

OPINION

Letters To The Editor

Ebony Rezoning/Dollar General litigation update

To the Editor:

BACKGROUND

This fight started three years ago (2019) when a landowner in Ebony accepted an offer to purchase from a development company looking to build a Dollar General that was contingent on the land in a largely rural, residential/agricultural community being rezoned from A-1 Agriculture to B-1 Business to accommodate the store requirements. Per Subdivision Ordinances that reflect the Comprehensive Plan, business is intentionally controlled in an A-1 district via a Conditional Use Permit to insure there is no damage to the character and well-being of the impacted community.

This change was not aligned with the Comprehensive Plan and Virginia statutes and completely disregarded the negative impacts to the community. This is a classic example of unchecked, destructive over-development in a protected area that proper enforcement of zoning and land use management are intended to prevent and entrusted to the County leadership to enforce.

With prevailing opposition voiced through public hearings for both the Planning Commission meeting and Board of Supervisors meeting and throughout the extended community across the county, the latter ultimately approved on Jan. 29, 2020 the rezoning with a split vote 3-2 where the 3rd vote in favor was a tiebreaker and was against the position of the home Supervisor. An appeal on behalf of the opposition and sponsored by adjacent landowners as Petitioners was filed on Feb. 28, 2020. Litigation has been ongoing ever since – being delayed at the beginning because of Covid.

Efforts by the County to have the case dismissed with a Demurrer failed – paving the way to trial – because of the substance of petitioners' claims. Multiple offers to settle and stop the litigation were rejected by the County. The County's expenditure to defend their vote and 1 possible Dollar General location in all of Brunswick County approaches \$150,000.

UPDATE

A Motion for Summary Judgment to avoid trial was filed by the County and heard in Brunswick Circuit Court on June 3, 2022. The parties received the ruling in early August that was in favor of the County – largely dismissing the claims of the Petitioners that had survived the Demurrer. The latter was ruled upon by a different judge.

After assessing the options and in conjunction with expanded research in term of how other Counties enforce the Comprehensive Plan, the Petitioners have filed a Notice of Appeal with the Virginia Court of Appeals. There is simply too much at stake to stop the fight. The Petitioners' case is based on the County's decision being misaligned with Comprehensive Plan and statutes.

We still want to believe the judicial system should care about these issues and uphold the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan and associated legal statutes that should be followed when making zoning decisions, since it is the state who has mandated the creation and administration of the Comprehensive Plan at great expense to the Counties.

MORE INFORMATION AND TO SUPPORT

For more information about the background, litigation, and how to donate to the legal fund for the opposition, please visit <https://keepebonycountry.org/>. And stay connected via the Facebook page: Keep Ebony Country

The best way to support this fight is through donations. If you can help and want to add your support, please make check to "Keep Ebony Country Fund" and mail to Keep Ebony Country, c/o Kay Whitehead, PO Box 36, Ebony, VA 23845.

Sincerely,

Anne and Al Hartley
Ebony Preservation Group



FROM THE DESK OF



SENATOR
FRANK RUFF

Swan Song for Colleges?

In the last three decades, many have been concerned about the direction of our colleges. Despite that, we as parents have encouraged our youth to attend college to broaden their opportunities in life.

A college diploma tells employers that a young person is capable of accomplishing some goals and, therefore, might be worth giving a chance as an employee.

Often, however, unless the student was focused on an employable skill, that job may not have been in the realm in which the student studied. Since many young people start college with limited knowledge of what careers might be available to them, this has not been unusual.

Some of those have never considered the opportunity that may or may not be available in their course of study. They hope to keep their dreams alive despite limited opportunities. Often, because of too many applicants for available positions, they pay poorly, too poorly to pay student loans and sustain the lifestyle that they wish to maintain.

Other young people are unsuccessful as college students. It may be because they were unprepared academically or they were too busy socially to study as needed. The end results for those students often have been that they have no degree, but they are burdened with debt to repay.

Biden's Giveaway

This leads us to President Biden's decision to pay a portion of a student's debt off, to the tune of up to \$20,000 for some. There are many flaws with his decision to take this action.

1. There is no authority for a President to make a spending decision that has not been approved by Congress. This President knew this, yet he acted, claiming that he was using excess funds from Covid, while at the same time ending free Covid test kits.
2. It is unethical for those who committed to repay

loaned funds for their own education to demand that the taxpayers now have a responsibility to pay any of those students' loans. Taxpayers that have either not gone to college or attended and fulfilled their commitment to repay those loans.

3. It creates a mentality of people that they are not responsible for that which they are obligated. \$10,000 or \$20,000 this time, then maybe more in future years. Likewise, if society owes them an education, then would it not lead them to believe that an expensive car or house should also be provided to them?

4. It will drive greater inflation. A young lady was interviewed by the Richmond Times Dispatch. When asked how she would deal with the \$20,000 windfall, she stated that she could buy a new car, travel, or maybe run up greater debt by getting her doctorate degree. She didn't consider a faster plan to pay off the \$64,000 remainder of her student loan. The same thought process will be held by many. They will feel free to spend money freely when their incomes might not justify such spending.

5. It will drive up the cost of college education for those students that are currently enrolled or future students. Universities have had no reason to control expenses in the past. This has been driven by the ease in which students can get loans. We are now seeing that many young people have no idea how much debt they are accumulating or how it will be repaid. School administrations, seeing how easy it has been to lobby for debt forgiveness, will feel free to raise tuition and fees, fully expecting the taxpayers will be stuck with the bill.

Better Methods

We need to offer young people a better understanding of their options of a successful future. Skills training can be very rewarding financially.

We need to reconsider how loans are offered. Look back to the period in which education loans were a function of banks and compare that to the years since, when Sallie Mae started offering unsecured loans.

This cycle of never-ending tuition increases didn't occur overnight. It has increased exponentially in recent years and will continue to do so if we do not have a major overhaul of higher education.

If we are to forgive loan repayments, then there must be a commitment for recipients to do things such as take teaching jobs that are unfilled as we enter a school year.

We love to hear from you! You can reach us at [Sen. Ruff@verizon.net](mailto:Sen.Ruff@verizon.net), 434-374-5129 or P.O. Box 332, Clarksville, VA 23927.

Brunswick STEW

by Mark Evans



Remembering Saint Paul's College

Good morning, Brunswick County. When Cindy and I first moved to Lawrenceville, back in 1984, we were delighted to learn that there were two colleges in the county, Southside Virginia Community College, and St. Paul's College.

We did not know, at that time, when our oldest child was just about to start kindergarten, how much those two institutions would influence our family and the positive impact they had had and were having on the community.

I would like to direct my comments today to St. Paul's College.

As we began to become acquainted with college administrators, teachers, and students both in the dental office, and in public settings, we were launched into a world we had never seen before.

Both Cindy and I had attended universities and seen institutions of higher learning from a student's perspective, but listening to professors and deans revealed the fascinating web of education, finance, human resources, accreditation, and tenure.

For some reason, the dental chair seems to remove speech restrictions in many people.

We got to hear the good, the bad, and the ugly. Deep secrets of the education underworld (is there such a thing) were revealed. Interactions between administration and staff were openly discussed.

Wars and rumors of wars.

And plenty of "Did you know?"s. (I'm not really sure how to properly punctuate that semi-sentence but you get the message.)

All of this led to a greater appreciation for the battles that teachers face when dealing with poor administrators, and the battles that administrators face when dealing with poor teachers.

And we prayed for them all.

As our children started high school, they began to have more direct interaction with those two colleges. To our great delight, the Governor's School of Southside Virginia was organized with students from 4 local school systems testing into participation and then a select few students from each school system meeting together each morning alternately on either the Alberta campus of SVCC or on the St. Paul's campus.

This program was a great blessing to our children.

And we became more grateful for the modernized classrooms.

We watched as the St. Paul's Department of Education produced excellent school principals, teachers, and office staff. We also saw other young people use the college as a wonderful stepping stone to even higher education.

And so it was with great sadness that we heard the news that St. Paul's would be closing, though it was not a surprise as our "informants" had been detailing the corrupt handling of finances and the uninspired student recruitment policies of several presidents over a span of several years.

The college buildings are now in a sad state of decay (and you know how I feel about decay) that brings a tear to the eye.

And then, a few weeks ago, I became aware of the St. Paul's museum upstairs in the Thomasson Building (where the DMV office and the bowling alley are.).

Cindy and I called Mr. Grimstead, the museum curator, for an appointment to visit.

It was a delightful experience.

And it was especially fun to see pictures of and the names of people we knew. Some of them dental patients that we had visited with 35+ years ago.

Happily, the museum's emphasis is on the positive, the good that James Solomon Russell's dream brought to Southside Virginia and to the world. The newspaper clippings, the journals, the class pictures, and the reproductions all helped us feel and sense the greatness of his vision.

It made us smile.

You will, too.

And here's a shout out for recent efforts to keep the spirit of St. Paul's going today.

Will St. Paul's College be rebuilt some day?

I think it would take another great leader like James Solomon Russell, someone who cares more for the future

See STEW, page 5

Letters to the Editor

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