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Falls Church City Community Leaders and Residents Invited to Deliberate Community Issues

New Initiative to Train GM High School & Citizen Volunteers

CITY OF FALLS CHURCH — November 20, 2006 — In an effort to expand participation in civic activities, four Falls Church City community organizations today announced that they will support an innovative new forum for addressing community issues in the City.

The community organizations supporting the new effort are the American Association of University Women (Falls Church Branch), the Citizens for a Better City, the League of Women Voters of Falls Church, and the Village Preservation and Improvement Society. These and other interested groups will invite Falls Church City residents and business and community leaders to attend a community meeting or “Deliberation Day” on March 17 of next year.

The “Deliberation Day” meeting will address one of several community issues to be selected in early January based on input from local citizens. Students from George Mason High School and adult volunteers will be trained by experts to serve as moderators for the Deliberation Day events.

Between now and December 29th, Falls Church City residents are invited to visit the project’s website at www.dfccva.org and to vote and post comments on three initial topics – affordable housing, environmental action, and taxation and development. Or, the public can suggest another topic altogether for consideration.

When considering the topic for the March 17 Deliberation Day, the public should aim for an emerging issue that is of broad concern within the community. The issue should also be one for which the decision making of office-holders and other leaders needs to be informed by public judgment, as well as by experts’ views. The topic for the March 17 “Deliberation Day” will be announced in mid-January. Registration to attend the event is open now at www.dfccva.org.

“The City of Falls Church today is a community that exists online as well as in our schools, neighborhoods and businesses,” said Edie Smolinski, co-president of the League of Women Voters of Falls Church. “Deliberation Falls Church uses dialogue to frame the issues and promote community action,” said Richard Maynard of the Citizens for a Better City.

Training in moderator skills will be offered to adult volunteers on December 8-9 and later to George Mason High School student volunteers. The training is offered by

experts from the Center for Voter Deliberation and the National Issues Forum Institute (NIFI). Adults may register for the December training by filling out an online registration form at www.dfccva.org.

Falls Church organizations are supported in the development of “Deliberation Day” by the Center for Voter Deliberation which works to educate the public on the importance of participation in political life, and to involve community youth in that effort. Its practice and research focuses on deliberative democracy, which bridges the gap between consensus decision-making and representative democracy. For more information, visit www.centerforvoterdeliberation.org.

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