

The application that was submitted this week by SDC Capital was a hard decision for me and my family. I knew that it would come with backlash, but I didn't expect it would be about my character, rather than data centers. When I ran, I never intended for our family farm to come before the Board, but when the decision was made to sell, I always planned to recuse myself from this application.

As many residents know, my family has owned this farm for generations, and like many Fauquier residents, our family struggles to maintain this land and to pay our taxes that continue to increase every year. An answer exists to help not just for our family, but for all Fauquier families — to both preserve Fauquier's beautiful farms, but also ensure taxes stop increasing.

Our family has 2 farms. One is where I live with my wife and two daughters, soon to be three, down Sumerduck Road. This is where we have made a home for our family. The other farm was my grandfather's homeplace on Remington Road, where my mother resides and where my sister and I grew up. Since the late 1970s, easements and public utilities have been put on our land regardless of my grandfather's effort to stop them. It started with a Dominion 230kv transmission line splitting the farm in half, then a public sewer line that runs the entire frontage of the property that takes all the waste from Bealeton to Remington. Then, fiber was installed during the early 2000s. All utilities that were placed on our land offer no benefit to us. During my lifetime, every adjoining farm was developed for housing, and Luck Stone quarry was built across the street (they will be soon adding a solar field that will run the entire road frontage across from our farm). My grandfather tried to stop all of it, with no success.

My family lost the patriarch of our family 13 years ago. At 26 years old, I lost my grandfather, my mentor, my boss, and I took over an immense responsibility on behalf of family. Inheriting the land was a blessing, and I am grateful, but I was not left with the financial resources to support it. I spent 5 years trying to make a living by farming, but I was spending more than I was earning. I started a fencing company to try and supplement the loss on the farms. I investigated conservation easements, wetland banks, carbon credits, and I exhausted every effort to try and find a way to earn money with the land in order to keep it. When the probability that we would have to sell or develop became evident — a choice facing many family farms — I wanted to find something that would be positive for the county while ensuring our families' financial future.

When I ran for supervisor, I still didn't have a plan for our farm and how we might sell it. During the campaign everything was about data centers, both pros and cons, and I learned that our site has everything needed to build one. I didn't like what I saw in Prince William or Loudoun Counties, but I wondered if it was possible to do it a

better way. I envisioned making the buildings more attractive, with bigger setbacks, and to only allow them where the infrastructure is already in place. We wanted to honor our surroundings with an agricultural theme. We all use technology, but we don't want it to take over our county.

As a supervisor, I see so many financial needs around the community. I have spent countless hours trying to come up with ideas for agricultural support to help all the farmers like me who struggle to make ends meet. By allowing a limited number of data center sites along existing transmission lines and with access to public utilities, we can fund a substantial increase in our budget, while ensuring our taxes are reduced. The application's proffers and the future revenue would add money to our Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) fund, preserving more land at a faster rate. I want to see the parks and recreation promises fulfilled in the southern end of the county. I want to see our teachers, first responders, and police paid more so we don't continue to lose good people to surrounding counties.

I will always do my best for my family and the county. People are struggling to keep their land and homes, pay their taxes, and support their families. If my family can sell our land to take care of our needs and generate tax revenue to go towards the citizens that don't have a way out, then I will do what is best for everyone. My grandfather's legacy was not in the land — it was in taking care of his family and serving his community, and that's what I will continue to do.

Daron Culbertson