

NEWS

Planning tables vote on rezoning request Residents oppose Dollar General coming to Ebony

BY SYLVIA ALLEN
Brunswick Times-Gazette

The battle lines are drawn between those in favor of a Dollar General being built on Ebony Road in Ebony and residents who oppose the project.

The Brunswick County Planning Commission held a public hearing, a request submitted by Par 5 Development Group, LLC to rezone 8.36 acres owned by Jerry Michael and Susan Royster Jones from Agricultural (A-1) to Business (B-1). Approximately 2.04 acres of the parcel will be developed for the project. The Commission deferred voting on the request until the December meeting in order to get information from the Virginia Department of Transportation regarding sight distance requirements. In a letter dated Nov. 7, 2019 C. Todd Cage, Land Development Engineer, Southern Regional Land Development, Richmond District, said, "The subject commercial site and entrance will be required to meet Access Management Regulations due to Rte. 903, Ebony Road being classified as a rural major collector. The commercial entrance will be required to have 335 feet of intersection spacing and 500 feet of sight distance in both directions. We highly recommend the applicant make sure he can meet these regulations before proceeding."

The meeting will be held Tuesday, Dec. 10 at 7:30 p.m. at the Brunswick County Government Building, 228 North Main Street.

According to information provided by Director of Planning George E. Morrison, III, the subject property is located on the east sides of Ebony Road (State Route 903), across from the intersection of Hendricks Mill Road (State Route 903) and Robinson Ferry Road (State Route 644) in the Meherrin Election and Magisterial Districts.

Kerry Hutcheson with Dollar General said the project would yield approximately \$1.5 million in construction costs. He further stated local contractors would be used when possible. Hutcheson reviewed Dollar General's history of donating approximately \$127 million to non-profit organizations. He said the project would include 6 to 8 full time jobs. Dollar General also offered to use a brick front on the building to bring it in line with the existing Ebony Volunteer Fire Department building. Hutcheson also said Dollar General supports a literacy foundation.

Hutcheson also said Dollar General would consider planting Cypress trees to block the view from Prospect United Methodist Church located next door or installing a fence.

Jerry Jones spoke in favor of the project saying it would be a good fit for Ebony. He was pleased Dollar General would use local contractors.

Tony Conner, who owns property in Ebony, spoke in opposition to the project. He questioned being able to have the 500 feet sight distance.

Conner said the Comprehensive Plan does not list Ebony as a potential site for economic development. He said there are only telephone and electric lines as infrastructure, Ebony is not an incorporated town

and residents want to retain the quaint character of the community. Conner said that in his opinion this should be considered spot zoning and also called attention to the closeness of the proposed facility to the church and cemetery.

Richard Beville spoke in favor of the project saying it will bring jobs and revenue to Brunswick County. He favors the project because it will increase economic development.

Bobby Conner who lives in Ebony spoke in opposition to the project. He said for the past 20 years he has worked with the county and other organizations to increase tourism in the county by improving existing assets such as Fort Christanna and creating new ones such as the Brunswick Byways Visitor Center, the James Solomon Russell/Saint Paul's College Museum and Archives and having the Meherrin River designated as a State Scenic River. Conner said another project was having Highway 46 and Highway 626, and Highway 903, which both run through Ebony, designed as Virginia Byways. Virginia Byways are roads that represent an exceptional example of a common regional landscape and have reasonable protection for aesthetic and cultural values.

Conner said in the 2037 Brunswick County Comprehensive Plan tourism plays a prominent role in the county's future. The plan states that tourism is an asset particularly in scenic, rural regions of the county that offers outdoor recreation and cultural assets.

The plan, said Conner, goes on to say that from a tourism perspective, visitors want to experience the "authentic" local culture of a destination, such as art, history, music, local crafts, traditions, local food, architecture, religion and distinctive leisure activities. The cultural, heritage and natural assets of Brunswick County make it very attractive for tourism.

Conner said the Ebony area is unique in that it has not changed much over the last 100 plus years and that is what attracts tourists and new residents to the Ebony/Lake Gaston area. He called attention to its open spaces, natural resources and history and it currently offers what the Comprehensive Plan states is what visitors want.

Conner expressed concern about lighting for this project. He said in the proposal Par 5 Development says they will provide night sky friendly lighting that will not provide spill over or glare onto other adjacent properties. There are many types and classes of night sky friendly lighting. Some work and others not as well and the application does not directly address the specific kind of night sky lighting except to say that it will be night sky friendly.

Conner said his last concern was traffic. The proposed property to be rezoned sits almost directly across from the intersection of Hendricks Mill Road, Ebony Road, and Robinson Ferry Road. He said almost 75% of the cars that get to the stop sign, treat the sign as a yield sign rather than a stop.

"This coupled with the entrance to Ebony General which is directly across the road from the proposed property to be rezoned. There is

not a standard entrance or exit from Ebony General. The store has been at this location for 50 years and the entire parking lot is open as an entrance and exit across from the proposed rezoning. There are over 1500 cars a day according to VDOT's 2018 traffic count that travel this road and the combination of the intersection, the driveway at Ebony General and the new entrance to Dollar General all right in close proximity will create problems," Conner stated.

Earl Jarrell, a member of the Planning Commission, said motorists not stopping at the stop sign are breaking the law, which is a safety factor regardless of whether Dollar General builds a facility.

Conner agreed but restated that adding an entrance to an already congested area is a safety concern.

Fredrick Harrison, also a member of the planning commission, said that the fact that cars don't stop at the stop sign should never have been brought up at the public hearing and wasn't something that should be considered.

Valerie Zubrod said she has lived in Ebony for approximately 35 years and opposes building a Dollar General. She called attention to the Dollar General located in Gasburg and another in Bracey. She expressed concern that Dollar General would hurt Ebony General Store and 903 Raceway, the two stores in Ebony.

Melissa Brewer who operates 903 Slip In said she opposed Dollar General coming to Ebony. She said if the store comes it might result in two vacant buildings She said her store and Ebony General offer their customers great service

Sarah Moseley said she and her husband own property in the Ebony area and is using some of the property adjacent to this project as sustainable organic farming. She said Ebony is descriptive of Brunswick County and Southside Virginia calling attention to the social interaction not found in generic Dollar General stores. She opposed the rezoning request and said she didn't want Ebony to become a cookie cutter strip mall.

Patricia Conner voiced opposition to the rezoning request. She said her late husband Robert Conner served on the Brunswick County Board of Supervisors and Brunswick County Planning Commission for 20 years. She said Ebony is a unique community and feels that uniqueness should be preserved. Conner also expressed concern about the close proximity of the proposed business to Prospect United Methodist Church and cemetery and the increase in traffic.

Anne Hartley, who is an adjacent property owner, presented a booklet to members of the Planning Commission with parts of the Comprehensive Plan highlighted for their review. She also provided information about the negative impact Dollar General stores can have on a community. Hartley called attention to the proliferation of Dollar General stores and asked the members to consider the big picture. She is also chair of the Prospect Cemetery Association and feels this

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Lake Happenings

Nov. 29, Post 308 Monthly Dinner, 6:00 p.m., 217 Mitchell Street, Littleton, N.C. All members are urged to attend, by order of the Post Commander.

Dec. 2, Northampton County Board of Commissioners Meeting, 6 p.m., Board of Commissioners Meeting Room, JW Faison 9495 NC-305, Jackson, N.C.

Dec. 4, LGA Monthly Meeting, 9:30 a.m., at Lake Gaston Baptist Church, Hwy 903 across from Subway Restaurant. The speaker will be Lake Gaston realtor Barney Watson from Re/Max on the Lake. Open to members and non-members. For more information contact info@lakegastonassoc.com or call 252-586-6577 or toll free 888-586-6577.

Dec. 6 & 7, Wreath Making Workshops, Friday Evening (Dec. 6): 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.; Saturday Morning (Dec. 7): 9-11 a.m.; Saturday Afternoon (Dec. 7): 1-3 p.m., Halifax County Agriculture Center, 359 Ferrell Lane, Halifax, N.C. Sign up early for a fun holiday event. Space is limited. Fresh greens, materials and instruction will be provided to make a beautiful wreath. Light refreshments. Cost is \$20 per person. Call the Halifax County Agriculture Center at (252) 583-5161 to register and reserve a space. Bring a pair of gardening gloves and your favorite clippers to the workshop (or purchase gloves at workshop.)

Dec. 6, 7, 13, 14 & Dec. 15 (matinee), Lakeland Cultural Arts Center presents Christmas Belles, 411 Mosby Ave., Littleton, N.C. Doors open at 7:30 p.m for evening performance and at 1:45 on Dec. 15 for matinee. Visit lakelandcac.org for tickets or call 252-586-3124 ext. 3.

Dec. 7, Littleton Christmas Parade, 11 a.m., Starting at Lakeland Theatre on Mosby Ave., turning right onto S. Main St. (Hwy 158) to Piggly Wiggly. Line up starts at 10 a.m. For more information about participating in the Parade call (252) 586-6169.

Dec. 7, Quill Theatre presents Infamy: Pearl Harbor, 7p.m., Brunswick High School, 2171 Lawrenceville Plank Rd., Lawrenceville, Va. Student tickets \$5.00; adult tickets \$15. Experience the sights and sounds of December 7, 1941. For additional information aboutsouthsideva@live.com or (434) 577-2833.

Dec. 7, Ebony Vol. Fire Dept. BINGO, 7p.m., 497 Robinson Ferry Road, Ebony, Va. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. The cost is \$10 for a pack of fifteen games, six cards per sheet. Additional packs will be sold for \$5. This event will be an all cash payout. The grand jackpot will be \$500 cash. Children seven and older may play Bingo if they are accompanied by an adult. You must be 18 or older to purchase or play Pull-Tab Games. Hamburgers, hotdogs, french fries, chips, homemade cake and pie and drinks will be sold before and during Bingo. For more information, call Chuck King at 434-917-5043.

Dec. 8, Roanoke Rapids Christmas Parade, 2 p.m., Roanoke Avenue, Roanoke Rapids, N.C. Donated canned goods to be given to the Angel's Closet for Christmas. These will be accepted at T.J. Davis Recreation Center.

Dec. 13, Christmas at the Canal, 6-8 p.m., The Roanoke Canal Museum and Trail, 15 Jackson St. Extension, Roanoke Rapids, N.C. Bring your children out to the museum for a night of games, crafts and refreshments. Have your picture taken with Santa and Mrs. Claus. This is a totally Free event. For more information call 252-537-2769.

Dec. 21, Lakeland Singers Winter Concert, 7:30 p.m., 411 Mosby Ave., Littleton, N.C. A special holiday concert with a special appearance by the Gastonettes. Tickets are 16 for adults and \$9 for students. Visit lakelandcac.org for tickets or call 252-586-3124 ext. 3.

Repeat Events

Alcoholics Anonymous meets each Friday at 8 p.m. at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, 210 North Main Street, Warrenton, NC 27589. For more information or questions, please call 252-456-3404.

BINGO every Thursday, doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Roanoke Wildwood Vol. Fire Dept., 790 Lizard Creek Rd., Littleton. Games begin at 7:30 p.m. The kitchen is open. Proceeds benefit the fire department.

BUNCO at 7 p.m., the first Tuesday of each month, Central Rescue Squad Bldg., 5736 Gasburg Rd., Gasburg, Va., sponsored by Ladies of the Lake Cancer Support Team. For more information email ladieslkg@gmail.com.

G.E.D. Classes 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Tuesdays at John 3:16 Center, 407 East End Ave., Littleton. There is no fee for the class. Lunch is provided. Call 252-586-1800 for more information. Other times by appointment, as needed by students.

Grief Support Jo Story Senior Center, 701 Jackson St., Roanoke Rapids. Second Thursday of each month. Kelly Bradshaw leads the group. For information call 252-533-2849.

Lake Country AI-Anon Family Group meets at 7 p.m. every Wednesday at Prospect United Methodist Church, 1974 Ebony Road, Ebony Va.

Lake Gaston Computer Club meets second Tuesday of the month at 1 p.m. at the Lion's Den, 139 Stanley Rd., Henrico N.C. Visit the website at lakegastoncc.org.

Lake Gaston Piecemakers Quilt Guild meets at 10 a.m. every second Wednesday monthly at Prospect United Methodist Church, 1974 Ebony Rd., Ebony, 252-578-7480.

Lake Gaston Lions Club meets 7 p.m. second and fourth Monday monthly, 139 Stanley Rd., Henrico. e-clubhouse.org/sites/lakegastoncc.

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Candidate filing to begin in Northampton County

Candidates seeking party primary nominations for State and County offices can file notices beginning Monday, December 2 at noon with the Northampton County Board of Elections.

Candidates cannot file for a party primary other than what is listed in the registration system.

Candidates must be affiliated with their party for at least 90 days prior to the filing date.

At the time of filing a notice of candidacy, each candidate must pay to the Board of Elections a filing fee.

Filing will begin no earlier than Monday, December 2 at noon and end on Friday, December 20 at noon. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Board of Elections office at 252-534-5681.