

Marsha Perry: How much money buys a landfill along the Patuxent? | COMMENTARY

By Marsha Perry
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On July 6, County Executive Steuart Pittman held a Town Hall at Two Rivers Community Center to update residents regarding developer Cookie Halle's plans to build a project adjacent to Two Rivers along the Patuxent River. It's name: Chesapeake Terrace. The name suggests a town house development, a park with tennis courts, walking trails and picnic areas.

The decades-old plan, however, is for a rubble landfill wedged between Patuxent and Conway roads next to the banks of the Patuxent River, thus effecting the entire length of the Patuxent watershed south of the site in and along an environmentally significant area.

Through the years, notifications of hearings, meetings, and court dates have been widely distributed in Anne Arundel County communities and to its elected officials. County Council member Andrew Pruski, District 4, is a neighbor of the site. He and his staff most assuredly have spoken to other elected officials about the landfill proposal working its way through state and county permitting processes and being closely followed by their affected district residents. The Crofton Civic Association, Crofton First, Greater Crofton Council, Woodwardville Heritage Society, Forks of the Patuxent Improvement Association, Piney Orchard Association have all been long involved in protesting this landfill. One important reason was a deep concern for the landfill's impact on Route 3 and its feeder roads as dump trucks would drive their loads to and from the site in residential neighborhoods and near schools.

Council member Jessica Haire did not attend Pittman's town hall. She told the news media that she had just learned of the landfill a week before the meeting. My assumption is that an Anne Arundel County council member representing miles of Patuxent watershed properties in west and south county would be quite sensitive and concerned about the impact of a rubble landfill's contamination of the waters flowing from the site through the south county and beyond.

I take partial blame for Haire not "remembering," as all along I assumed that she was staying "in the know about what I had previously discussed with her."

Early in the 1970s, the southern Maryland counties sued counties to the north because of their alleged contamination of the Patuxent River by wastewater treatment plants. The south won that suit. Those of us who lived here through that time are quite aware of our

obligations and are determined to monitor our impact on the Patuxent. Former Maryland state Sen. Bernie Fowler – aka “Pa Patuxent” – was known as the guardian of the southern part of the river. He once said, “Marsha, I officially appoint you, Marsha Perry, ‘Ma Patuxent.’ Thus, you are to be in charge of the northern part.” Thus, I must, to my best possible, worked diligently on Patuxent preservation whenever I think it to be threatened.

Haire’s assertion is that she just learned of the project. IN the fall of 2019, however, Crofton Civic Association President Martin Simon and I met with her to talk about this and other Route 3 development threats. We believed then and now that the corridor is often the dumping ground for projects not wanted along the roads of her council district south of Route 50.

We spoke at length about the proposals for both the Tolson Landfill at the end of Capital Raceway Road, the Tolson Concrete crushing plant and Cookie’s proposed landfill near Wilsontown.

Haire would not claim that the meeting did not happen or that I had not given her adequate information about the Halle project and my history with it. I went over its story in laborious detail.

Did Cookie Halle or any of his friends or relatives mention Chesapeake Terrace before, when or after giving her close to more than \$250,000 for her current campaign for county executive? I remember state Sen. Jack Cade telling me, “Marsha, remember, we did not get here on the back of a Turnip truck.” Senator Cade, that is quite true. \$250,000 dollars buys more than a turnip truck.

If Halle is still determined to have a site for his landfill, and if the plans are as well done as was testified to by the Maryland Department of the Environment, then I strongly suggest he look elsewhere – not in west Anne Arundel County or any ex-gravel pits near scenic rivers anywhere in Maryland.

I noted that many donors to Haire were residents of the Carolinas. Perhaps Halle should look there.

Marsha Perry is a board member of Crofton First and vice president of the Crofton Civic Association.