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A publication of Cooke
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Our View Governor to be applauded for veto

Governor Roy Cooper should be applauded for vetoing a bill aimed at threatening a free press.

House Bill 205 sought to allow municipalities to post legal advertisements and public notices on a county website instead of local newspapers. An earlier version of the bill would have applied across the state, but the proposal was amended so as to apply only in Guilford County.

The proposed law would have required local government in Guilford County to publish legal notices to their websites. Instead of spending the money on newspaper advertising, the savings would be used to partially fund teacher supplements.

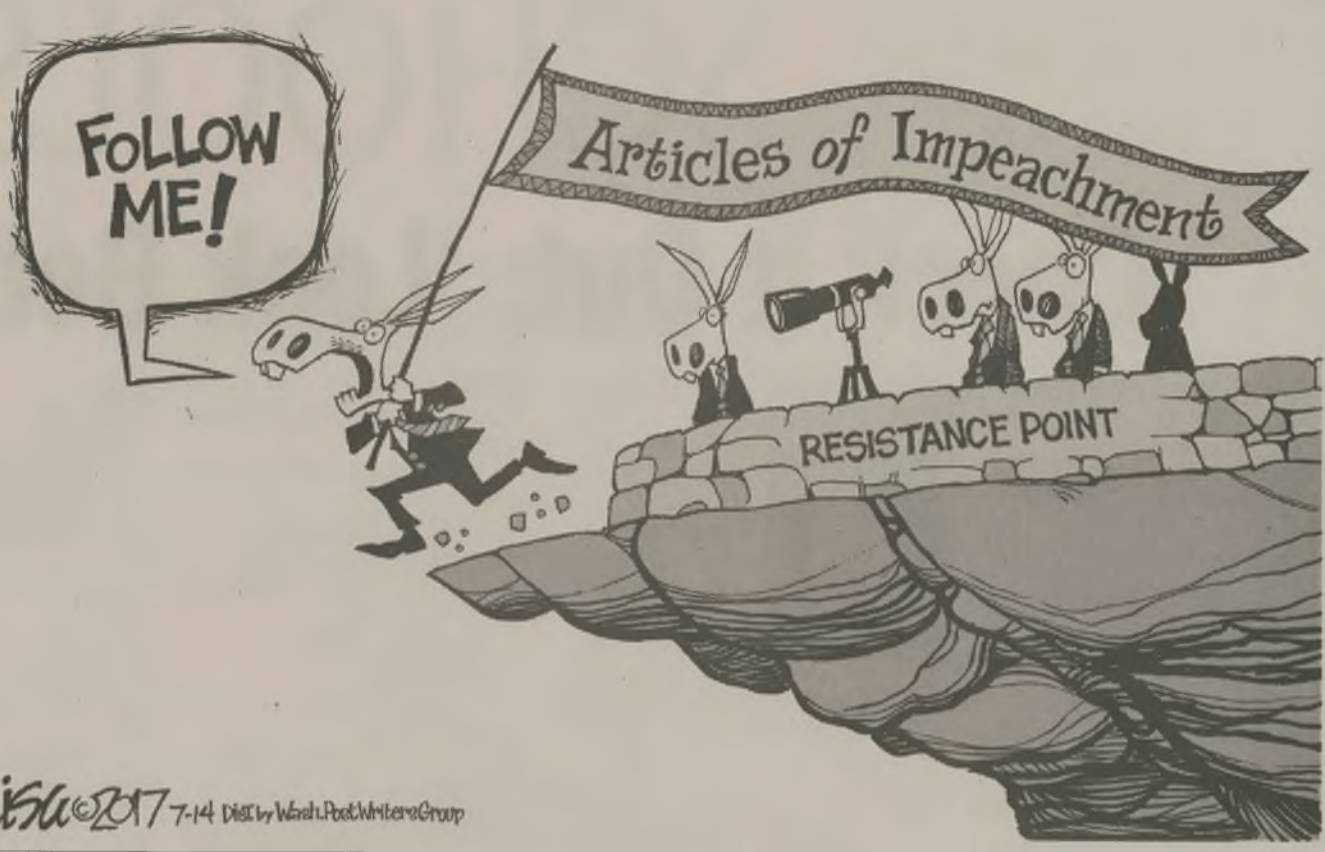
The bill was championed by Sen. Trudy Wade, R-Guilford, a conservative firebrand, who surely understood the principles enshrined by the First Amendment. However, Wade's ongoing war with the media blinded her judgment in supporting a law that would've penalized conservatives and liberals alike.

Though Wade's bill was pared down from statewide to Guilford County, its passage would have had a chilling effect on a free press no matter where it would have been applied.

Cooper was right to veto the bill because the public shouldn't rely on any government to place notices on a website. Time and time again, government has shown a reluctance to provide the public the information needed to understand how decisions are made. Giving the government the power to place these notices on a website seems fraught with peril. Not everyone may have access to the Internet nor time to navigate web sites some of which are not exactly user friendly.

The media's role is to shine a spotlight on government's activities large and small so that the public can be better informed. A free press insures that leaders operate with transparency, not behind the shadows of walls guarded by the bureaucracy.

There's no denying that these legal ads are a big part of the bottom line of many local newspapers. However, without these ads circulating to readers near and far, unless the public routinely surfs these government websites, few folks would be aware of what's going on.



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Voices of Reconciliation

"Granny, why do black children go to a different school? Why don't we have any black friends?"

These are two of the many questions I asked my grandmother in the early 1950s. Her answer was always, "JoJo, that's just the way it's always been and there's nothing we can do about it. Hush now and don't worry yourself."

But I continued to wonder. I knew something wasn't right. In Tarboro where I grew up 65 miles west of Edenton, I saw the way blacks were treated as second class citizens. Even black professionals — pastors, doctors, nurses, teachers — received grudging respect in the white community. In the black communities of East Tarboro and Princeville, they were held up as shining examples inspiring youth to dream big regardless of the obstacles.

The social and economic inequities between the races made little sense to the child I was then or to the developing racial reconciler I would become in adult years. Many blacks I hear today speak of having to leave their small Southern towns to find their true worth — and opportunities — which weren't guaranteed in the wider world. I witnessed what they meant when I went away to college.

A student at UNC-Greensboro in 1960,

the year of the Woolworth's sit-ins there, white resistance was fierce towards blacks seeking equal access to the lunch counter. THE LUNCH COUNTER! My classes at UNC-Chapel Hill years later from 1977 to 1981 were



JO BAKER
COLUMNIST

racially integrated and more welcoming.

Professor Hortense McClinton in the School of Social Work, the first black professor hired at UNC-Chapel Hill, was my favorite teacher and she influenced me to become a marriage and family therapist. Many of my co-workers were black at my first two clinical social work jobs — Murdoch Center in Butner and Moore Regional Hospital in Pinehurst. Working closely with these men and women confirmed my childhood wisdom. The few cultural differences between blacks and whites are to be appreciated and enjoyed rather than discounted as inferior.

My grandmother's convictions do not apply today. We CAN do something: recognize that the Jim Crow thinking — "separate but equal" — which was never fairly carried out or believed — persists in 2017 in many minds despite being overturned by law in the 1950s and 60s. We can replace Jim Crow behavior with what is more appropriate now — honest peer relationships regardless of skin color or ethnicity

and an openness to friendships wherever they are possible.

As a white Southern woman living in Edenton for fifteen years, I cherish my friendships with local persons of color or a different ethnicity which have enriched my life immeasurably.

In the Racial Reconciliation Group at Edenton United Methodist Church which I coordinate and helped start, we practice what we "teach." We also study history and current events to get a more complete understanding of why white Americans resist the integration of minority groups.

Acknowledging any progress the culture at large demonstrates on systemic and personal levels, we recognize that skin color bias and cultural "tribe" mentality are not easily overcome.

Group members openly discuss their experiences and each person's point of view is valued as we discuss how we can make a positive impact on Edenton. New opportunities and challenges are always presenting themselves.

Over the three-plus years that we have met, bonds of trust and friendship have developed, perhaps, an example of Dr. King's "beloved community" though we know we haven't "arrived" by any means.

Contact Information: Call 482-3924, Email curtisandjo@yahoo.com

Jo Baker is the coordinator of the Racial Reconciliation Group.

Differing views: Edenton storm water system Town takes its responsibility seriously

The Town's storm water system is built like most municipal storm water systems, to handle 5 inches of rain in 24 hours. This amount of rain is called a "10 year storm". The Town's storm water pump station located on the Schmieler property by easement on East Water Street was designed to remove storm water from a 10 year storm.



KNIGHTON

The pump station drains approximately 82 acres of property through storm water pipes and catch basins from N. Broad Street to streets on the east side to E. Water Street and then discharges directly in to Edenton Bay. Under designed conditions, the pipes and storm water pump station perform. The storms that flooded the Schmieler property five times in the past three years were intense storms with volumes of rain that exceeded the capacity of the Town's storm water pipes and pump station. When volume exceeds capacity, flooding occurs.

Hurricane Matthew and the flash flood on Saturday, June 24th are examples of storms that created volumes of rain that exceeded our system's capacity. Matthew rainfall accumulation of up to 15 inches was reported and 5 inches of rain fell within two hours during the height of the storm. The June 24th storm was according to National Weather Service defined as a flash flood — 3 inches of rain in less than 3 hours. When rains from these events eased up or stopped, the Town's storm water system drained the flooded streets and in quick time the flood waters were drained away.

Schmieler wants the Town to consider issuing bonds to make repairs and expand capacity of storm water system. I have authorized the Town's consulting engineer to study options to upgrade the storm sewer pump station to handle higher intensity storms and also divert portion of upstream storm water flow at Court Street to Edenton Bay, via gravity flow, if possible. This study will include cost estimates and should be completed by the first of September.

The second complaint is about storm surge flooding on E. Water Street. This street floods when the level of Edenton Bay exceeds the level of the bulkhead at Queen Anne Creek. This is called storm surge flooding and East Water Street and surrounding

properties are at risk for storm surge flooding. Properties on E. Water Street are located in FEMA's high hazard flood zone and are required to purchase flood insurance if property is mortgaged.

The third complaint is regarding the sanitary sewer overflows that occurred as result of Matthew and the June 24th flash flood. The Town tries hard to prevent overflows, our goal is zero overflows. But when streets are flooded, storm water enters sewer system by draining into man holes covers causing manholes to surge charge. Storm water also enters sewer pipes through cracks in joints and seals. By law, the Town is required to report the volume of overflow as untreated wastewater. However we know during extreme weather events, overflow likely consists of 90 percent storm water and 10 percent untreated wastewater.

The Town takes it responsibility to clean overflows seriously. After Hurricane Matthew, extra steps were taken to protect the public from impacted areas of the overflows. In addition to Public Works personnel cleaning and sanitizing sewer overflow areas, the Fire Department was deployed to hose down impacted area and the street sweeper was mobilized to the area as well. Although not required by state law or state regulations, the Town collected water samples from Edenton Bay to test for possible presence of bacteria.

The Town contacted State regulators to advise we collected water samples and asked if we should post signs, warning the public and requested advice on for appropriate wording of signs. The Town was informed it was not necessary to do any of this, that the volume of storm water diluted the untreated wastewater in the Creek and Bay and any bacteria on the ground would no longer be harmful. Our department heads and I are monitoring our infrastructure and identifying areas where we may be vulnerable.

Our citizens should know that we are in pursuit of funding to make repairs where needed as well as any improvements that would further reduce the impact of extreme weather events in the future. We are committed to the safety of our citizens and the protection of their property.

Anne-Marie Knighton is the town manager of Edenton.

Another view of the sewage problems

On July 5th, 2017, the Chowan Herald reported the disclosure by the Town of Edenton (the "Town") of a leak of some 40,000 gallons of raw sewage on June 24th, 2017 into Edenton Bay.

I submit that there's more to the story. Just as troubling as the leak, is how the foul and dangerous stuff found its way into the bay, as well as how often this type of event has occurred.

The press has reported that more than 26,000 gallons of the leak occurred at 209 East Water St. To be clear, that is Mayor Roland Vaughn's home. My wife and I have lived next door at 211 East Water Street for the last 5 years. In point of fact, the leaks have occurred in the sidewalk and street at the border of our two homes. I'm this specific only because it bears on what I'm about to tell you.

For at least three years, I have repeatedly appealed to the Town to do something about the frequent and repetitive storm water events that flood our yards on the east ends of Water, King, Eden and Queen Streets with untreated storm water, often, in places up to waist deep.

When this occurs, as it did on June 24, 2017, the bend on East Water Street adjacent to the Hays Farm bridge is closed by the Town as a result of the presence of the flood waters. This often leads to the spilling of these waters over into Queen Anne Park and Queen Anne Creek at the head of Edenton Bay.

When sanitary sewer leaks occur at the manholes described above at the same time, the raw sewage mixes with the untreated storm water and covers our yards, East Water Street and often Queen Anne Park and enters the Creek. Once the storm water floods over the manholes it's impossible to determine if raw sewage is mixing in.

I believe that this leads to an unacceptable and possibly dangerous and serious public health hazard that the Town has not done enough to stop.

And it hasn't just occurred on June 24. This has happened before, and I believe it will continue until the Town takes this situation seriously and does something about it now.

During Hurricane Matthew the raw sewage



SCHMIELER

age, mixed with untreated storm water, again covered our yards, Water Street and the Park. The Town did nothing until I demanded that they respond. I then saw them apply some sort of chemical to our yard and the manhole covers. I saw nothing done to the Park. The next day I saw a large group of young children playing in the Park in guess what.

When I brought this to the Town's attention I was told not to worry, the microbes in the sewage would not live that long.

I'm a trained bio-chemist and I'm not buying it. Furthermore, I believe there's more in that raw sewage than microbes. It is well reported that raw sanitary sewage contains all manner of contaminants such as human feces, condoms, sanitary napkins, tampons, harmful microorganisms and pathogens including bacteria, viruses, Protozoa and parasites as well as persistent pharmaceuticals (drugs).

Does this sound like a situation that should take years to fix? Is this something that the "Prettiest Little Town in the South" should allow its residents, their children and its tourists to be exposed to?

I predict that the Town will respond to this letter with the same tired excuses: 1) These are extraordinary events. (It's happened at least five times to me in the last three years.) 2) We're working on the problem. (I'd like to believe that, however, after three years I find the pace is so slow that when you're on the receiving end of these floods progress seems nonexistent.) 3) We have no funding. (I believe the time has come for the Town to consider issuing bonds to raise the funds to make comprehensive repairs, alterations and capacity improvements to our sanitary sewers, our storm sewers and our sea walls.)

I invite anyone from the Town leadership and our residents to come down to our house, see the situation for themselves and decide how long we, our children and our tourists should live with this.

If you find you agree with me, please take the time to let our Town leaders know that we want this unbearable and dangerous situation fixed now.

Chuck Schmieler is an Edenton homeowner.