

Supervisor Cook Announces He Will Not Seek Re-Election

Serving as your Braddock District Supervisor has been the greatest honor of my professional career. But for many reasons, I have decided I will not be a candidate for reelection next year.

Public service asks much of those who seek it and after ten years of balancing the competing responsibilities of Supervisor, lawyer, husband, father and son, it is time for me to focus on other priorities in my life. I have reached this decision after a number of months of personal reflection and do not come to the conclusion lightly. Despite the sacrifices, holding elected office has been a tremendously rewarding experience. I am so grateful for the opportunity afforded me to serve the people of Fairfax County.

I leave with grave concern for the future of our broken political system. I remember when people ran for office to be of service to the community, as Senator John McCain used to say, to pursue a cause greater than your own self-interest. It's a spirit I still largely see on the Board of Supervisors, where I have enjoyed working collaboratively and building friendships with my colleagues. Even when we have disagreed, I believe the Board has conducted the County's business with the best interests of the community in mind.

But that approach is not commonplace in today's political system, which rewards a different set of values. Ideological litmus tests, wedge issues, personal attacks, reliance on scapegoats, and downright lies are the currency of the day. Disagreement and dialogue, followed by collaboration and compromise, is how problems get solved. But many in politics today view that process with disdain. Those who strive for moderation and consensus are marginalized by such political actors, hindering our ability to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. It is no wonder people have less and less confidence in their government and the political system that selects it, when the political system seems to have less and less interest in actually governing.

In spite of the current environment, I remain committed to the ideal of public service and hope to remain engaged in community life. I do not rule out any potential future opportunities. But today it is time for me to step back, recharge my batteries, and focus my attention elsewhere.

I am proud of the work we have accomplished together during my time in office. We have trained hundreds of community leaders through our neighborhood colleges and supported our civic and homeowner associations, community pools, Scouts, recreational sports leagues, and nonprofits. I have made a concerted effort to keep the community informed of, and involved in, the major issues of the day. I believe this active engagement has led to better decisions being made on projects affecting the District, such as Mason's Campus Drive, the Braddock Road enhancements, and the futures of the Training Center property and Lake Accotink.

On a countywide level, I have been a leader in our criminal justice reform efforts and believe our police department has revamped its use of force and communications policies to better serve our residents. The Diversion First initiative is providing treatment instead of incarceration for those with mental health challenges. I am honored to serve as chairman of the Domestic Violence Prevention, Policy, & Coordinating Council, the Public Safety Committee, and the Welcoming Inclusion Network. After serving in these roles, I believe Fairfax County is now leading the way in domestic violence and sexual assault awareness and prevention, increasing our efforts to involve those with developmental disabilities in our community life, and providing nationally recognized public safety services to our residents. I have also been a necessary voice for fiscal balance between the need for quality governmental services and the costs borne by the taxpayers. On a regional level, I have been honored to serve in leadership positions on the Virginia Railway Express, the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, the INOVA Health Care Services Board of Trustees, and the Northern Virginia Regional Commission.

In the course of it all, I have made many friends and had the opportunity to work with some excellent community-minded elected and appointed officials and community leaders. I have experienced great personal growth in this process, being introduced to a broader range of issues - from stormwater to housing to transportation - than I would ever have imagined. I have also learned how to work with diverse groups and individuals to achieve viable, pragmatic approaches to those issues. Working together, we have truly made our community a better place to live.

I wish my successor well and hope he or she finds great success. Thank you for your support these past ten years, and through this remaining year of my term. I look forward to continuing to work with you in private life.

John C. Cook
Braddock District Supervisor
November 16, 2018