Opinion

YOUR VIEWS

Who cares about the consequences of gold/metallic mining?

Dear Editor,

The Buckingham Supervisors handed the project of banning metallic mining to the Planning Commission. The Planners have hosted more than two hours of testimony — exclusively from self-promoting industry, which has them a bit derailed, thinking that metallic mining isn't so bad! I remind us — that the EPA considers metallic mining the most toxic of all industries.

I asked Chair Bickford to invite independent experts (who have had success in mining reform around the world) to the next Planning Commission Work Session on April 19 at 6 p.m. His current plan is to hear my 20 minute report on the 2022 state study of the potential impacts of gold mining in Virginia. The county attorney would be speaking for the remaining time on the legalities of banning mining. I hope he's done his research. We observed his failure in August to cite Virginia law allowing counties to ban mining.

At the work session, covered in the March 24 *Farmville Herald* feature article, we heard about industry's needs and wants to stay the course, to carry on as is. We heard about the good paying jobs and the taxes paid to the county and state, and about the mining materials that we use every day. We can thank them for bringing these benefits to our world and benefits need to outweigh the risks in any choices in life.

I heard nothing about the so-called 'externalized costs' of doing business. The true costs that we all pay for, in forever-poisoned water, air, land and the effects on our health, safety and local and regional economies.

I heard no offer of solutions from industry as to how to protect this county and the state of Virginia from the ravages of the metallic mining industry.

Let's remember the Supervisors agree they don't want new metallic mining. Figuring out how to stop it is the challenge. The options need careful scrutiny: ban new metallic mining, ban cyanide, and/or require industry to prove it safe first. By calling in forward-thinking experts we can learn from other communities such as Wisconsin that successfully required safety to be proven first, or El Salvador, which banned metallic mining, or the state of Montana, which banned cyanide.

The state study of the potential impacts of gold mining to Virginia tells us clearly that our regulatory framework won't protect us, and lacks an adequate financial assurance system, posing a fiscal and environmental risk to the Commonwealth. It is very important for decision makers to hear from voices that have been hard at work creating new ideas and solutions to these very big problems.

Please call your Supervisor and Commissioner and tell them you want them to make decisions based on fair and balanced information on how metallic mining would affect the County and your future here.

Heidi Dhivya Berthoud
Buckingham

Every wishlist comes with a price

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

BRIAN CARLTON

There are five words that I despise hearing more than anything in the world. No, it's not "sorry sir, we're sold out," even though that's a close second at 5 p.m. on Christmas Eve. It's also not "well, I changed my mind", but that's almost as bad.

No, what I hate hearing most of all is "you need to be realistic." That implies that the dream, the goal or whatever I'm talking about is somehow not viable as is. Even if that's the truth, nobody likes saying it, let alone hearing it. And normally I would be the first one encouraging people to dream, to aim high. But in this case, we all need to consider the situation as well.

Now by situation, I'm referring to the future of Prince Edward County Elementary School. By this point, there's been meetings between architects and the staff, employees, parents and residents of the county. And each time, people have been given the opportunity to say what they want to see, to explain what they want added to the school (or taken away).

Some ideas are, especially in a week that saw a mass shooting at a school in Tennessee, unfortunately needed. In the Thursday, March 16 community meeting, parents were concerned about the fact that there are so many ways to enter the school from the outside right now. Part of the process, officials from Moseley Architects said, will be to make sure all visitors have to enter through the front doors. They will also look at building in, as part of the design, places where students can hide in a classroom if need be, areas not as easily seen when walking in. They're also looking at connecting classrooms through an interior corridor, rather than having so many doors leading to the outside.

That's a necessity. As is a new traffic design, to fix the morning and afternoon headaches parents experience everyday.

But when it comes to everything else, and we've received quite a few suggestions since that original story ran, we need to be realistic. Greenhouse space and solar energy cells are great ideas, as are virtual reality workspaces and other 21st century tools. But we need to go into this understanding that the checkbook is not infinite. We've already seen that the state struggles to even get the regular budget right. They still don't have a permanent fix for that $201 million self-inflicted shortfall, just a temporary one. So when they promise money is coming, we have to take that with a grain of salt.

It's also not fair or possible to put the full burden on Prince Edward County to make all of this wishlist happen, unless you just really want to see taxes go up. I've covered plenty of county meetings over the last six months. I can say that every rock has been looked under, every door opened. Yes, the county will provide funding for renovations, but we can't get worked up when every request doesn't make the final list, simply because the money isn't there.

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Bless our children, the government can't

YOUR TURN

FRANK RUFF JR.

All around us, we see assaults on the well-being of our young people. Some schools allow 'drag shows' for the youngest students. School unions have bought control of some schools. In Los Angeles, strikes have shut down schools. Some states are in the process of destroying women's sports by allowing men to compete against young ladies. Many schools have books in their libraries undermining acceptable community standards.

TRANSGENDER

Stories abound of young people that were encouraged to surrender their God-given body to doctors by prescribing drugs to inhibit the proper hormone development of young children. Surgeons are removing the breasts of 13-year-old girls. Once respected hospitals are allowing their operating rooms for these sick procedures.

Why is this suddenly occurring? I make no judgment on what an adult does with their body. In a free society, they can do what they wish without my approval. However, children are in a completely different situation. Why would any parent allow their child to be butchered this way? Are they properly supervising what others are telling their child?

Where would children, some pre-puberty, even come up with this insanity? We have heard some instances of it originating with teachers in our schools. Is that the role of any teacher? Does it make sense that libraries are offering books that confuse their gender? If it is true that a teacher has instigated this thinking, why have parents not noticed a change in their child? Are too many parents so involved with their job or activities that they are not sensing when a problem exists?

Currently, the ACLU is challenging Florida legislation that prevents teachers, doctors, and medical facilities from not consulting parents prior to any such activity. How irresponsible!

GANGS AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

No community is exempt from the fact that gangs or 'wannabe gangs' are all around us. Much of this activity is driven by drug use and drug dealing. Often, these gangs are interested in maintaining their monopoly of selling drugs in a particular area. One might ask why would a young person get involved in such an enterprise?

The reasons are numerous. Our society has been more accepting of drug use. Many parents today do not understand that the marijuana of today is much more potent than that which they experimented with decades ago. They also are unaware that many other drugs, some deadly like those laced with fentanyl, are on the streets.

Another reason is that today a household often has only one parent in the life of a child. Without a father figure in the house or engaged in a child's life, that young person will seek that father figure outside the home. Sometimes the gang leader becomes someone to follow. Membership in these gangs often requires some proof of loyalty to the gang. Sometimes it is something silly or dumb. Other times the requirement is to commit a crime as the proof of loyalty. In some cases, it goes as far as to do bodily harm to an innocent victim, sometimes to the point of murdering an individual of another gang.

SOLUTIONS

The problem starts in the home, that is where the best solution can be found. Parents need to be more aware of their responsibility to not only feed and clothe their children but purposely reinforce personal responsibility and the importance of doing what is morally right.

A part of the solution can be community involvement. Programs that channel young people into activities that focus their energy and interests in things that are positive. It might be sports, both in school and out. It might be with such programs as church groups or programs such as Big Brothers.

Some in government have celebrated that far fewer young people are held in state juvenile facilities. What they ignore is that, when one person gets off with a slap on the wrist, it emboldens their peers to break laws. While many can be dealt with outside of correctional facilities, some must be dealt with more seriously. As a society, we are wrong when we don't take seriously those actions that risk the safety of our citizens.

If we are to return to a civil society, now is the time for all of us to step in and do all we can.

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