the HQ on the air, I hope I was not disrespectful when I said that the Kaine administration's "real men" ambitions for residential and commercial development, ambitions apparently held regardless of integration complexities with the rest of Fort Monroe, were an impoverished vision compared to this truly visionary economic approach that my group supports. In this hardheaded practical matter of economics and prosperity, people like Joanne Berkley, Betty Wyatt, Gerri Hollins, and Dorothy Rouse-Bottom -- and Sheri Bailey -- are the real men.

At one point Cathy asked me what the powers-that-be are thinking about the HQ idea. Afterwards, I realized that this was her cue for me to report on the air that Conover Hunt has quite graciously said that the Fort Monroe Authority means to incorporate the HQ idea in its cultural planning. Cathy likes to highlight agreement, and I wish I had realized I should include mention of that, because I like to highlight agreement too -- even though I'm not sure we can have both an HQ and, for example, Hampton's gated-neighborhood-without-the-gate surrounding Freedom's Fortress.

But talk shows happen in real time, and I didn't catch Cathy's cue. What I found myself saying instead was that although Virginia Tourism Corporation President Alisa Bailey had told me last week that she would discuss the Historic Quadrangle in her presentation to the authority on Monday, and although she had said to me again on Monday that she intended to do that, in the end she had omitted any mention of it. On the air I said I was afraid that the omission might even mean that the Kaine administration -- of which I believe President Bailey is a part, in some sense -- realizes that any truly grand vision for Fort Monroe that beats their own narrow vision purely on economic terms therefore also beats their own narrow vision all around, on all terms. It also beats the spirit of their partnership with Hampton city leaders, who have an

entitlement mentality concerning a national treasure that they believe Hampton should in some sense own.

And indeed I do worry about that one possible effect of Ms. Bailey's expert economic truth-telling, which in all other respects we all welcome. She says with great authority that Fort Monroe can be the diamond in Virginia's tourism crown. Well, I worry that her expert economic truth-telling will alarm the Kaine administration, which is confined to some degree by its plainly stated interest in pleasing the especially narrow-visioned Hampton leadership. I worry that those narrow interests will hamper the planners from being guided by the economic facts as outlined by this tourism expert, when in fact her expert economic truth-telling should instead guide the planning. If I understood her right, she sees Fort Monroe as needing to evolve in a way that involves absolute respect for the entirety of Old Point Comfort. If I understood her right, she sees this respect for the spirit of the place, this respect for Old Point Comfort's reflection of the genuine Tidewater character of Hampton Roads, as crucial for capitalizing on that diamond in that crown.

Later still in today's edition of "HearSay," another caller -- "Jeff from Hampton" -- heartily endorsed the HQ idea. (No, I didn't plant his call! I'm aggressive, but not devious, and the defense of Fort Monroe from inappropriate development will, in the long run, succeed on the obvious merits alone. That's what CFMNP's president, Dr. H. O. Malone, believes, and in my better moments I believe it too.)

All in all, the show was very gratifying. The link to the audio will be posted at <http://www.cfmnp.org/multimedia.htm> . A blurb there will tell where on the timeline of the show you can move that little cursor thing so as to hear the Fort Monroe parts if you don't want to listen to the whole hour.

Which no one who has kindly read this way-too-long report will now have time to do anyway.

Thanks.

Steve Corneliussen