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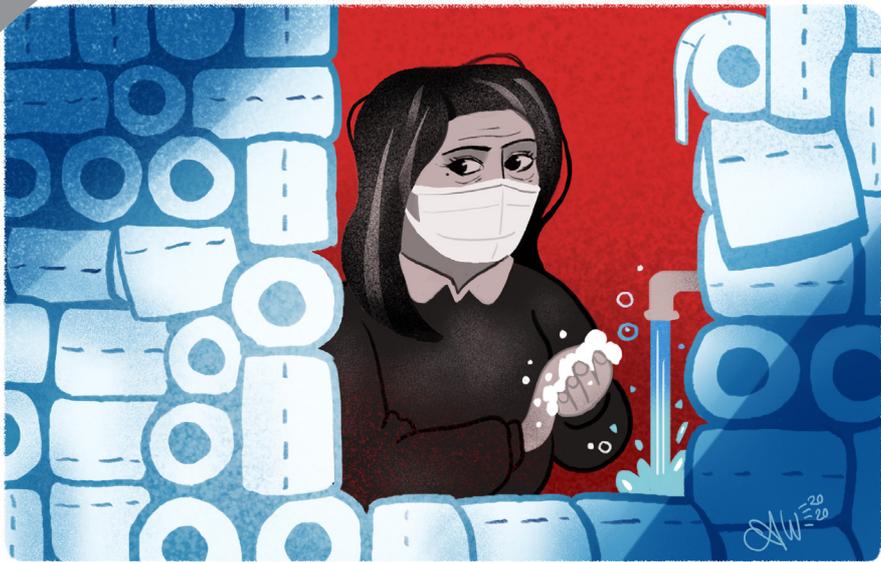


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Prince William Times | March 18, 2020



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We're in this together and we need your support

You may have noticed a lot of activity on the princewilliamtimes.com site the last several days. We've been busy trying to cover the local upheaval caused by the coronavirus. There are a thousand considerations – the status of county facilities, the courts, the schools, our local businesses, health care facilities, sports, children's activities, nursing homes and assisted living centers, groceries and toilet paper. And we know our community needs to keep on top of it all.

Our readers expect us to be there, talking, listening, reading, researching and putting all the chaos into neat packages that are easy to understand.

We have heard from those who follow our website that they especially appreciate our efforts to keep them informed during this difficult time. Even though it means long hours and short deadlines, we are happy to do it. We live here too, and we care about our community.

COVID-19 is about to take a deep toll on our country and our community. Every person will feel its effects. We worry about our elders and those with fragile health, while at the same time empathize with our young people, especially those who had been looking forward to major life events this spring, such as high school and college graduations, weddings and other milestones.

This coronavirus crisis is downright heartbreaking. And while we mourn the many personal losses suffered as life as we know it grinds to a halt, we are also mindful of the tremendous financial strain the crisis will pose to our residents and local businesses.

Our newspaper is no different. As our loyal advertisers experience a precipitous dip in customers, they'll have no choice but to pull back their support. The print newspaper will shrink, as will our resources.



Donations are appreciated at www.fauquier.com.

We received some good news, though. The Piedmont Journalism Foundation – the nonprofit that owns the Prince William Times and Fauquier Times -- has a benefactor who has pledged to match – up to \$5,000 -- what the foundation is able to raise in the next two weeks.

So, in this effort, we have a new deadline: Friday, March 27.

If you appreciate local journalism and our efforts to report the news of your community, now is the time to show it. We know things are challenging, but if you would like to help keep local journalism alive in Prince William County, please take this opportunity to really make your dollars count.

Please visit the Fauquier Times website, at www.fauquier.com, and look for a button that says "support." Click on it to donate what you can.

If you are on a mobile device, click on the menu next to the Fauquier Times logo at the top. The "support" button is on the bottom of the menu list.

All contributions are tax deductible and extremely appreciated. Thank you for your consideration.

And, as we move through this crisis, please don't hesitate to share your stories with us. Are you seeing your neighbors taking extra steps to be helpful and careful during this public health emergency? If so, please get in touch with me at jpalermo@fauquier.com.

Now, go wash your hands.

JILL PALERMO
Managing Editor, Prince William Times

Guest Opinion

Why the Devlin rezoning should be a call-to-action

I have been asked about my vote to approve the "Devlin Road community" rezoning. My reasons touch on a number of legal realities, land-use policies and impact mitigation (in terms of schools, traffic, etc.), as well as how rezoning approvals in the surrounding area by previous boards made it much more challenging for the current board to deny this rezoning.

First, the legal realities. Virginia law makes it difficult for local boards to deny rezonings when proffers offset school and road impacts and when the proposed development conforms to the county's current comprehensive plan in terms of density.

The area in question is designated "suburban residential low," which allows for one to four single-family homes per acre. At 516 homes, the Devlin project falls in the mid-range of the designation. Additionally, the area's existing zoning, set at the county default of A-1, isn't compatible with the comp plan designation nor the surrounding uses. Two residential neighborhoods border the proposed development.

The proffers (cash and infrastructure improvements given by the developer to offset the impacts of the development) attached to this project weaken the board's legal case for denying the application based on those school and road impacts.

Moving forward, we should evaluate the formulas used to determine the amount of proffers that constitute as offsetting the traffic and school impacts. Currently, the formulas are slanted in favor of developers, allowing them to "check a box" even if they haven't fully mitigated negative impacts to our quality of life.

We also need to address stormwater mitigation rules, as I mentioned in my questions during the board meeting. Currently, clear-cutting land either does not trigger stormwater management requirements, or significantly decreases the standards by which the developer has to install stormwater management systems during construction.

That being said, unlike some other unpopular developments passed by the previous board, such as Ray's Regarde, which is planned for an area of Woodbridge east of Interstate 95, a combination of planned new schools and road improvements – along with staggered development – will put infrastructure in place ahead of the growth in the Devlin community.

**KENNY
BODDYE**
GUEST
OPINION



The realignment of the intersection at Balls Ford Road and Va. 234, which has been funded as part of the Interstate 66 project, is moving forward, and the pace of adding new homes is contingent on completion of the Devlin Road widening.

In some cases, the developer will be prohibited from building entire phases of the Devlin community project unless certain road improvements are finished. This is baked into the proffers and is legally binding.

Additionally, the development will take at least 10 years to reach full buildout; on average, 50 homes will be added per year once construction begins. I feel this incremental approach, along with the school division's existing capital improvements program and proffered school funding, will allow area schools to accommodate new students generated by this project.

We also heard from neighbors who are understandably upset by ongoing flooding that was only made worse when the landowner clear-cut the property. They worry about what will happen once construction begins and impervious surfaces are added. The good news is that though the rezoning is approved, the developers will need to work with the county's development services officials to ensure they meet any number of regulations, to include stormwater management that should alleviate flooding.

I realize that none of this will make the development popular, but I feel that the public deserves answers and insight.

Additionally, I'd like to see Devlin Road become a call to action: Let's fix the loopholes in the county comprehensive plan, zoning ordinances and state laws that tie our hands at the local level. I will be sharing my thoughts on this soon as well as seeking your ideas. It will take grassroots action to rebalance the scales so that local communities have a greater say in land use.

The writer is the Prince William County supervisor representing the Occoquan District.