

ASAP Update

What Is ASAP's Position on Growth?

On June 5th, local Democrats nominated a candidate for a seat on the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. In the next day's edition of *The Daily Progress*, the candidate denied that he was active in ASAP (true) and said, as the newspaper phrased it, that he disagreed with ASAP's desire to stymie population growth.

Stymie population growth? That seems so simplistic. ASAP's position is more complex than that, and we would like to clarify it.

But before we do, we have to say that we are puzzled that some people are concerned about "growth" but look askance at ASAP's focus on *population* growth. In fact, the terms are synonymous.

- **"Growth"—as many in the development community use the term—is simply a shorthand way of referring to "job growth."**
- **Job growth goes hand in hand with "population growth."**

Many in the development community believe that prosperity requires the constant creation of more jobs and—because *new* residents fill most new jobs—the addition of more residents. (We expand on this on page 2.) As long as the *total* number of jobs in our area continues to grow, so will our population. We cannot increase the number of jobs without driving the unemployment rate down to zero (which economists say will not happen) or attracting additional residents.

Nonetheless, **ASAP recognizes the paramount importance of economic prosperity**—full employment, economic opportunity, and a living wage. But **we do not believe that slowing (population) growth will put prosperity at risk**; nor do we believe that *eventually* stabilizing our population will imperil prosperity. We can understand that some would not want to place limits on job growth because of the possibility of a short- or long-term loss of jobs. But such "insurance" is expensive, as explained below.

In addition, if local prosperity really does depend upon endless job/population growth, what happens when we reach some capacity-constraining limit (such as affordable water) and our population growth is *forced* to stop? Are we doomed to eventually reach a point where our economy will have to crash because we cannot grow any further? Or is it more probable that—like communities in most European countries—we can have a healthy economy without constantly inviting businesses to locate here and swelling our population?

Why is ASAP so concerned about population growth? Because **it entails real costs**: demands for more water and battles over how to supply it; traffic congestion and the resulting community-wide conflicts over building new or wider roads; more development of rural land; and further degradation of the environment that nurtures us. Ask yourself: do I see my quality of life improving as our population grows? Will it continue to improve if our population grows infinitely? For most of us, the answer is a clear NO.

New Newsletter Format

The local business community with its pro-growth agenda receives significant coverage in *The Daily Progress* each week, whereas the coverage ASAP receives is sketchy, at best.

Two of ASAP's strategic goals are to educate and advocate. It can't do either one without *consistently* communicating with its members and other community leaders. It has tried to do that with this newsletter, but the past irregular publishing schedule has not helped.

Therefore, to counter the development community's "mainstream" growth message, ASAP intends to publish a new **monthly** newsletter with original material and a new style. It will be data-based and analysis-oriented. It will aim to

- Respond to statements made by the development community and local officials and present ASAP's perspective
- Comment on current issues
- Contribute to the discussion about growth in a responsible manner

This is our first issue. We would like to hear what you think. What do you like or dislike? What's missing? Please provide feedback by e-mailing harry@harrydale.com.

Can you help with this newsletter's layout? We need a volunteer who can accept articles electronically and use desktop publishing software to create an attractive newsletter. If you wish to volunteer, please contact Diana Abbott at dabbottcc@aol.com or 434-823-4680.

Research: New Jobs Go To New Residents

In 1993, a respected researcher at the W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research published a paper that surveyed much of the research that had already been done on who gets jobs from local growth.¹ This paper was academic in nature. It had no apparent agenda. The researcher looked at many local job growth issues, but one stands out. He concluded that, in the long run, *new* residents absorb 60% to 90% of new jobs.²

Central Virginia's population has been growing at a steady rate.³ Yet our unemployment rate has held steady over the same time period.⁴ If all of the new businesses brought into the area were employing existing residents, then the unemployment rate should have been driven down to zero. Since it has not, one must conclude that *new* residents are filling most of the new jobs.

The expansion of GE Fanuc in the mid-1990s provides evidence to support this conclusion. In 1994, GE Fanuc decided to expand its facilities north of Charlottesville. It more or less promised that 80% to 90% of the new jobs would go to existing area residents. At the time, one of its officials said, "We aren't going to be relocating people to Central Virginia. The new employees won't be putting children in schools that aren't already there, or require new roads or sewers. We're going to be hiring local people."⁵ What actually happened? GE Fanuc created 334 new jobs. But only 36% went to area residents, and only 25% of the new *professional* positions went to locals.⁶ This example is not meant to malign GE Fanuc. GE Fanuc is a good corporate citizen, and it did its best to hire local residents. The point of this example is that it is extremely difficult to target new jobs toward local residents. Invariably, most new jobs go to *new* residents.

¹ Timothy J. Bartik, "Who Benefits from Local Job Growth, Migrants or the Original Residents?" *Regional Studies* 27 (1993): 297-311.

² *Ibid.*, 303.

³ For example, according to U. S. Census Bureau figures, Albemarle County's population has more than doubled over the last three decades—from 37,780 in 1970 to 84,112 in 2000.

⁴ Virginia Employment Commission website, "Local Area Unemployment Statistics" for the Charlottesville Metropolitan Statistical Area and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District, 1992-2002 annual statistics (as of 6 June 2003).

⁵ Beth J. Lipper, "County Gov't & Private Business Join Together for Positive Growth," *Charlottesville Business Journal* (March 1995): 20.

⁶ Letter from Donald C. Borwhat, Jr., Sr. Vice President, Human Resources and Public Relations, GE Fanuc, to Robert Tucker, Jr., Albemarle County's County Executive, 17 December 1997.

Perspective: 5,000 Lost Jobs

In the April 2003 issue of the *Charlottesville Business Journal*, Tim Hulbert, the President of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce, stated, "Our Chamber members know ... that the loss in recent years of 5,000 jobs ... in our community is a call to serious action. We must re-start and refuel the engines of enterprise before the quality of life we all enjoy is jeopardized any further."

His claim that the region has lost 5,000 jobs alarmed many people. It also caused some confusion. What about our decade-long, low unemployment rate of between 2% to 3%? If 5,000 people had lost their jobs, wouldn't our unemployment rate have skyrocketed? In fact, the money.cnn website recently listed the Charlottesville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as having the fourth lowest unemployment rate of the 260 MSAs in the United States. In other words, over 98% of the urban areas in the United States have higher unemployment rates. So, what's really going on?

Well, it turns out that the total of 5,000 is **not** a *net* figure. The Chamber tallied the number of jobs *lost* but did not, or could not, total the number of jobs *created* during the same time period.

Of course, the Chamber knows that a lot of jobs have been created. In his own memos on the subject, Tim Hulbert states that, "Of course other employers have relocated or expanded within our region. ... Thankfully a number of positive developments have offset this very substantial job loss in recent years."

Nonetheless, the Chamber is still quite concerned about job loss. Its data shows a net loss of as many as 1,000 jobs in 2001. ASAP does not know if this data is comprehensive (i.e., a true *net* figure), but it does know that unemployment statistics for the area did **not** show a spike in 2001 or 2002.

The Chamber is also concerned about another aspect of the issue. It believes that, while many lost jobs have been replaced, the replacement jobs do not pay as well as the lost ones. Albemarle County government officials are collecting data to examine this conjecture.

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A New Vision for the Rural Areas of Albemarle County

At ASAP's June 5th monthly membership meeting, **Tom Olivier**—Ph.D. biological anthropologist, small business owner, and long-time activist in local conservation issues—presented his vision for conserving Albemarle's Rural Areas.

Tom's vision is an *integrated* one. Many community organizations are distressed by what is happening in the rural areas. But these interests are fragmented and sometimes appear to be at odds. Some are concerned about an adequate supply of clean water. Others are focused on agriculture and forestry, biodiversity, or recreation. Additional groups work to preserve the area's history or our beloved viewsheds. Rather than working in isolation on our own issues, Tom exhorted us to work together. He proposed that we create an overarching conservation plan that incorporates what he believes are compatible interests.

Our ongoing population growth makes such conservation urgent. Waiting will reduce the resources that can be saved, make it more expensive to acquire them, and exacerbate the decline in our quality of life.

A panel of three discussants commented on Tom's vision. **Tim Beatley**, author and UVa Professor in the Department of Urban and Environmental Planning, endorsed Tom's vision. He agreed that local government officials probably would not champion such a drastic departure from the status quo. Citizens groups will have to lead the way. **Ed Imhoff**, a professional geologist and water resource expert, also endorsed Tom's vision. He stressed that land use and water use planning must be integrated. **Joe Jones**, a farmer, businessman, and Vice President of the local Farm Bureau, stated that, "Nature rewards those who respect the land." He advocated a number of immediate strategies for land preservation: temporary and permanent conservation easements, rural preservation developments (clustering houses on large rural tracts), etc.

Several themes emerged. All participants seemed to agree that

- A vision of rural areas conservation is necessary and must identify critical resources in some detail
- A coalition of like-minded groups working together will have the highest probability of success
- Preservation will have to be purchased, and it will be expensive. Other communities have used bond issues to raise money and purchase development rights, much like an individual takes out a mortgage to enjoy the benefits of homeownership both now and far into the future.

You can discuss this article with Tom Olivier or obtain a copy of his January 2002 essay, "Achieving a New Vision for the Rural Areas of Albemarle County," by contacting him at tolivier@cstone.net.

Information Resource: Land Use Law Handbook

In 2001, the Albemarle County Attorney's Office published a remarkable resource—*The Albemarle County Land Use Law Handbook*. The *Handbook* was written for County officials and employees but is posted on the County's website for public access.

The *Handbook's* Introduction states that it

"provides a review of Virginia's planning, zoning, and subdivision laws, as implemented by the County's Comprehensive Plan and its Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. It also provides a review of many of the principles and laws that come into play in every land use decision."

What does that mean? Have you ever wondered if another Albemarle County downzoning would be legal? You can find an answer on page 12-13 of the *Handbook*. If you merely *anticipate* using your land for some purpose in the future, do you have a vested property right in that use? The answer is on page 6-1. Can Albemarle County tell a developer that he has to build a minimum number of affordable housing units as a condition for approval of a development? Read page 6-3. Don't know what the Dillon Rule is? Read the two-page Chapter 8. Do you want a primer on what a Comprehensive Plan is, or want to know what zoning is all about? Each has its own chapter in the *Handbook*. What is an overlay district, and how many does the County have? Read page 12-7. Proffers, special use permits, variances—they are all discussed.

The *Handbook* is well organized and clearly, concisely, and *precisely* written. That's the one drawback. In order to understand the material, it is helpful to have some knowledge of statutory and case law. Nonetheless, if you want to know about land use law as it currently applies to Albemarle County, this is the bible.

Access the *Handbook* at

<http://www.albemarle.org/attorney/landusehandbook/>.

The *Handbook* is organized into 25 .pdf files: a Table of Contents, an Introduction, and 23 chapters, each covering a specific topic. You will need a (free) Adobe Acrobat Reader to access them. Adobe Acrobat Reader is probably already installed on your computer.

Can you think of any problem, on any scale from microscopic to global whose **long-term** solution is in any **demonstrable** way aided, assisted, or advanced by having further population growth at the local level, the state level, the national level, or globally? — *Albert A. Bartlett*

ASAP's Second Annual Conference— Saturday, September 13

ASAP's *second* annual conference, "**Beyond the Myths of Growth**," will address our opponents' three main arguments:

- (Population) Growth is good
- (Population) Growth is necessary for economic prosperity
- (Population) Growth can't be slowed or stopped because it's illegal or impossible

Why does the word *population* precede growth? Because many people talk about "growth" without thinking about what it really means. If "growth" did not mean "population growth," ASAP would never have been formed. We could amass incredible wealth without impacting our water supplies, our roads, the rural areas, the environment in which we live, and our quality of life. But the fact is that "growth," as used by the local development community, means attracting more businesses to a locality. Those businesses attract new employees, and the majority of those are new residents. Clearly, the development community's model of growth will increase population numbers.

The conference will be held on **Saturday, September 13, 2003**, in the main auditorium of the **Albemarle County Office Building** from **9:00 a.m.** to approximately 12:45 p.m.

Advocates for a Sustainable Albemarle Population (ASAP)

ASAP is a non-profit corporation organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Its **mission** is to increase knowledge and awareness about the effects of net population growth on our natural environment and on our quality of life, and to advocate appropriate policies and mechanisms that will enable our region to reach a sustainable population size. To achieve this, ASAP will engage in research, community education, policy development, and advocacy.

ASAP publishes this **newsletter** monthly except for combined June-July and December-January issues. Submit editorial comments to the newsletter's editor, Harry Levins, at harry@harrydale.com. To become a member of ASAP and/or to be placed on a mailing list to receive this newsletter and a notice of ASAP events, contact crijack@cville.net.

In the next issue ...

The League of Women Voters advocates a policy on population size for Albemarle County's Rural Areas.

How can population growth be slowed and perhaps eventually stopped? We will begin a series on this topic.



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