



## Rezoning request sparked controversy

**It was a packed house at the public hearing the Brunswick County Board of Supervisors held on a request to rezone property from Agriculture (A-1) to Business (B-1) in Ebony. The supervisors approved the rezoning request in a 3 to 2 vote. (Sylvia Allen/Brunswick Times-Gazette)**



**ON THE HILL**  
with  
**DENVER RIGGLEMAN**  
U.S. CONGRESSMAN  
#4-05

January 31, 2020

Friends,

Yesterday, I joined President Donald Trump at the White House for the signing of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. The USMCA is a huge win for 5th District.

It will rebalance trade to support local dairy, cattle, and other farmers and give them greater access to markets in Canada and Mexico, who are two of Virginia's largest trading partners, making up almost 25% of total exports. I was happy to join President Trump to see this agreement signed.

The USMCA will help farmers in my district and I am proud to announce I have introduced another bill that will help farmers in the 5th.

The Voluntary Checkoff Program Participation Act will make Department of Agriculture check-off programs voluntary. Check off programs require small farmers to contribute a portion of their income to lobbyists and marketing firms.

Weaponizing regulation to force small farms to pay into a system that might only benefit a large corporation or a middle man and not the farmer is wrong. Farmers shouldn't be made to pay fees for things they don't want.

If these checkoff programs give farmers value they can make the voluntary decision to pay into it- but it should not be mandatory. I am proud to sponsor this bill and will always stand up for 5th District farmers. The gov-

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## Rezoning

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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.

As background the Brunswick County Planning Commission held a public hearing on the request on Tuesday, Nov. 12, 2019. The Planning Commission deferred action on the request until December and at that meeting recommended approval of the rezoning request to the supervisors.

Prior to the vote Tyler said he understood the comments from members of the community. He said he visited the site on Sunday and talked to people who wanted Dollar General to come to Ebony. Tyler said he stopped and talked to people and they wanted Dollar General to come too. He said Brunswick County is advertising that it is Open for Business and said denying the request would go against that claim. Tyler said Dollar General stores are located in Chesterfield and Short Pump and feels the store will help the community.

"I have to vote my convictions and the business will increase the tax base and help take the burden off homeowners. We need to diversify our tax base. Business is good for everybody. Competition is good. Dollar General is not selling gas. I feel this will be good for the community," Tyler said.

Zubrod said he has served on the board for 4 years and his phone has been ringing off the hook with folks expressing opposition to Dollar General. He said he has also received numerous emails in opposition. Zubrod said he has lived in the Ebony area for 36 years and raised his family children and now his grandchildren there. He expressed concern about the increase in traffic, especially at the intersection.

Zubrod said that approximately 10 percent of the people who signed the petition in favor of Dollar General were local signatures. He said the supervisors' vision is to protect the local charm of the county. Zubrod said if the rezoning request is granted, the property value of surrounding properties would likely decrease.

"Ebony is unique. It is historic and picturesque. There are 100 year plus farms in the community. People take pride in their community. I am very concerned about the decline in value of surrounding properties. I make a motion to deny the rezoning request," Zubrod said.

## Citizens voice their opinions

Prior to the vote Kerry Hutcheson with Dollar General called attention to the Open for Business sign he saw coming into Brunswick County. He said the company will invest \$1 million on the project emphasizing that efforts will be made to use local contractors. Hutcheson said the VDOT report shows that traffic will not be a problem and referred to the planning commission's approval of the request. He said Dollar General stores co-exist with local convenience stores in other areas, dispelling fears that Dollar General will hurt existing businesses. Hutcheson said at the last public hearing concern was raised about lighting being intrusive. He said lights will be turned downward and cut off when the stores at 10 p.m. Hutcheson said the gas station located across the street has more lights that take away from the night sky.

Jerry Jones, property owner, said Dollar General will provide job opportunities to citizens. He said he was bothered by the opposition to the store and stopped by houses to ask their opinions. Jones said he visited homes on Tilman Road, Alvis Road, Doctor Purdy Road, Dry Bread Road, Clary Lane, Robinson Ferry Road and Ebony Road and everyone was in favor of the project. Jones said he didn't visit areas who he knew opposed Dollar General. Jones said he wanted to preserve the historic sites in Ebony but is confident that the majority of the people in Ebony are in favor of the project.

Anne Hartley who lives at 42 Robinson Ferry Road and is an adjoining property owner said businesses and agriculture could co-mingle but she feared approving the rezoning request would create a business corridor in Ebony that would be a threat to their way of life. She said Rural Rustic and Agriculture areas should be protected. Hartley called attention to the fact that the proposed building is 9,000 square feet and the Comprehensive Plan limits buildings to 5,000 square feet.

Hartley said the applicant should have been required to obtain a conditional use permit and called this spot zoning. She said there are Dollar General stores located within 10 miles of Ebony and there is a Family Dollar and Ace Hardware.

Hartley said she favors business but the right kind of business. She favors protecting the rare authentic character of the neighborhood.

Hartley questioned the net benefit with the proliferation of these kinds of stores, which leads to low performance. She expressed concern about the traffic and said the revenue gained from Dollar General will benefit the corporation headquartered in Tennessee.

Hartley closed by saying the charm of Ebony will be lost forever. She asked the supervisors to deny the rezoning request to protect the integrity of the area. She strongly opposed the rezoning.

Shelton Jones, Jr. spoke in favor of rezoning saying the business will bring tax dollars to Brunswick County. He said he works in Mecklenburg County and passes by Dollar General Stores and there are also Dollar General stores in North Carolina. Jones said he will still go to convenience stores to buy hot dogs and feels traffic will not be a problem.

Tony Conner, who owns property in Ebony, spoke in

opposition to the rezoning request. He said that he considered the rezoning request spot zoning and should not be approved. He also said that he feels that the rezoning request is not in compliance with the county's zoning ordinances. He further said the zoning ordinances should be followed and not interpreted. He read from both the county zoning ordinance and the 2037 Comprehensive plan to make his points.

Tom King who lives in Gasburg spoke in opposition. He restores historic houses. King urged the supervisors to consider where businesses like this are going. He said people who live near Dollar General stores have to pull their blinds because the light is so bright. King worried about the negative impact Dollar General will have on the community. He said people in South Brunswick alone will not be able to keep Dollar General open and the business will draw people from Lake Gaston.

Elizabeth Nash spoke with emotion in her voice when she talked about visiting the Prospect United Methodist Church Cemetery with her children. She looks forward to the tranquility found at the cemetery that she fears will be lost if traffic in the area increases.

Jerry Jones spoke again and promised to protect the cemetery saying he has loved ones buried there too and will not be developing the adjoining property.

Patricia Baird Conner spoke in opposition to the rezoning request. She said she is the third generation to live in Ebony and her children and grandchildren live in Ebony bringing the total to five generations. Conner said she enjoyed living in Ebony gardening and growing trees. She said it is a quiet community and she hopes it stays that way. Conner expressed concern about the church cemetery and the increase in traffic. She said her late husband Bob Conner served as a supervisor when zoning was introduced and he believed zoning was needed to protect and control the community. She said she owns a Century Farm and the land that Dollar General wants to build on is probably 200 years old. Conner asked the supervisors not to grant the rezoning request and to help preserve the life residents enjoy.

Richard Beville spoke in favor of rezoning. He said Brunswick County needs economic development and will benefit from the tax revenue. Beville said he couldn't understand why the county would be against it.

Wendy Nash spoke in opposition. She said the Comprehensive Plan promotes new businesses and tourism. Nash said Brunswick County appeals to people retiring but there are tradeoffs like little Internet service, problematic cell phone service and fewer stores. She asked the supervisors to protect the integrity of the community.

Nash said people can visit Lake Anna or Smith Mountain Lake instead of visiting Lake Gaston. She asked what if Dollar General wants to build a store across from the Valentines Post Office or across from the Saint Paul's Memorial Chapel? She said steps should be taken to preserve certain areas of Brunswick County.

Donna Paxton spoke in opposition to Dollar General. She said she loves living in Ebony and going to Prospect United Methodist Church and that she bought her home thinking that the area would be protected from growth. Paxton enjoys seeing the cows and deer and loves the tranquility found in Ebony.

Lisa Conner spoke in opposition to the rezoning request. She expressed shock that the planning commission recommended rezoning and ignored the numerous comments they received at their hearing. Conner also expressed shock that they decided to go against the zoning ordinance laws and did not follow the Comprehensive Plan granting a structure that is nearly twice in the size limit they set for the county.

Conner questioned the claim that the business will bring revenue to the county. She said if you lose tax dollars from the two existing stores what is the county gaining by granting this rezoning?

Conner said adding Dollar General will hurt the community by the devaluing or imposition of a cost on the community's "Sense of Place" - a term used to value the special meaning a place holds for particular people or animals. Conner said, "The more one city comes to look and feel just like every other city, the less reason to visit."

Conner said the planning commission recommended approval without any restrictions. She said if the supervisors grant the rezoning request, she asked the supervisors to give careful consideration to restrictions and requirements that should be put into place.

Earlier Conner expressed concern about light pollution with the building design of Dollar General. "Light pollution is excessive, misdirected or inappropriate outdoor lighting. Too much of light pollution may constitute a legal nuisance when it disturbs a neighbor's use or enjoyment of property as well as harming the habits of wildlife. It can be turned off at a certain hour and can be directed in such a way that does not impede on neighbors right to enjoy their property."

Conner said a Dollar General representative said there are several lighting options for the facility to reduce the amount of light pollution. There are also several building designs. Conner presented examples of both.

George R. Smith asked the supervisors to grant the rezoning request and said there are more people in favor of the request but they don't want to say anything.

Bobby Conner opposed the rezoning saying he has worked in tourism for the county for 20 years. He said Hwy 903 is the gateway from Interstate 85 to Brunswick County and from North Carolina. He said the 2037 Comprehensive Plan promotes tourism and promotes pre-

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## Ruff

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We will be in session until at least March 7th. We would be honored for you to come to see the legislative process work. If you do, please come by our office at the Pocahontas Building, Room 505. You can also let us know your thoughts on issues by emailing us at District15@senate.virginia.gov, by mail at P. O. Box 396, Richmond, VA 23218 or by calling 804-698-7515.

## Governor's

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and also had to take out subsidized loans. By covering her tuition, G3 would have provided the resources needed to reduce her part-time work hours or lower her loan amount.

We wholeheartedly believe in and support the Governor's G3 initiative and the tremendous potential it offers to our families, friends, and neighbors throughout Southern Virginia. We encourage the General Assembly to consider the impact this program will have on the Commonwealth, and how it will position Virginia more competitively in the areas of economic and workforce development.

Jackie Gill Powell is the president of Danville Community College. She can be reached at jackie.gillpowell@danville.edu or by calling (434) 797-8400.

Angeline D. Godwin is the president of Patrick Henry Community College. She can be reached at agodwin@patrickhenry.edu or (276) 656-0201.

Quentin R. Johnson is the president of Southside Virginia Community College. He can be reached at quentin.johnson@southside.edu or (434) 949-1004.

## Answers from the Jan. 29, 2020 puzzle

### King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.

P	R	O	P		E	A	S	E		S	O	S		
A	U	R	A		X	R	A	Y		I	M	P		
S	T	E	P		E	I	R	E		L	E	A		
S	H	O	E		M	A	T			P	O	N	Y	
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A	G	O				I	C	O	N		A	L	E	E
I	L	L				C	O	L	T		I	B	E	X
L	Y	E				E	M	M	Y		L	A	D	Y

## Weekly SUDOKU

### Answer

8	7	9	6	3	4	5	1	2
1	6	3	5	7	2	4	9	8
2	5	4	1	9	8	3	6	7
9	3	1	7	4	5	8	2	6
4	2	7	8	6	3	9	5	1
5	8	6	2	1	9	7	4	3
3	9	2	4	8	6	1	7	5
6	1	8	9	5	7	2	3	4
7	4	5	3	2	1	6	8	9