

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 Unsigned or anonymous letters will not be published.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.

Letter writer questions YMCA future

To the Editor:

I attended the September 10th Board of Supervisor's meeting and would like to make the following comments.

Three text amendments refining the definition of "rural resorts" in Caroline County were presented for the Public Hearing. Following discussion, the three text amendments were voted down by the Board 3-2, with Supervisor Thomas abstaining. Supervisor Thomas' stated reason for abstaining was to avoid a tie vote, and any resulting contentious discussion regarding these text amendments. I think the supervisors are wise to stay away from amendments such as this, which can quickly become convoluted and can open the door to extremely problematic uses of property in the future. However, it also concerns me that my elected representative declined to cast a vote. I hope this will not become routine. While I don't always agree with my supervisor, I respect him and add that he has always made himself available to me to discuss various issues within my neighborhood.

That said, after the vote was taken, a decision was made to "revisit" the issue,

an occurrence I find odd. While this may be legally "proper," it has a distinctly fishy stench. One would think the matter would now be closed. But because some of the Supervisors were not happy with the outcome of the vote, it was brought up again with the Board voting 3-2 (Sup. Underwood being the "swing vote") to send the amendments back to the Planning Commission for rework.

One would have to live under a rock in Caroline to have not seen the pictures in the paper of the pig farm along the road where Silver Companies wish to put their rural resort on Rt. 17. To refresh memories, I add that it was suddenly erected when neighbors protested the plan to bring in a "Rural Resort." It is apparent to me that the text amendments up for consideration at the board meeting were crafted in order for this project to be accomplished despite many factors which clearly show the project should not be approved at all. Some of these include mining on the property, the condition of Highway 17 and newspaper accounts of Silver Companies' continuous battles with other localities and entities about what their responsibilities

entail. The passing of the text amendment would have cleared the way for this project.

During the YMCA discussion, Supervisor Black noted that one of the major contributors to the YMCA project was the owner of the property which now belongs to Abundant Life Academy who facilitated a similar specially crafted text amendment earlier this year. Another donor, Luck Stone, who received a Special Exception last year from the Board of Supervisors, is a \$50,000 donor, according to the donor spread sheet (available online and handed out at the meeting). There are also \$49,500 in donations unaccounted for on the spread sheet from donors who wish to remain "anonymous."

I sincerely hope these anonymous benefactors are not entities who plan to appear in the future (or have in the past) before the Board of Supervisors for projects and Special Exceptions. The Y project clearly belongs to Mr. Acors, with so many committees (as outlined by Supervisor Black) now apparently defunct except for one which appeared before the board at this meeting. Neither Mr. Acors

nor his representatives have any business asking for, or accepting, money from prospective developers or others who stand to benefit from his vote as a member of the Board of Supervisors (despite his being listed on the donor spreadsheet as having solicited at least three of the donations).

I certainly commiserate with any supervisor who actually thought that any committee could, in 18 months, raise 5 million dollars (plus interest, I'm sure). To me, this seems even less believable than Mr. Acors's statements about raising money from Richmond businesses (they are well outside the Rappahannock YMCA's area). I am not an insider but there must be a story there which is a bit more complicated. I would be shocked if the new committee members really believe they will be raising 5 million dollars in time to better this financial mess.

As a taxpayer it defies understanding that we must accept, without the benefit of the Freedom of Information Act, monies of which we do not know the origin. The Y's attitude about providing documentation is also puzzling. One example, why is it such a big se-

cret about why the architect won't sign off on changes? Another – Mr. Reiley stated repeatedly that there would be no cost over-run on the building – but with over 20 changes and no "just in case" plan in place? This makes no sense at all to me. Good if he can do it, but much smarter with a "just in case" plan. While I do not oppose the YMCA on general principles, I do oppose it in Caroline County (Supervisors Taylor and Acors, please take note). If I understood Mr. Reiley's comments correctly, the YMCA will not turn down memberships based on ability to pay. But I also thought that the YMCA was a business? They cannot be a business *and* a charity. If their goal is to use the combination business/charity model make membership numbers in Caroline County, I believe they will fail miserably.

So, with regard to the YMCA, here is what I do not believe: I do not believe that enough money will ever be raised to cover costs (which by definition means that the Supervisor's will have to renege on their "not one penny of taxpayer money will be used for this project" promise). I do not believe there will

be enough demand for use of the YMCA in Caroline County, resulting in an empty building and a defaulted loan (and by extension, loss of title to the school building put up as collateral on the loan). I do not believe in Mr. Reiley's "if one child is saved because they learned to swim at the Y, it will all be worth it" comment. This is a cliché'd position which is the default "fall back" statement used by anyone with no other leg to stand on. Finally, given the dismal state of the County's financial affairs, I do not believe that the project should have ever commenced unless and until the capital contributions were already in hand. One more example of poor planning on the part of our elected officials.

The Y has no legal obligation to allow us out of the contract but perhaps their Board of Directors, after realizing that things were not as presented to them, will rethink their position and offer some relief to the Caroline tax payer.

"Transparency" – as taxpayers, we should accept nothing less.

*George Parker
Ruther Glen*

County never offered to buy Ladysmith Water Co.

To the Editor:

Your coverage of LWC's PENDING SALE in the 8/29/2013 issue of the Caroline Progress Newspaper included an often repeated FALSE "fact." The third paragraph states:

"Ladysmith Water owns the water system and company representatives have turned down offers from the county government to buy the system."

THIS IS FALSE. Nei-

ther the County nor POA (property owners association) nor any intermediary has ever suggested purchase to Ladysmith Water Company. NEVER.

Instead of "Offers to Purchase the Water Company," there have been a series of efforts to devalue and seize utility assets after LWC had VDH (Virginia Department of Health) approval of engineering to improve the treatment plant

and funding set-up awaiting prerequisite SCC approval. POA initiated two separate civil actions in circuit court; (both to refute ownership of LWC distribution lines and supply rights); POA lost each case.

Most recently the County demanded LWC accept a non-negotiated adhesive contract to permanentize current interim County supply to our customers. The contract increased risk and

abandoned all responsibility for quality and adequacy, with liabilities and all costs shifted to our company permanently. Aside from the contract's open-ended demands, \$700,000 costs and fees, loss of plant, lawyers advised that the contract was illegal. For refusing to sign such adhesive contract, the SCC (State Corporation Commission) issued unique punitive actions against stockholders personally.

The SCC case remains open for further possible damages or utility destruction.

This subject was mentioned in a recent letter sent to customers to advise the company status and circumstances of sale to Aqua. At the very least, this sale will result in vastly improved quality and adequacy assurances for customer's health and safety, improvements heretofore blocked by the SCC.

I ask that the "false fact" be formally corrected by your newspaper, lest it contribute to further politicizing this sale. I believe this correction of fact to be in the public interest.

Respectfully,
William Seltzer,
President
Ladysmith Water
Company

Churchgoers are 3 times less likely to smoke

After all manner of campaigns against smoking, it turns out that civil society has some sway in the matter. A recent Gallup poll found that regular church attendees are three times less likely to pick up a cigarette.

While the group that has the highest concentration of smokers—young, single men—is also the least likely to attend services, Gallup controlled for these factors and found that church attendance was still significantly related to whether an indi-

vidual smoked.

The influence that church attendance can have on health highlights how the impact of religion can extend far beyond weekend services. Religious practice is generally not limited to an hour a week. For many, religious faith influences a core set of beliefs about the world that guides their day-to-day actions.

In the United States, religious freedom has been increasingly watered down to mean the mere freedom to

worship, where faith should be expressed only on weekends, within the walls of churches, synagogues, and mosques. But religious freedom can't stop at the doors of people's homes or places of worship.

The Gallup poll found that Mormons were least likely to smoke, with only 8 percent of respondents admitting to lighting up. Jewish respondents were

a close second, with only 10 percent identifying as smokers. Catholics had a 18 percent likelihood, and Protestants had a 20 percent likelihood, of being smokers. Meanwhile, "nones"—those unaffiliated with a specific religion—had the highest percentage with a 26 percent likelihood of being smokers.

But this shouldn't surprise anyone. Regular

church attendees—particularly teens—are far less likely to engage in a number of unhealthy activities, including using drugs, abusing alcohol, or having multiple sexual partners.

Religious practice plays an important role in maintaining civil society, encouraging intact families, and even promoting individuals' health. Yet, an increasing disregard for the ben-

efits of faith-driven actions is threatening to confine Americans' faith behind closed doors. Policymakers and national leaders should recognize the profoundly important role that religious belief—and practice—plays in sustaining families, increasing personal well-being, and promoting a robust civil society.

(From the Heritage Foundation)

Letter writer supports Buddy Fowler

To the Editor:

I write in enthusiastic support Buddy Fowler for 55th District Delegate. In addition to being a long time resident of Hanover County, an upstanding, loving family man and good friend to many, who has

provided extensive, excellent community service to Hanover County, Buddy Fowler has extensive experience in public service including his service as a Legislative Aide to two Delegates who have served the 55th District in the Gen-

eral Assembly. Buddy is his own man, with the interests of ALL in our District at heart, and will be able to "hit the ground running", in the General Assembly, without a "learning curve". He will immediately be of service to the 55th District

when he is elected. Buddy worthily enjoys the support of many in the 55th District and he certainly has my strong support.

*E. Marshall Buckles
Rockville, VA*

Toni Radler gets this writer's vote

To the Editor:

For the last two Presidential elections, Caroline County voted Democratic. And that got the attention of the Virginia Republican Party. When it came time to redistrict, 11 Caroline County precincts were paired with 19 precincts in Hanover, which strongly votes Republican. That was the Republican political machine's way of telling Caroline Democrats to "sit down and shut up." Redistricting was used to defuse the rising strength of the Democratic vote in Caroline County. Caroline's rising democratic majority was going to be

effectively buried through redistricting—they thought.

But sometimes power politics backfires. And I think this is one of those times. Incumbent John Cox took a look at the political landscape and didn't see the effortless path to victory he had in two previous elections. So Cox announced his retirement and handed his running shoes to his legislative aide. But, not so fast. Toni Radler, a long time Hanover resident and community activist put on her running shoes, and it's not so clear who is going to cross the finish line first.

That largely depends on Caroline County voters.

Toni is not a career politician. She is not beholden to entrenched, special interest groups. Over her career she has worked as a reporter, served on the Board of Directors of Hanover Habitat for Humanity, volunteered for Hanover Safe Place and worked for Christian Children's Fund and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Toni Radler is family oriented and a motivated, civic-minded citizen. She has led her life in public communications and people centered activities.

I have known Toni through Church for two

decades. She has demonstrated her care for people. She is running for office because she wants to help solve the people's problems. She does not want to be part of some complex, ideologically-driven hyper partisan problem. Her campaign is an effort to move away from extreme partisan politics and get back to the work of doing the people's business in government. It's time to raise your voice once again, go to the polls on Nov. 5 and vote for Toni.

*Lou Szari
Mechanicsville*

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