Active, engaged citizenry crucial to a happy future

by Randy Voller

Primary elections are around the corner in March, with all of its fanfare, bluster and relative importance. And regardless of who wins the Presidential nomination, we will have non-incumbents facing off in the fall.

This is all very exciting and certain to make for great theater and a lot of money for consultants and the media selling ads, but I have grown tired and perhaps a bit weary of the show.

Since jumping in with two feet in Chatham County in 2005, I have served as an elected official and on numerous boards in the county, region and state.

I even spent time as the Chairman of the local Democratic Party and the State Democratic Party.

I did this because I wanted to make a difference and I was fortunate that my wife and family supported and endorsed my work. Perhaps it's my German roots or the values of my family, but making the community better and creating and building needed infrastructure actually appeals to me. I like seeing progress and problems being addressed and solved. And an active, visionary and energized local government can make the difference.

New schools, new parks and libraries are exciting. Upfitting our existing schools and public infrastructure is satisfying. Seeing our ABC system work well and make a profit for the community is gratifying. And better quality transit, roads, sidewalks, greenways and bike lanes is rewarding.

Having an effective and visionary local government that works with the community is the difference between destructive mediocrity and potential greatness.

Just ask the people of Flint, Michigan or any other community that has found itself bogged down on a slippery slope trying to reach a sustained mutual prosperity, but finds itself constantly sliding back toward economic hopelessness.

It is not just the decisions that get made in real time that matter, but sometimes it is the failure to address problems in a timely fashion and with aplomb that shackle a community to a future that it cannot escape.

We can avoid that problem by working on tomorrow's issues today.

For instance, continuing to improve the potable water system in Pittsboro is important and working together in the region to improve the wastewater treatment plant and construct a force main to Sanford is good for the environment and will yield long term prosperous results for the Town of Pittsboro, Chatham County and the Region.

We need to come together as a community and strongly support our elected officials in their efforts to move the community forward and make Chatham County a great place for everyone with safe water, beautiful parks, inviting greenways, great schools, safe roads, economically viable downtown districts and prosperity and opportunity for all citizens.

This is not just hopeful dreaming, but a manifest reality that is within our grasp. It will take work, but these are achievable goals. We just need the vision and willpower to do it.

We can all start by voting this year and follow up by getting involved in our community. That will make the difference between achieving our potential or allowing our fears and misgivings to limit the future.

Randy Voller of Pittsboro, a political and business consultant, is the former Mayor of Pittsboro and former chair of the North Carolina Democratic Party.

Keep this billboard down

Polk's Village on 15/501 South just put a billboard on its property facing Northbound traffic... for a Gun Show. Again.

It should be clear to anyone that putting a GUN SHOW billboard near a day care center and a pediatric medical facility isn't the best positioning choice to advertise your Gun Show.

But clearly the folks who own the Polk's Village property and Fairway Outdoor who sell the space made a decision to go "money over community" regarding the appropriateness of advertising a GUN SHOW in the midst of a collection of businesses that included A DAY CARE CENTER and A MEDICAL FACILITY.

While drivers on 15/501 N seem to be a desirable audience for such an ad to reach, only because of the volume of traffic, anyone with an IQ above that of an earthworm would clearly see that such a move is grossly out of place, insensitive in the extreme and against all known reasoning when children and medical facilities are present. Both Polk's Village and Fairway Outdoor channeled their earthworm alter egos on this one...

So how is it that a local property owner with a billboard in the "public" yard approves such a placement? Huh? Wait... what?

Witness the Mental gymnastics of the North American Earthworm:

Dixie Gun and Knife Show: Hey–we want to advertise our GUN SHOW on your Polk's Village billboard. Yeah, the one next to the UNC Pediatrics & Internal Medicine Medical Facility and the Rainbow Child Care Facility.

Fairway Outdoor Salesman: Hmmm, some advertising for a GUN SHOW? Let's see...guns, pediatric medical facility, day care...well, OK, Dixie folks, that works for me!...

Polk's Village: Zzzzzzzzzzzzzz....

Are you serious? Sheeesh!

While Clear Channel and Lamar — two of the elephants in the room when it comes to outdoor advertising — are occasionally helmed by mental inferiors and not known for their vision and intellectual clarity, and do seem, on occasion, more focused on frequency and repetition than community care taking, more often than not even they make the right choice when it comes to placing questionable advertising in sensitive areas.

— Eric and William Sommers

Live to Fight Another Day

by Jeff Davidson

It's a new year, but some things stay the same: All our lives we are subject to highs and lows. Thing are going well, happiness ensues, and we're not conscious of the time. Things are not going so well, and time slows down. Sometimes it's hard to find a friend. It can be difficult to know what to do next.

WHAT CAN I HANDLE

Throughout my adult life, when I feel immobilized, I employ catchphrases that spur me on to action. One of these key phrases is "live to fight another day." What do I mean by live to fight another day? Certainly it has nothing to do with physical combat. It means that if nothing seems to be going well, and I'm in a quandary, I look for what I can handle and can complete in the present.

Suppose I'm feeling lonely or overwhelmed, or simply a have a lack of clarity. I say to myself "live to fight another day" which translates into: I don't have to necessarily deal with any of those obstacles at the moment as long as I take care of items that need to be handled. This is an antidote to fretting about my current turmoil and to not taking care of other things.

When I complete tasks, around the house or around my office, whether or not I have attained clarity, I feel less overwhelmed and less encumbered by whatever has been weighing on me heavily: I have at least finished these other tasks.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Suppose it's a Sunday afternoon, and nothing seems to be going well; I feel as if the world is passing me by, and experience a "dead space" in the middle of the day. I rally myself by thinking, "live to fight another day." I then look around the house for all the items that need to be tackled.

Are there dishes in the sink? Does the living room needs cleaning? Does the front porch require sweeping? Is anything left undone in the backyard?

Alternatively, I'll handle accumulated email correspondence, visit web sites that I've been intending to visit, or do reading that I've saved for the proverbial rainy day.

Following the rallying cry "live to fight another day," as soon as I engage in one or more of the above activities, I quickly feel better. Once such tasks are completed, maybe I'll emerge from my mental rut. Maybe not. In either case, I've created a clearing for myself because the items I have completed do count for something.

Now, I could call a friend, see a movie, take a walk, open a book, watch a show, cook a dish, or do something that represents the next step. On other days and at other times, other opportunities will unfold. For now, I'm doing what I can, and that's fine.

Jeff Davidson is the author of Simpler Living, Breathing Space, and Dial it Down, Live it Up. His books have been published in 19 languages including Arabic, Chinese, Japanese,Malay, Turkish, and Russian. Visit www.BreathingSpace.com

Chatham Park needs to do Environmental Impact Study

I am responding to correspondence distributed by Pittsboro Matters earlier in January regarding evidence found on meetings held behind closed doors regarding the development of Chatham Park. Pittsboro and Chatham County have, for the last two to three years, asked Chatham Park Investment (CPI) to follow specific efforts typical for large developments, such as an Environmental Impact Study to determine long-term effects of major change that would affect Eastern Chatham County and would extend to like change in Pittsboro. To date, no EIS has been agreed to by CPI, nor have this and other requests for open discussion and compliance with requested change in the county and town been respected nor even addressed.

Am I surprised at the shenanigans that CPI has, is, will try to pull against requests by Pittboro and Chatham County? Not one bit! Do I believe and accept their promises and "gifts" of land for schools and other "gifts" as given through the "kindness of the CPI heart?" I cannot believe anything they have said to the public in the last two to three years. Why? Because the organization has used up any trust the public may have had. How many times has Pittsboro Matters asked CPI to adhere to regulations that are typical for such an undertaking, such as an EIS, a permanent blueprint for the "lay of the land" that shows how and where business, residential, recreational development will be? How many times has CPI put off requirements that apply to any large development? Where is the integrity that such development relies on? And who has turned from listening to the voice of Chatham County public and what they see as necessary for the County to voicing what CPI sees as benefits to their organization?

What can Pittsboro and Chatham County do to make final decisions that echo what the public has asked for? What can we do/say that will convince CPI to respect the will of the people, or is that impossible, along with evidence of integrity in their plans and communication, to bring their plans out in the open rather than behind closed doors? Am I the only member of the public that is disgusted by the sneaky way CPI has behaved? I agree with others — a representative group of Chatham public might take advantage of "Freedom of the People . . ." to tell CPI like it is and require a change in their manner and underhanded way of pressuring elected leadership to give in to their demands.

It may be inevitable that development will happen in Pittsboro in the relatively near future, and I, and I believe others, will hate to see major change happen in and adjacent to our town. Nonetheless, if CPI shows itself willing to listen to and respect those who will be impacted by their planned major change and agree to the EIS and other impacts requested, if negotiation might show old-fashioned characteristics such as integrity, respect, trust, acknowledging the rights of others, responding to the voice of the people and open planning that includes more positive change in Pittsboro and the Eastern part of Chatham County, there wouldn't be the need for that organization to plan their strategies "behind closed doors."

Kathleen Hundley, Chatham County

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