



The Mecklenburg Sun

Largest Circulated Newspaper In Mecklenburg County • Established 1976

Phone (434) 374-8152

FAX (434) 374-8153

www.SoVaNow.com

P.O. Box 997 • 602 Virginia Avenue • Clarksville, VA 23927 • email news@thamecklenburgsun.com

November 9, 2020

Federal Election Commission
Office of Complaints Examination
& Legal Administration
1050 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 204639

Attn: Christal Dennis, Paralegal
SENT VIA EMAIL & USPS (hard copy)

Dear Christal,

Our newspaper, The Mecklenburg Sun, received notification on Oct. 29, 2020 that The Sun has been named in a complaint (MUR 7831) pertaining to political advertising that appeared in our August 19, 2020 edition. This response is intended to both address the nature of the complaint, as best as we can ascertain its particulars, and outline the corrective/remedial steps that our newspaper took in the aftermath.

In our August 19 edition, The Sun carried a print ad from an individual, Jeanne Capello, advocating for the Democratic ticket on the Nov. 3 general election ballot. The ad in question (enclosed) asked voters to support Joe Biden for president, Senator Mark Warner for U.S. Senate in Virginia, and VA-5 Congressional candidate Dr. Cameron Webb for U.S. House of Representatives. Due to a production mistake for which we subsequently accepted responsibility and apologized for, the ad appeared in our newspaper without a disclaimer stating who paid for it. The ad itself was a relatively minor transaction in the scheme of things (the cost was \$180.00 for a 30 column inch ad running at the bottom of page A5), but it did lack information that should have been included for the benefit and understanding of our readers.

This was a mistake all around (involving the advertiser, our advertising sales representative, our production staff and me personally in my capacity as publisher/editor), but of course, it falls on our organization and on me to do better, and this is something we discussed internally at length after a number of readers complained to us directly.

At the first opportunity, we reached out to our readership to admit the error, which was innocent but real. (I also spoke to about 3 or 4 people personally who called our office to complain.) In our Aug. 26 edition (The Sun is published weekly, on Wednesdays), we ran a page A3 "note to readers" explaining our mistake, and I wrote about the matter in my editorial page column on page A4 (enclosed), which is a weekly feature of the newspaper (and one, I like to think, that gets much more widespread readership than any particular display ad running in our newspaper.) We explained openly and honestly to readers what had happened, and by and large this seemed to calm the situation, or at least convey an understanding that none of this was part of a scheme to inappropriately influence the election or how voters should approach it.



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It probably bears mentioning that The Sun continued to carry paid print political advertising throughout the campaign season, including from Ms. Capello, without any further errors in identifying the purchasers of the ads.

We are a small and proud community newspaper with a staff that works extremely hard to provide thorough, accurate and fair-minded coverage of news and happenings in Mecklenburg County, Va. The nature of our business is such that we are perpetually resigned to displeasing someone at some point pretty much all of the time. But we do our work and strive to fulfill our mission as an honest provider of community information with a sense of diligence that is not perfect but is ever constant. This controversy over the Aug. 19 political ad in our newspaper does not change this fact, in our minds nor in the minds of our readers — as evidenced by the loyalty and support we receive from our more than 4,000 regular subscribers and many hundreds of purchasers of newsstand copies each week. Accountability is our core pledge to our local community, and that spirit guided our response in the aftermath of this situation.

I am available most any time via my cell phone number (_____) if you or a member of FEC staff would like to discuss this matter further.

All good wishes.

Sincerely,



Tom McLaughlin
 The Mecklenburg Sun

Enclosures/attachments (email)

Obituaries

Lewis Clyde Madison, Jr.

Lewis Clyde Madison, Jr., 91, passed away peacefully August 18, 2020 at Henrico Doctor's Hospital in Richmond. He was born January 6, 1929, in Richmond and was the son of Lewis Clyde Madison, Sr. and Allene Madison Hardwick. Lewis spent his first 69 years in Richmond where he met and married Kathryn Edgerton Madison. They would have been married 60 years in November.

Lewis graduated from the University of Richmond in 1951. He served in the United States Naval Reserves for 5 years, until he joined WRVA Radio Station in 1957. He had a long 33-year career at the radio station and during this time, he met his beloved Kathryn. They had one son, James Lewis Madison, in 1968. The Madison family are members of Derbyshire Baptist Church in Richmond, where Lewis served proudly as a Deacon and Sunday School Director. In 1990, Lewis and Kathryn retired to Clarksville.

Those who knew Lewis will remember him for his amazing sense of humor and quick wit. He loved telling stories about old times and his many fishing trips. He knew no stranger and could strike up a conversation anywhere he went. Up until his last precious days,

his smile and jokes would be remembered by anyone whose lives he touched. Lewis loved donating his time to his community. He was a 50-year member of the Masonic Fraternity, where he served as the Worshipful Master of the Glen Allen Masonic Lodge in 1968 and 1969. He was also a member of the American Legion, the Lions Club and many other community service groups along the way.

He is survived by his son, James Lewis Madison and wife, Dondi Madison; four grandchildren, Shelby Madison, Lindsey Madison, Brandon Wyatt, Bradley Wyatt, sister-in-law, Patricia Ryan and her husband, Chuck; numerous nieces and nephews, along with devoted friends Larry Willis, Beverly Hite, plus many more. He is predeceased by his parents, Lewis Clyde Madison and Allene Madison Hardwick and his wife, Kathryn.

The family would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Sunrise Assisted Living Community and Comfort Keepers in Richmond for all of their support.

A celebration of Lewis's life was held at Watkins Cooper Lyon Funeral Home at noon on Saturday, August 22, 2020. His celebration was live streamed on Facebook.

In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Lake Country SPCA or your local animal shelter on behalf of Lewis. He and Kathryn both adored every one of their pets, many being rescues. Online condolences may be made at www.wclh.com. The family is being served by Watkins Cooper Lyon Funeral Home.

STUDENT

From page A1

said, as well as for always being positive and well-mannered. He was part of the community of Williams Trail.

"He was a reflection of his mom [Debbie Henderson] and his community. He was loved by everyone," said Womack, adding that the deceased youth set an example in these times of racial turmoil for how all people should love one another.

With the deaths of the two students Sunday, Halifax County High School has organized a vigil at the school campus this Friday at 6 p.m. to honor and memorialize Henderson and Singleton.

HCHS Principal Michael Lewis and Scott met Monday to organize the Friday night event. Everyone is asked to observe social distancing guidelines and park in the student lot. You may bring a candle or some will be provided. The JROTC program will provide the balloons.

"I am deeply saddened by the loss of Aiden and Kolby. I want the families to know our thoughts and prayers are with them during this extremely difficult time," said Lewis.

"Aiden was always one member I'd call to go with me to events to represent Misunderstood," said Womack. Henderson was known for his genuine and infectious smile, Womack

Ruff, Wright removed from Virginia Tobacco Commission

Mecklenburg County has no representation on the Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission after House Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn and members of the Senate Rules Committee opted not to reappoint Del. Tommy Wright and Senator Frank Ruff to the panel.

The change came after Democrats took control of the House of Delegates and Senate, which gives them power to appoint lawmakers to commissions.

Ruff who was first named to the Commission in 1999 when it was created and had been serving as Vice Chair.

Also gone from the Commission are Senators Bill Stanley (R-Franklin) and Bill Carrico (R-Grayson). Carrico retired from the Senate at the end of 2019. In their place, the Senate Rules Committee named Senators John Edwards (D-Roanoke), Louise Lucas (D-Portsmouth) and Joe Morrissey (D-Richmond).

Ben Chafin (R-Russell) was the only Republican Senator reappointed to the Commission.

The House replaced Dels. Tommy Wright (R-Lunenburg) Kathy Byron (R-Bedford), Will Morefield (R-Tazewell) and Danny Marshall (R-Danville) with Dels. Lashrese Aird (D-Petersburg), Chris Hurst (D-Montgomery), Sam Rasoul (D-Roanoke) and Roslyn Tyler (D-Sussex). Chairman Terry Kilgore (R-Scott) and Del. James Edmunds (R-Halifax) were both reappointed to their respective posts.

During his long tenure, Wright served as Chair of the Southside Economic Development Committee.

Of the seven new members, only Del. Roslyn Tyler lives in either the Southwest or Southside regions of Virginia. She resides in Sussex County. Every Republican member live in the area commonly known as the "tobacco footprint."

The remaining 18 members of the 28-member Tobacco Commission include cabinet secretaries and politically appointed citizens, none of whom live in Mecklenburg

Palmer Springs Volunteer Fire Department Drive Thru Fried Chicken Dinner. A drive thru Fried Chicken dinner will be held on Friday, August 28 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Stay in your vehicle and pick up Fried Chicken, Green Beans, Boiled Potatoes, Dessert and Soda or Water for \$10 per plate. Preorders are highly encouraged and must be picked up by 6:00 p.m. Preorders may be placed by calling (434) 689-2739 prior to 10:00 p.m. daily. Preorders will be accepted until 10 p.m. Thursday, August 27, 1697 Palmer Springs Road (at Palmer Springs Road, Rough Road and Mineral Springs Road).

County. Ruff said this is the first time in the history of the commission that any legislative member has lived outside of one of the communities covered by the tobacco footprint. Traditionally, long-standing members of a committee are asked if they wish to continue their service. In his case, Ruff said he learned he was being replaced after was taken in the Senate Rules Committee. "I received official word about a week later."

He concedes that the enabling legislation that created the Commission is vague in that it requires members to reside in areas that are undefined — "with the exception of the Secretary of Commerce and Trade or his designee, the Secretary of Finance or his designee and the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry or his designee, all members of the Commission shall reside in the Southside and Southwest regions." Ruff says it's been generally understood that the Southside and Southwest regions are limited to the 34 counties and 6 cities that make up the tobacco footprint: Lee, Wise, Dickenson, Buchanan, Scott, Russell, Washington, Tazewell, Smyth, Grayson, Wythe, Bland, Carroll, Floyd, Patrick, Henry, Franklin, Bedford, Pittsylvania, Campbell, Appomattox, Buckingham, Halifax, Charlotte, Prince Edward, Cumberland, Amelia, Nottoway, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Brunswick, Dinwiddie, Greensville, and Sussex counties and the cities of Norton, Bristol, Galax, Martinsville, Danville, Emporia.

Ruff acknowledges that no Democrats have served on the Commission in the past few years, but says that is a function of who the people living in Southside and Southwest Virginia elect to the General Assembly. There are few

Democratic members of Virginia's legislative delegation elected from Southside or Southwest Virginia.

Hearing that Ruff was no longer a member of the Tobacco Commission, Mecklenburg County Administrator Wayne Carter said he was disheartened to learn that the county which has historically been in the top three tobacco producing counties in Virginia no longer has any representation on the Commission.

He added on behalf of Mecklenburg County supervisors, "we are gravely disappointed that our two representatives have been replaced with others outside the region in violation of state law." He also commended Ruff and Wright who he said always represented their communities well.

The Virginia Tobacco Commission was created in 1999 for the purposes of determining the appropriate use of Virginia's share of the Tobacco Master Settlement money, which is to be used to promote economic development and growth in formerly tobacco-dependent communities in southern and

Note to readers

The Election Day ad that ran on page A5 of the August 19 edition of The Sun was paid for by a private citizen, Jeanne Capello. It should have included a disclaimer that identified Capello as the person who purchased the ad and that it was not authorized by any candidate or candidate's campaign committee.

The contact information listed at the bottom of the ad is for the Mecklenburg County Registrar's office. It was included for persons interested in obtaining an absentee ballot only.

Capello says that anyone seeking additional information about the candidates listed in the ad can contact her at jmc20005@yahoo.com.

southwestern Virginia. While the strategic and funding priorities of the Commission have evolved over time, the geographic area served by the Tobacco Commission remains fixed.



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Crystal Nehme, Owner • 434-738-3596
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Commentary

Aftermath

Quite a few people were upset with us after a political advertisement appeared in the pages of last week's *The Sun*, which just so happened to be a mass mailed edition to kick off our annual subscription campaign. Folks had cause for complaint: the ad lacked a disclaimer stating who paid for it. On page A3 of today's paper, you'll find a note with this necessary information, which should have been included in the original run of the ad. It was our mistake — my mistake — and for that, we apologize.

The point of the ad was to encourage people to (1) vote early and (2) vote for the Democratic ticket of Joe Biden for President, Mark Warner for U.S. Senate, and Cameron Webb for Congress in Virginia's 5th District. (Webb, a Charlottesville physician, is running against Republican nominee Bob Good, a former Campbell County supervisor and Liberty University fundraiser, to succeed incumbent GOP Rep. Denver Riggleman, who was denied renomination by his party in June.) Setting aside the horse race aspects of the matter for now, the ad elicited complaints on a number of grounds. Some people read it and thought it was placed by Mecklenburg County local government (despite no content indicating such), others felt supporters of the Republican ticket were denied equal opportunity to place their own ads, and some felt generally it was all a dirty trick somehow. So let's address each of these points in turn.

First: Political expression, including political advertising, is open to all in these pages, and while anyone who reads this column can guess where *The Sun's* endorsements will land this fall, we do not deny others an opportunity to express different opinions. This is true on both a paid basis (political advertising) and non-paid basis (letters to the editor that appear in our Viewpoint column.) In the case of last week's mass mailing, an individual purchaser (Jeanne Capello) chose to place the ad, as everyone is free to do. We announced our upcoming mass mailing in a quarter-page ad that ran in the prior week's edition.

Just to show that we welcome all comers, *The Sun* has scheduled our next mass mailing for Wednesday, Oct. 21, two weeks before Election Day. Again, all are welcome to participate. So if you'd like to advertise in that edition, just call our office at (434) 374-8152. We're happy to help.

The press lives and dies on the hill of the First Amendment (our industry is specifically referenced in the Constitution) and we work to uphold the ideals of free expression on a daily basis. That doesn't mean we place no rules or limits on outside contributors. *The Sun* reserves the right to reject any political advertising that we deem defamatory or false. We publish as many Viewpoint letters as we can fit in these pages, although we reserve the right to prioritize all content based on what we believe is of greatest interest to readers. Sometimes we ding letters for being defamatory, false, racist or abusive, but I can tell you the single biggest reason a letter may end up in the wastebasket is because it's too darn long. Some letter writers can maintain an argument over hundreds of words, but many others do not. All letters bump up against space constraints that are a fact of life in the print business. Please keep these factors in mind when you pen your letters, and try to keep them as compact as you can — we'll do everything possible to make our Viewpoint column a lively space for competing views.

From the feedback we received last week, I can't quite get a handle on why so many folks felt last week's ad — a simple



THE VIEW FROM HERE

Tom McLaughlin

appeal for people to vote early — was so transgressive. Was it because early voting in Virginia is new? Absentee voting prior to Election Day has been a political reality since forever, but this will be the first major election in Virginia in which people can cast their ballots before the general election without having to provide an approved justification for voting absentee, such as a work-related scheduling conflict or medical excuse. "No excuses" absentee voting is the same as early voting in all but name, and it's a much overdue improvement in Virginia's ridiculously restrictive voting laws. Especially with a deadly pandemic raging across America, there is absolutely no reason to require people to stand in long lines on Election Day just to exercise their right to vote. I plan to cast my ballot early and I hope you do, too. It'll make life safer for everyone.

Absentee/early voting begins Sept. 18. You must submit an application for an absentee ballot to the Voter Registrar's office, and they will mail out a ballot form for you to fill out and return with your choices. In recent weeks, there's been extensive coverage of President Trump's intentions to stop mail-in voting (he said it, not me), coupled with further reports of dodgy orders by the Postmaster General, Trump donor Louis DeJoy, that threaten to denigrate the ability of the Postal Service to process ballots in time for the general election. Personally, I don't believe the Trump Administration is competent enough to cheat on such a massive scale, but I understand why people wouldn't want to test that theory. For that reason and others, early in-person voting at the Registrar's Office in Boynton is probably your best option, unless you fear getting out altogether (justifiably) or don't have easy access to Boynton. (The Registrar's Office is located at 439 Madison Street.) In that case, it would be a good idea to mail in your completed ballots well ahead of the Nov. 3 election. Here at *The Sun*, we work extensively with our local post offices, and I can assure you the USPS workforce is dedicated to delivering the mail promptly and accurately — no politics involved. But you can make life easier for your postal carrier by mailing in those ballots sooner rather than later.

One more thing: heading into this year, I dreaded the upheaval that 2020 would bring simply by virtue of being a presidential election year. Little did I (and everyone else) know. Without a doubt, 2020 has been one of the most traumatic years in living memory in America, with the coronavirus now responsible for nearly 180,000 dead (that's the official number of deaths, the actual figure is almost certainly higher due to spotty reporting and yawning gaps in our public health systems). On top of the cruelty of the virus itself, our national response has been pathetic, leading to an economic collapse with tens of millions of people unemployed and thousands of businesses wiped out through no fault of their own. (You would never hear me say this under ordinary circumstances, but we'll eventually need to bail out the airlines, bars and restaurants, entertainment venues and other sectors of the economy that have been all but destroyed by COVID-19. With strict caps on executive pay, of course.) The immense challenges of combatting the virus have been compounded by the bottomless corruption and incompetence of our current president, which was always a battle that would be fought with this year's election, if not to this existential degree. Yet having said all this, I understand opinions on Donald Trump and Joe Biden differ. Opinions always



Pollinator country

A butterfly finds nourishment in the nectar of a fruit tree — and the conditions are set for a new seed to grow. (Contributed photo)

differ! What's so different this time is the thin ice we find ourselves standing on — with everyone on edge, and more than a little fearful. It's not a great foundation for holding our democracy together. Working through our differences is going to be tough, and somebody's going to be very unhappy with the outcome, but for the sake of America's future and our collective sanity, we've got to run a clean election process and respect the results it produces. Arguments are never really settled, but they must be properly channeled. Otherwise, the United States of America will become nothing more than the world's largest banana republic.

Last week we slipped up on this score — making a mistake with a political ad that was unintentional, but a mistake nonetheless. We try to be consciously transparent, but that hardly means we're going to be perfect. To this end, if you've got a problem with what we do, reach out and we'll respond as soon as we can. We may not always be able to provide satisfaction, but we do listen. It's the foundation for all things to come.

Grief visits us all in due course, and learning how to deal with it is a challenge none of us gets to avoid. Every day brings new endings, and there have been three recently that I want to mention here.

It wasn't until I read his obituary that I realized Stan Pitts of Clarksville was a former head track coach at the University of Maryland. Once he and wife Janice moved to Clarksville, they both became pillars of the local real estate industry, and tireless boosters for the Town of Clarksville. I should have guessed that Stan would have been an athletic standout as a younger man — in late middle age, when our paths frequently crossed, he still had the fit-and-trim look of a sprinter, or perhaps a pole vaulter. (The most fearless of track and field competitors.) He and Janice were always outstanding to do business with, and they've made their adoptive town a better place with their hard work and energetic presence. Stan died Aug. 8 at the age of 82. He will be greatly missed.

Bobby Williams of Clover, who died Aug. 17 at age 80, was a dear friend. Many will remember Bobby as the manager of the old Byrd's Foods in Chase City, later to become Lowe's Foods, a regional player in a grocery industry that continues to consolidate into bigger and bigger companies. Bobby was a low-key, unassuming sort, and it took me some

time to overcome my own cluelessness to discover what a wonderful and warm-hearted person he was. The grocery business is a dog-eat-dog world, not the sort of environment that always brings out the best in a person, yet I never saw Bobby being anything less other courteous and helpful to customers, and kind and respectful overall. Plus he had a quietly excellent sense of humor. Our condolences to Mary Lee, his equally wonderful wife, and Bobby's entire family.

I could — and maybe will — write an entire column about Jack Hite of Clarksville, who died Sunday night after a long spell of declining health. There's so much I could say about the former county supervisor and Board Chairman, Boyd Tavern president, health department sanitarian, Virginia Tech booster and stalwart Democrat that it's hard to know where to even begin (much less end.) So until I have a little more time to compose a better tribute, there's this: Jack was simply one of the smartest individuals I've ever known. Our conversations, and there were many, were always a joy, even when we may have disagreed on the particulars. Jack had a fantastically cutting sense of humor — which didn't endear him to everyone — but in the vein of it's only funny because it's true, Jack was a truth-teller extraordinaire. His network of connections in Mecklenburg and around Virginia never ceased to amaze, and I can't even begin to count all the times I'd learn the news ahead of the pack simply by paying attention to the parts that fit between the cackles and zings. He could be entertaining as all get out.

Jack also set an example as an eminently fair-minded chairman of the Board of Supervisors. Back when I first started covering the board, in my 20s and 30s, it was a contentious, bruising bunch, with not a lot of effort expended trying to establish a foundation of trust and communication among all factions of the board (sometimes the battle lines were drawn neatly between opposing factions, sometimes not.) Once he became chairman, Jack put great effort into allowing everyone to have their say, which improved the work of the Board immensely. His example was carried forward by future board chairs, from W.P. Hudgins and others to current chair Glenn Barbour, and by large they, too, have done an excellent job keeping county business on track despite inevitable disagreements among members. Jack Hite paired sharp elbows with an even-keeled inner compass — a balance to strive for, now more than ever.

TO CONTACT THE SUN: Call (434) 374-8152 or contact *The Sun* by e-mail: news@thamecklenburgsun.com ■ On the web at www.sovanow.com

Subscription price: \$18 yearly for residents of Mecklenburg and adjoining Va. counties of Brunswick, Lunenburg, Charlotte, Halifax and in N.C., Granville & Person; all others \$32 yearly.

The Mecklenburg Sun (USPS 003-032) is published every Wednesday for \$18 a year in Mecklenburg, Charlotte, Halifax, Granville, Lunenburg and Person counties; all other locations \$32 per year by Sun Publishing Company, Inc., P.O. Box 997, Clarksville, VA 23927. Periodical class postage paid at Clarksville, VA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE MECKLENBURG SUN, P.O. Box 997, Clarksville, VA 23927.

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Editor & General Manager: Tom McLaughlin
Staff Writers: Susan Kyte, Mike Moseley, Steve Hinzman
Office Manager: Malinda Chery
Advertising Representatives: Lisa Jarry, Teresa Elliott,
David Jones

VIEWPOINT



Write Viewpoint, PO Box 997, Clarksville VA 23927 or e-mail The Sun at news@themecklenburgsun.com.

Let's be respectful

Dear Viewpoint:

With only 76 days to Election Day on Nov. 3, more and more presidential campaign signs are appearing in the county. We all believe that our candidate is the best and with that said, how about we show respect for the other party's signs, property, and each other? Whoever stole the 4' x 8' Biden-Warner-Webb sign from the corner of Mayfield Drive and Highway 58 — you were trespassing along with stealing. This type of behavior does not speak well for the party we choose to support. On a lighter note, early voting in the Nov. 3 general election starts Sept. 18 at the Voter Registrar's Office in Boydton.

Jeanne M. Capello
Boydton

Praise for health care heroes

Dear Viewpoint:

I want to take this opportunity to let this community know how proud they should be of the health care team at Community Memorial Hospital as they have faced the challenge of dealing with COVID-19. Over the last five plus months, the CMH team has shown true dedication to caring for patients in what could easily be called the worst of times, other than that of a war zone perhaps. However, for all intents and purposes, they have been engaged in a war with an invisible, yet very deadly disease. Highly infectious patients may not even display any symptoms of illness, yet can transmit the virus simply by being close to others and not wearing a mask. The act of speaking, a sneeze or a simple cough can send droplets containing the virus that can then be absorbed through the mouth, nose or eyes of another person.

Since COVID-19 arrived, the CMH team transformed a 70 bed community hospital into a multi-hospital complex capable of housing at least 225 acute care and critical care patients. This transition was accomplished within the first three weeks after the declaration of a state of emergency and was made possible by our ability to repurpose the original Community Memorial Hospital facility. The amount of effort that was necessary to accomplish this was extraordinary and speaks volumes to the caliber of individuals who make up the CMH team.

We have had to change how we operate all of our clinics and our patient care services. Our direct care teams have had to adapt to more strict levels of infection prevention protocols and daily put aside their fears of working in an environment that exists to treat all illnesses and injuries, but is also ready to face this new world-wide pandemic. This requires an enormous amount of dedication and resilience and it is something that will carry them through these many months yet to come until an effective vaccine can be developed. I also want to thank the community for adapting to our stricter visitor guidelines that are necessary to ensure everyone's safety at our facilities. I realize they have been an inconvenience; but, cooperation overall has been great and it is much appreciated.

While we all seem to have adapted a bit more to this "world of COVID-19," I wanted everyone to know how awesome the CMH team of health care professionals is and how proud I am to be their CEO. I also want to thank this community for the many expressions of support and encouragement that have been offered to the staff at the hospital and all of our patient care divisions of CMH. It means a lot for them to know that their willingness to face the daily risk to their personal health is appreciated. This same dedication is demonstrated by our EMS partners in this region who have worked tirelessly to make sure all patients receive whatever care is needed and I want to thank them as well.

We are not out of the woods with COVID-19 yet, but the teams at VCU Health Community Memorial Hospital and VCU Medical Center in Richmond stand ready to face this challenge as they have done so well throughout our histories.

No words are adequate to express my appreciation to the CMH team, so I will simply end this letter by saying, "Thank you."

Sincerely,
W. Scott Burnette, Chief Executive Officer

Questions for Bluestone

Dear Viewpoint:
Dear Superintendent Nichols, Assistant Superintendent Jeffers and Bluestone High School Administration:

I write to you today because myself and some concerned Bluestone Band parents have noticed that there is a job opening on the Mecklenburg County Public Schools website for a Band Director. This is a shocking concern for us and we are wondering if there is some issue with Mr. Moton?

On Monday August 10, 2020 we started by addressing this to the Bluestone High School Administration and were met with only a comment that the job is posted and they are unable to discuss personnel matters. While we understand that personnel matters are sensitive, it is not unreasonable for concerned parents to initiate a constructive dialogue to protect our kids from more and unexpected turmoil which appears avoidable. From our perspective, Mr. Moton has been one of the few consistent influences during this difficult time. That said, we believe that concerned parents invested in the work that Mr. Moton has been doing with our kids, are entitled to answers when appearances indicate that Mr. Moton may no longer be their teacher.

We are hopeful that this is a simple error and that Mr. Moton is still the band director for Bluestone. We realize Mr. Moton is not from this area and perhaps has approached things a little differently than in previous years. However, it is our firm belief that his approach with educating our children has been effective in mentoring, improving, and strengthening the core technical and personal skills the Band Director is required to impart on the students.

I personally have had multiple conversations with individuals in this community identifying the need for a shift in the mindset of community members in the Mecklenburg County area regarding not only education as a whole, but also in its music program. I recall hearing someone in the community reply over a negative comment about Bluestone that, "It's Bluestone, it's just the way it is." Let me state boldly at this point, we reject that mindset. If there is a desire to improve the mindset in this community, then it is crucial to start now and different ways of approaching things, and new ideas and methods in the Band program is only one of the tools to support that end.

Our children have endured some rather difficult issues over the past six months and everything in their world seems to be uncertain. Schools closed, their hard work and preparation for Spring performances were dashed by safety concerns from the COVID-19 virus, and all (students and parents) have had to transition to a new, and for some more challenging, method of educational operations. Early on, my daughter believed that her marching band season would be taken from her. While this may seem small to some, this is a big deal for our children. My daughter's dream in life is to become a Band Director and do exactly what Mr. Moton has been mentoring her to accomplish. My daughter is not alone in her needs for this guidance and mentorship.

From spring into summer, these kids have experienced anxiety without end over many different aspects of their lives. As summer progressed, their worst fears about Summer Band Camp, and recently their entire opportunity to march competitively, have been realized. COVID-19 took their chance to perform and show their hard work, took their opportunity to come together again to press forward with a new season of normalcy with Band Camp, and took their only hope of performing in marching competition to show their hard work.

Now, it appears that there is some chance that they may have to deal with yet a new variable: A new Band Director. The one thing that has consistently been a positive voice during these trying times has been Mr. Moton. He has gone above and beyond (and far more than many, if most, core class teachers), by engaging the students in video meetings and lessons. We realize the decision to cancel the season for the students is another matter entirely and do not presume to debate the merits of that decision in this discussion.

Mr. Moton's leadership has been crucial to the development of our children, which is likely the most important measure of an effective educator. The program has made significant progress in the short time that Mr. Moton has been leading the Bluestone Bands. These children deserve to continue to work with Mr. Moton in developing their skills.

Let me state that some of the parents driving this discussion expect more than a simple deflection comment indicating that this matter cannot be discussed. We are hopeful that useful constructive dialogue is still possible in this situation.

Thank you for your attention and we certainly do hope to

hear from you very soon on this matter.
Best regards,
Scott Cassell, concerned parent

LAND TO BUILD ON IN KERR LAKE REGION

 BLUESTONE FOREST • 1.3 Acres w/Community Dock \$17,000 • 2.65 Acres w/direct Lake access Buoy #4833 Saves your Private Dock Spot \$50,000	 COLLEEN'S COVE • Almost an Acre LAKEFRONT w/private DOCK Spot. Golf cart down! Town water, sewer, garbage & SENECA available \$175,000
 GREENWOOD • Lakeside Lot 11 - 1.6 ACRES - \$75,000 with private Dock Spot	 OAK HILL • Lots 9-13 on Meherlin Drive w/Community Lake access - \$10,000
 PRESTWOOD • Overlook the Bluestone Channel w/Dock spot (#5678) - \$175,000	 SANDIE POINT • 1.5 LAKEFRONT ACRES - private Dock spot (#4705) - \$75,000 • Lot 6 - Community Dock - \$30,000
 THE POINTE • Lakeside Lot 11 w/rip, private Dock Spot - will connect to town water & sewer \$150,000	 WESTVIEW ON THE LAKE • 5.66 ACRES w/private well & path to your Dock Spot \$125,000
 MERIFIELD ACRES • Oak Run - Lot Direct Lake access \$10,000 • OAK RUN - Lot Direct Lake access \$20,000 • 40 Hiddenwood Court - Call de sac setting \$12,000 • Hollyfield Drive - 1.7 ACRES w/direct Lake Access \$18,000 • Merifield Drive & Greenbar - 1.00 ACRES w/direct Lake access \$20,000 • Eagle Perch - shared DOCK \$34,900 • Lewis Road - Includes private DOCK (access @ Comm. area) \$35,000 • Westpoint Drive - Direct Lake access @ Lot 8 Priv Dock spot (access @ Comm. area) \$50,000 • WestPoint - Lots 9 & 10 Lakefront w/Dock Spot \$85,000 • WestPoint - Lots 7 & 8 Lakefront w/Dock spot \$95,000 • Eagle Perch - Lot w/DOCK \$100,000	
LAKE BARGAINS Shared Dock BROWNS COVE \$75,000 Lakeviewers Sorry, No Room For DOCK KINGSWOOD Lot 21 - \$22,500 Sorry, No Room For DOCK HOLIDAY SHORES Juniper Court - \$50,000	HIGHWAY 58 Near Oconeechee State Park 45 Acres Near Boat Ramps \$125,000

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