

Submit Letters to the Editor to:
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OPINIONS

Letters should include the author's full name, residence and telephone number for verification. Unsigned or anonymous letters will not be published. The Caroline Progress reserves the right to edit letters for length, grammar and libelous content.

A weekend at The Homestead

We reported recently that three members of the Board of Supervisors – Wayne Acors, Calvin Taylor, and Floyd Thomas – attended the annual conference of the Virginia Association of Counties last fall.

The three-day, three-night conference was held at The Homestead, the luxury resort hotel in Bath County. County Administrator Charles Culley went, too. The trip cost Caroline County taxpayers \$5,020.

We contacted all three supervisors prior to publishing the report. Acors and Thomas responded and defended their attendance at the conference. Taylor did not respond but chose to read a prepared statement at the most recent meeting of the Board of Supervisors; in his statement, Taylor too, defended attending the conference. As noted in our report, Acors is a member of the board of directors of the association.

All three supervisors essentially have justified attendance at the conference by saying they gained valuable information on behalf of the county – information that has helped them make decisions that saved the county money. Acors noted that he spent time chatting with state Sen. John Watkins of Chesterfield, who has proposed a major overhaul of state transportation funding, legislation that is being debated in the current General Assembly session.

The various programs put on at association conferences - speakers, briefings, panel discussions, etc. - certainly can provide valuable information to members. We don't dispute that.

Members of associations also can get the same information in other ways – by obtaining copies of recordings of the proceedings, reports, and so on. These organizations exist in part to share and provide information to members, not to hoard all the helpful hints for an annual blow-out.

We think going to The Homestead sends the wrong message to county taxpayers, employees of county government, and employees of the county's school division. In such lean budget years as Caroline has endured recently, it strikes us as unwarranted.

It's not the first time that members of the board have gone to The Homestead, and we expect it will not be the last. Why? Because they don't pay for it. You pay for it.

Their attendance suggests the three supervisors feel a sense of entitlement. They go on the taxpayers' dime because they 'earned' it or 'deserve' it – one weekend a year at the posh resort.

As for the conversation with Sen. Watkins, we suggest that if Acors wants to chat up the Chesterfield lawmaker, pick up the phone and give him a call.

As for Thomas, he has yet to explain why he stayed an extra night at the hotel and charged it to the taxpayers.

It's not bashing to ask about 'Y'

A couple of people asked Supervisor Wayne Acors last week how the capital campaign is coming along for the new YMCA. He didn't take kindly to it.

Instead of taking the opportunity to enlighten people about the campaign, he accused the questioners of attacking the YMCA.

"Some people are trying to make this into a negative thing and bash the YMCA," Acors said in response to questions by Supervisor Jeff Black.

It is not bashing the YMCA to ask about the status or progress of the capital campaign. After all, Acors is the one who promised to lead the effort to raise money to pay back the \$5 million the county borrowed to build the YMCA.

Acors only mentioned that the committee has been making presentations to various organizations and has raised some money.

He said something else that strikes us as odd: "At the end of the day, if they haven't raised all the money, then that's cause for complaint." (Our italics for emphasis.)

It strikes us odd because he is the one who promised to raise the money.

As he said at a YMCA kick-event event in late 2001, "I promised no county funds would be used. I intend to keep my promise."

THE CAROLINE Progress

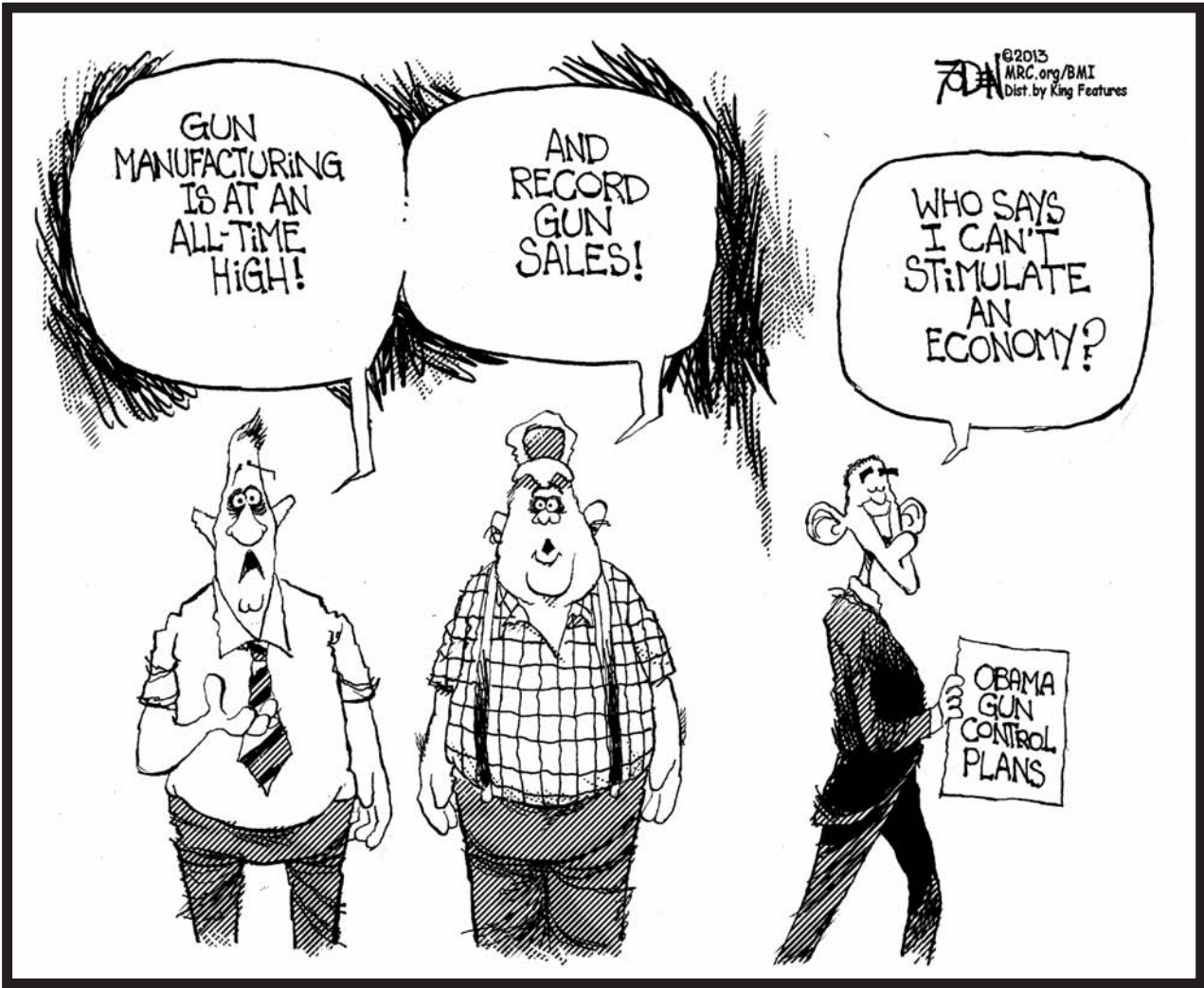
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Letters to the Editor

County should act swiftly to preserve the town of Port Royal

When our county began in 1727, the seat of government was in lower Caroline County, located on what is now Kidds Fork Road, but which at that time was Cart Road, with little transportation either by water or roads. There were only a courthouse, jail, and tavern located there.

Port Royal was the commercial center for Caroline up until the mid-19th century, when trains came to Milford. Located on the Rappahannock River, ships from England came in weekly to Port Royal, bringing cargo for the county and transporting tobacco back to England. Port Royal was the first chartered town in Caroline County and remained the center for trade well into the 19th century.

Bowling Green became the third seat of government in 1805 when the courthouse moved from its second site, across from where the New Yorker Restaurant now stands on the north side of Lakewood Drive outside of the Bowling Green Farm, to the New Hope Tavern on Bowling Green Farm. It was not until Bowling Green Farm was subdivided in 1826 that the

town of Bowling Green began. At that time two house on South Main Street, that still stand today, were built. Milford Plantation, founded by the Hoomes family in the late 18th century, did not become a commercial center until the mid-19th century when part of the plantation became a town. The trains would come as far north as Milford, make a u-turn, and return to Richmond.

I urge the county to support the boundary changes to the Town of Port Royal so that this quaint town can survive. It will benefit both the town and the county and will preserve a historic site similar to that of Colonial Williamsburg; it will not only remain a tourist attraction for Caroline County but also the state of Virginia. Frankly, more survives at Port Royal today than did at Colonial Williamsburg in the 1930s when its restoration began.

Let's act swiftly to preserve the integrity and government of the Town of Port Royal before its too late.

Herbert R. Collins
Milford

What is the land use study with fort intended to achieve?

At the first public meeting on the Fort A.P. Hill (FAPH) Joint Land Use Study (JLUS), Ken Perrotte of FAPH identified the Department of Defense's (DOD) Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) as the lead organization. OEA is paying \$243,000 for the study and recommendations implementation.

A policy committee of elected officials from Essex, King George, Spotsylvania and Caroline counties, the mayors of Bowling Green and Port Royal, the commander at FAPH and an official from the state Department of Veterans Affairs lead the year-long study. The make-up of the policy committee is a Caroline concern because of how the policy committee might vote or decide.

The committee could approve Caroline land use restrictions without the approval of a single Caroline representative. After repeated questioning, neither study consultants, committee members, nor Army officials present could say what criteria were used to decide who would be represented on the committee. Caroline and surrounding counties each have their unique relationships with DOD, relationships that are brought into stark contrast by DOD's distinct financial impact on each county's ability to fund services for its citizens.

To illustrate, DOD land holdings in Caroline total 76,000 acres. The presence of FAPH is the primary reason that only 38 percent of county land is taxable to support Caroline citizen services. In King George, DOD land holdings total 4,300 acres or just 5 percent of the DOD held land area in Caroline. There are no DOD land holdings in Spotsylvania and Essex counties and thus, no similar negative DOD impact on the ability of these counties to raise revenue.

In addition to the 76,000 acres held directly by DOD in Caroline,

Given the above, Caroline citizens should have serious concern that Caroline officials agreed in the JLUS to an economic impact analysis for the Army but omitted to require an economic impact analysis for the Caroline County citizens...As the FAPH land use study advances, the initial concern of Caroline citizens is just what is this study intended to achieve, particularly since it omits the FAPH economic impact on Caroline.

the county is further constricted in its efforts to raise revenue by the fact that an additional 20,000 acres of county land is bound by conservation easements, many of them obtained through intensive DOD efforts targeted to restrict development in the 35,000 acres surrounding Fort A.P. Hill. The Caroline Progress article states that farm or natural land easements raise more in taxes than the easement land requires in services, but this thinking ignores the negative impact of easements on total county revenues.

On the revenue side, according to www.GovernmentContractsWon.Com, Caroline County businesses over the last 10 years received \$20 million in DOD contracts. By contrast, King George County businesses received 33

times as much or \$661 million. And Spotsylvania County businesses received more than 70 times as much as Caroline or \$1.4 billion.

Differing county DOD financial costs/benefits profiles significantly contribute to very different and real consequences for the citizens of each county. Those consequences are critical to Caroline residents.

Caroline schools rank 89th out of 117 in Virginia. King George schools rank 29th out of 117. Perrotte's odd response is that Caroline's rural nature means Caroline receives more state aid for education.

Limitations on household income are a second consequence of the Caroline-DOD cost/benefit imbalance. A third more Caroline citizens receive food stamps than do citizens of Spotsylvania and King George. Caroline's disparate DOD costs and benefits contribute to fewer and less rewarding Caroline jobs. And they do not even begin to hint at the opportunity costs that are paid in lost work opportunities by Caroline citizens.

Given the above, Caroline citizens should have serious concern that Caroline officials agreed in the JLUS to an economic impact analysis for the Army but omitted to require an economic impact analysis for the Caroline County citizens. Note that an economic impact analysis for citizens is the first requirement in a similar JLUS to be done 70 miles south of Caroline at Fort Lee near Petersburg.

As the FAPH land use study advances, the initial concern of Caroline citizens is just what is this study intended to achieve, particularly since it omits the FAPH economic impact on Caroline.

John W. Lampmann
Port Royal