

# OPINION

## Letters To The Editor

### Thank you for standing up to preserve Ebony, perseverance is key

To the Editor:

We wish to express our great appreciation for all who are standing for preserving Ebony by opposing rezoning and Dollar General. In particular, the many voices of opposition (16-18), petition signatures from both local stores, and overall attendance that overflowed the room at the Brunswick County Planning Commission public hearing on Nov. 12, 2019 were heard and made an impact. Only three spoke in favor: Dollar General, the landowner, and one other resident from the community.

At the Nov. 12, 2019 Planning Commission meeting a motion was made, seconded, and then tabled denying the application based on non-compliance with current zoning regulations. In addition it is not aligned with current or future land use of the Ebony community defined in the Brunswick County Comprehensive Plan 2037 ("2037 Plan") that keeps Ebony as it is: Country. This classification is described as Agricultural, Forestry, and Rural Residential.

Ultimately the Commission elected to defer the vote in order to get an analysis from Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) on whether the proposed Dollar General plan would meet traffic management and safety requirements. The next opportunity for the Planning Commission to revisit the vote will be at the December 10 meeting. It has been confirmed they will vote.

The Board of Supervisors' (BOS) vote that will follow the Planning Commission vote will determine the final outcome — regardless of how the Planning Commission votes. Once this has passed to the BOS, a second public hearing will be scheduled. It is important that our opposition voices and turnout match and even exceed the Planning Commission public hearing. This is anticipated to be at the BOS January meeting.

What Is At Stake:

The proposed rezoning will essentially redefine Ebony and destroy the historic integrity, rural authenticity, and community pride that inspired a community-written Ebony history book (compiled from 1987 – 1993, published in 1993), as well as private investment to fix up the historic structures to preserve the legacy and charm; this will also introduce the possibility of a business corridor all the way to the historic Prospect Cemetery and Church; not consistent with the 2037 Plan.

While the immediate scrutiny is the proposed incompatible Dollar General, other incompatible business opportunities will come along in the future.

With respect to Dollar General:

Bringing in Dollar General will put the two community stores at risk; they are already serving the community and have become favorite gathering places of locals as well as Lake Gaston population and tourists; there are two other

Dollar Generals within 10 miles as well as Family Dollar and Food Lion that are just 6.5 miles away.

Dollar General's aggressive business model targets rural America, in particular, where there tends to be no or lax land management practices; there is now push back occurring across the country that looks at the true need, whether it is a fit for the location, and the overall cost and benefit to the community. Profits primarily go back to the corporate entity.

What happens if Dollar General is allowed in and then the volume of business does not materialize? At that point the land is already zoned business and the seller will not care who buys and what they plan to do as a business. There is a long list of compliant businesses that could be pursued with little to no county oversight or approval process.

We hope that Brunswick County leadership will choose to look at the whole picture in making its final decision to do what is best for now and the future. This decision will set a precedent for Ebony and Brunswick County as a whole.

Will we indiscriminately choose to convert agricultural land to business in pursuit of economic development in a vacuum or will we consider the bigger picture? The latter approach would pursue the right kind of business development in the right place while preserving our heritage, historic connections, unspoiled rural setting, sustained agricultural future, and scenic landscapes – in alignment with the 2037 Plan.

Quoting from the Preface of "A History of the Ebony, Virginia Area": Just as the people highlighted in this book were responsible for bringing our community together, the people of the present and future generations will be responsible for continuing the traditions of the past and meeting the challenges of the future. As long as people strive on, the legacy will continue.

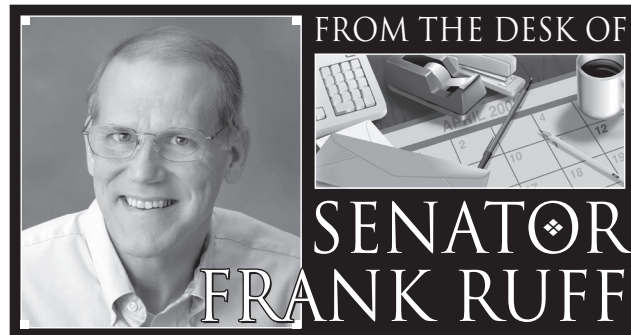
Quoting from the Epilogue of "A History of the Ebony, Virginia Area": We can proudly say that the community of Ebony is ready to face a new century with the best of the old and the best of the new.

Together, we must strive for the best of the new. Please stay tuned to upcoming public hearings and attend if at all possible. There are also petitions at both stores in Ebony. The next Planning Commission meeting is Dec. 10 at 7:30 p.m. at the Brunswick County Government Building, 228 North Main Street, Lawrenceville. It has been confirmed that they will vote at that meeting.

We thank you for your time and greatly appreciate all support to Keep Ebony Country.

Wishing you and yours a happy Thanksgiving,

**Anne Hartley**  
On behalf of the Ebony Preservation Group  
KeepEbonyCountry@gmail.com



### For What Should We Be Thankful

Over the last decade or so we have, as a nation, moved away from why Thanksgiving Day was established. Many now are planning that day around shopping on Thursday to get the best deals for the Black Friday shopping weekend. Others are planning the big family meal around football or other sports events. That is the right of each family and their priorities. It does, however, take the next generation one step further away from a tradition of reflecting on that for which we should be most thankful. Considering all the problems that we have as a society today, it seems to me that we should, during these times, make Thanksgiving more focused on prayer and hope rather than less.

Please consider planning now how your family can set aside at least some time Thursday to give your thanks in prayer to all that you have as well as pray for all our future.

#### Common Sense

Include in that prayer a call for common sense in all our interactions with others, including those in our government. That common sense was what made this nation and state strong.

Recently, someone sent me an email that focused on some of the basic things that we grew up with that define common sense.

Certainly, being able understand that it is good to know when to come in out of the rain is one of those. Likewise, the same could be said about going ahead and getting a job done, often referred to as "the early bird gets the worm". This phrase was often used when our parents were trying to get us going to get the job done; and the world will notice and reward you. Understanding that it is a positive to admit that sometimes things are your fault and that life is not always fair, so accept it. In your financial dealings, always watch what you are earning and don't spend more than that.

In recent years, we have watched as common sense has been eroded all around us. The following are some examples of things that would never have been acceptable in earlier generations.

Parents attacking teachers for doing the job they themselves have failed to do by not disciplining their unruly children. Schools charging a six-year-old boy with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate. Teens being suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch. Teachers being reprimanded and even fired for disciplining unruly students. Another example of not using common sense is when administrators must have permission from parents to allow a student to have an aspirin, much less take one, yet are barred from informing parents when a student is pregnant and wants and seeks to get an abortion.

Law enforcement, likewise, has been handcuffed to give criminals better treatment than victims and law-abiding citizens. Our judicial system sometimes provides options for criminals who can sue you for assault as you try to protect your family in your home.

Loss of common sense can be found in every other phase of our lives whether it be church, youth sports, healthcare, or food packaging. We see our lives tied up in miles of red tape rather than simply getting along with each other and treating each other as friend rather than foe.

Likewise, it seems too many people are unwilling to live their lives responsibly and not blame others. Consider the lady who bought a cup of hot coffee from the McDonald's drive through and placed it between her legs on the seat. When she spilled the coffee, she sued McDonalds even though she was the one who chose to use the drive through; even though she was the one to not use a cupholder. It is you and I who pay the price for her lack of judgement. Other restaurants have had to adjust to avoid similar lawsuits whether it be cooler coffee or more expensive coffee to pay for higher insurance costs.

As the email was sent to me, it was the obituary of Common Sense. It went on to say that Common Sense was preceded in death by his parents - Truth and Trust, his wife - Discretion, his daughter - Responsibility, and his son - Reason.

See RUFF, page 5

## Signup for 2019 Market Facilitation Program

Deadline to enroll is Dec. 6, 2019

Signup is ongoing for the Market Facilitation Program (MFP), a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program to assist farmers who continue to suffer from damages because of unjustified trade retaliation from foreign nations. Through MFP, USDA will provide up to \$14.5 billion in direct payments to impacted producers, part of a broader trade relief package announced in late July. The sign-up period runs through Dec. 6, 2019.

MFP payments will be made to producers of certain non-specialty and specialty crops as well as dairy and hog producers.

#### Non-Specialty Crops

MFP payments will be made to producers of alfalfa hay, barley, canola, corn, crambe, dried beans, dry peas, extra-long staple cotton, flaxseed, lentils, long grain and medium grain rice, millet, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, rapeseed, rye, safflower, sesame seed, small and large chickpeas, sorghum, soybeans, sunflower seed, temperate japonica rice, triticale, upland cotton, and wheat.

MFP assistance for 2019 crops is based on a single county payment rate multiplied by a farm's total plantings to the MFP-eligible crops in aggregate in 2019. Those per acre payments are not dependent on which of those crops are planted in 2019. A producer's total payment-eligible plantings cannot exceed total 2018 plantings.

#### Dairy and Hogs

Dairy producers who were in business as of June 1, 2019, will receive a per hundredweight payment on production history, and hog producers will receive a payment

based on the number of live hogs owned on a day selected by the producer between April 1 and May 15, 2019.

#### Specialty Crops

MFP payments will also be made to producers of almonds, cranberries, cultivated ginseng, fresh grapes, fresh sweet cherries, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pistachios, and walnuts. Each specialty crop will receive a payment based on 2019 acres of fruit or nut bearing plants, or in the case of ginseng, based on harvested acres in 2019.

Payments will be made in up to three tranches, with the second and third tranches evaluated as market conditions and trade opportunities dictate. If conditions warrant, the second and third tranches will be made in November and early January.

MFP payments are limited to a combined \$250,000 for non-specialty crops per person or legal entity. MFP payments are also limited to a combined \$250,000 for dairy and hog producers and a combined \$250,000 for specialty crop producers. However, no applicant can receive more than \$500,000. Eligible applicants must also have an average adjusted gross income (AGI) for tax years 2015, 2016, and 2017 of less than \$900,000, or 75 percent of the person's or legal entity's average AGI for those tax years must have been derived from farming and ranching. Applicants must also comply with the provisions of the Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation regulations.

More information can be found on farmers.gov/mfp, including payment information and a program application.

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### Our Mission: to be a written and visual record of what makes our community special

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