

OPINION

Letters To The Editor

Resident defends opposition to solar projects

To the Editor:

At November’s board meeting, a citizen lamented that the county has seen no growth for decades. I can’t argue that. However, he endorsed the development of solar facilities as a means to financially enrich the county and, because of my position on solar, admonished me to do my homework. I hope that anyone who has heard me speak over the past two years knows that I do my homework. Many counties are finding that the financial rewards assured by developers are not coming to fruition; conversely, the negative consequences associated with these facilities are becoming apparent. Further, the jobs these solar developers claim their projects will create don’t equate to the number of employed people. One person may be hired to complete several jobs. Long-term, full-time employment is almost nonexistent. Sometimes the minimal short-term financial gain as the result of siting agreements pales in comparison to the problems created. Perhaps this is why so many counties

are putting a halt to future solar development. If solar is such a fantastic proposition, why introduce moratoriums or void solar ordinances? Patrick County has revoked its solar ordinance, Caroline County repealed its solar ordinance, Greenville County has amended its solar ordinance such that agricultural land can no longer be used, Mecklenburg County has voted for a moratorium, and Dinwiddie County has proclaimed it is a farming community and not a solar farming community. These counties and others not named have experienced the negatives associated with solar development and have acted accordingly. Will Brunswick County learn from the experiences of its neighbors, or will it jeopardize the health, safety, and welfare of its residents and inflict both known and unknown risks upon the environment all in hopes of raking in unguaranteed revenues?

Ann Moore
Lawrenceville, Virginia

Ebony rezoning/Dollar General litigation ends: Good news and bad news

To the Editor:

The litigation has come to an end five years since the first Panning Commission meeting in November 2019 focused on a rezoning application to allow a Dollar General to be built in the heart of Ebony’s historic center. There was much opposition from the very beginning and throughout the final 3/2 split decision by the Brunswick County Board of Supervisors at the end of January 2020 – that overruled the home district supervisor! The appeal was filed a month later.

GOOD NEWS

The good news is that Ebony is STILL Country and the property (which was ILLEGALLY subdivided by not following the process) was never sold by the owner and there is no Dollar General in Ebony! We also benefited from the duration of the litigation in two other ways: 1) a new Dollar General is now being built just over four miles away and 2) the Virginia Department of Historic Resources has classified the Ebony area as eligible for the Virginia Register of Historic Places.

Sadly, the County chose to spend in excess of \$200,000 to defend a single Dollar General location and to maintain a position not to align with the Comprehensive Plan and statutes. You may recall from earlier updates that the Board refused repeated offers to stop the litigation by just reversing the rezoning which would have also put the County in alignment with statutes, Comprehensive Plans, and zoning ordinances.

BAD NEWS

The bad news is that Ebony still remains vulnerable to other incompatible business development because the rezoned property remains rezoned as B-1 Business without any notification to the community and is still owned by someone who has a clear vision to bring detrimental business development to the location without concern for the negative consequences and which violates statutes. The County gave up its control by approving the rezoning - so as long as a proposed business is aligned with B-1 requirements they have to approve it.

THE SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA

The Supreme Court of Virginia refused to accept our case and simply sustained the ruling of the Virginia Court

of Appeals who rubber stamped the Brunswick Circuit Court’s Summary Judgment that in and of itself was not legally proper to use in this case. The requirements for a Summary Judgment to be legitimate were not met. The Judicial system turned a blind eye to all of our evidence to the contrary and ruled the requirements were met.

We stayed in the game to allow the Virginia Supreme Court to say whether or not the laws mean anything and hoped they would appreciate the opportunity to rectify the sad precedent that has been set by the rulings on these cases. While we were not surprised with the Brunswick Circuit Court and even the Virginia Court of Appeals, we are surprised and disappointed in the Supreme Court of Virginia. But we have our answer, they don’t seem to care - and we can be confident we did all that we could.

By sustaining the County’s arguments, the Judicial system is allowing the statutes created by the Virginia General Assembly to be severely undermined by obscure, nuanced case law - and largely discounted our arguments and evidence that so many laws were being circumvented. And even in conflict with other rulings.

WHAT’S NEXT

We are planning to contact local representatives of the General Assembly to alert them how their statutes for Land Use Management have been severely undermined by case law and largely ineffective. And also, how local government is being afforded “home rule” over “Dillon Rule” with the latter being the standard of governance for the Commonwealth. It stipulates that local government is bound by the legislature and can’t make up their own rules. They may choose to revisit and strengthen the statutes to compensate.

SIGNING OFF - WE CAN ALL BE PROUD

We can all be proud as a community to know that we did everything we could to rectify the wrong - to Keep Ebony Country - and make proper zoning work as intended throughout the county.

We wish everyone a happy holiday season!

Anne and Al Hartley
On behalf of Ebony Preservation Group
Keep Ebony Country

How Brunswick adopted a former NFL football player and children’s book author

By Alyssa Hutton
Capital News Service

RICHMOND - Super Bowl champion Malcolm Mitchell knows how to move a ball down the field, but what he is most proud of is his ability to inspire children to read.

Mitchell did not have much interest in education growing up; he set his goals with his athleticism in mind, particularly with a focus on football. The talented wide receiver was recruited by several colleges and would eventually be drafted by the New England Patriots in 2016, who he helped win a Super Bowl the following year. He was released from the team in 2018 due to an injury.

“Because I grew up in an under-resourced community, the idea that education could take you very far, was quite far-fetched,” Mitchell said.

Mitchell attended the University of Georgia, located in Athens.

“But once I arrived to campus, I immediately realized that my perspective, that sports was the only way, was

incorrect,” Mitchell said. “That I could actually use my brain and some critical thinking skills.”

Mitchell decided to become a better reader. While at a bookstore in Georgia, Mitchell struck up a conversation with Kathy Rackley, and discovered she was in a book club. He joined the book club, comprised of women in the age 40-60 range.

He published his first book “The Magician’s Hat” the same year he was drafted by the Patriots, and then established the nonprofit Share the Magic Foundation.

Through the foundation, Mitchell hopes to increase a child’s access to print books, improve reading interest and enhance reading skills. He travels to schools and reads his books to the students. His favorite to read is “The Magician’s Hat,” but his other books are “My Very Favorite Book in the Whole Wide World” and “Hey, Georgia.”

Mitchell signed a three-book deal in 2017 with Scholastic, a children’s book publishing company. He has

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Medicare open enrollment is
Oct. 15, 2024 – Dec. 7, 2024.

Lake Country Area Agency on Aging has certified Medicare Counselors on staff. Counselors provide FREE unbiased, confidential information. They are trained to help you understand and compare plans. We serve Brunswick, Mecklenburg and Halifax Counties. We are here to help you! Call (434) 447-7661 today to set up an appointment. Counseling sessions can include but not limited to Medicare Initial Enrollment, Medicare Part D, Medicare Advantage Plans and Medicare Supplemental Plans.

State, federal sexual assault bills to better protect students in limbo

By Anna West
VCU Capital News Service

RICHMOND - Federal and state lawmakers have introduced legislation to strengthen support for and better protect sexual assault victims on college campuses, but the progress has been stagnant.

A congressional bill introduced by a Virginia senator previously died and was reintroduced, but it is still in committee.

A bill in the General Assembly recently died, with the final decision to kill it happening just months after Liberty University received the largest fine ever issued for breaking the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Act.

S.5086 - SOS Campus Act

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., reintroduced a proposal in September after an earlier version died in the last session of Congress. This bill amends the Higher Education Act of 1965, which, among other things, created the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Act.

The act requires higher education institutions to provide support for victims of violent crimes and to make publicly available campus crime statistics and institutional policies for campus safety, according to the Clery Center.

Kaine’s bill would require schools that receive federal funding to appoint an advocate, independent of the institution, who guides victims of sexual assault throughout the process. This would include better connection to available resources, emotional counseling and protection for the student from more harm – such as disciplinary action or penalization for reporting the incident.

The bill requires the advocate to report incidents to an investigative body and submit an annual report to the learning institution with the number of victims and how each resource was used.

The SOS Campus Act was referred to the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, according to Kaine.

The inspiration for the legislation is to protect the rights of students to feel safe on campus, according to Kaine.

“That’s why I’ve worked on legislation, including the SOS Campus Act, to prevent sexual assault and support survivors,” Kaine stated. “I will keep working to garner support among my colleagues for the SOS Campus Act and work to get it passed and signed into law.”

HB 369 - Sexual Misconduct Policies and Task Force

Del. Marty Martinez, D-Loudoun, introduced House Bill 369, which had similar objectives to Kaine’s bill, to update sexual misconduct policies and increase accountability for institutions.

The bill was introduced in the 2024 General Assembly session, but a Rules subcommittee continued the bill to the 2025 session. The bill was officially left in that committee on Nov. 18, effectively killing it.

The bill would create a task force which produced an annual climate survey, install a crisis center, establish a designated confidential adviser on all campuses and impose civil penalties for institutions that violate the proposed guidelines.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia would appoint the task force, whose charge would be to create a base sexual misconduct campus climate survey, according to SCHEV communications director Bob

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Letters to the Editor

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Sylvia Allen
MANAGING EDITOR
sallen@womackpublishing.com



Amy Elliott
OFFICE MANAGER
aelliott@womackpublishing.com



Dennis Smith
SPORTS WRITER
(434) 774-4488
dennis.smith@southside.edu



Randy Velvin
GENERAL MANAGER
SALES REPRESENTATIVE
rvelvin@womackpublishing.com

NEWS ARTICLES: sallen@womackpublishing.com
CLASSIFIEDS: aelliott@womackpublishing.com

ADVERTISING: rvelvin@womackpublishing.com
DRIVER: Forrest Phillips

