Where Do We Go from Here?

By Rande Davis

The uncertain commercial future of Poolesville is still on our minds. Now comes word that the Organic Market will be closed by the time you read this column. Maybe an entrepreneur will step forward and open a small grocery in the location that is pretty much ready to go just as it is—maybe not.

In the meantime, as a community, we still have to keep looking forward. The commissioners and the Community and Economic Development Committee are weighing ideas to increase the revenue base for the remaining businesses. One concept under consideration is using Leesburg, Virginia or New Market, Maryland as models. The former has a strong historical connection to the Civil War and thrives on weekend visitors, and the latter built itself into the Antique Capital of Maryland. Is this something that has merit? Right now, businesses have a two-pronged dilemma. During the week, the vast majority of people leave the area for work. On the weekends, the residents have developed purchasing habits for necessities and other expenditures—such as entertainment—that do not help fill the weekday void in local business revenue.

It is not simply enough to expect or demand people to shop local more. To be sure, if all residents make a conscious decision to support our merchants, it will help, but, most likely, would still not be enough.

The town’s Streetscape Plan, long a controversial project, has progressed in steps over the past ten years or so. You see its objective in Whalen Commons and sidewalks that make the town a more attractive and pedestrian-friendly experience. Yet, its completion is still many years in the future.

Is there room for senior living facilities? How about a moderate office building to employ more people that would augment weekday spending? Do these ideas threaten our beloved small town experience? What do you think? Maybe you have a few ideas of your own. Now is the time to rally a consensus on the direction our town needs to follow. Now is the time to speak out if you have something to offer. A good place to start is to simply email your thoughts to the commissioners.