

Sims-Mitchell House



Bed and Breakfast

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To: Mayor and Town Council, Chatham, Virginia

Re: Noise and smoke from the Columbia Forest Products plant.

Thank you for considering the matter of the Columbia Forest Products plant's noise and smoke. Our residence is the nearest structure to the plant. We have lived here for 28 years, and have operated our B&B for 18 years. The noise and smoke difficulties are of relatively recent origin, probably related to changes in the plant's dust collection system.

The uncomfortable sound has encroached on all our yard, and as of early October an additional pulsating rumble has penetrated our house, usually nearly 24 hours a day, and 6 or 7 days a week. (Typical outdoor readings are 65dbA and 80dbC, with about a 5 dbC pulse.) Simultaneously, the area has been permeated by rather constant wood smoke, and frequently by an additional thick, bitter-tasting fog that smells like burning tires. Apparently this heavier smoke comes from periodic controlled burning of creosote residue.

The noise and smoke have made life difficult for our family, annoyed our guests, and hurt the town's reputation for peace and beauty. If the problems continue or worsen, they will likely put an end to our B&B business. We also are concerned that such a constant noise can contribute to hearing loss, and creosote smoke is considered to be toxic in several aspects.

It is our understanding that neither the EPA, the Virginia DEQ, nor the county regulates wood creosote smoke or industrial noise. Thus the town seems to be left with the responsibility. Mr. Dave Abts, Columbia Forest Products plant manager, has pledged to us to make the plant a good neighbor. We trust that the company will do so, even though we are greatly distressed at recent events. We also believe it likely that technology is available to baffle, damp, and contain the noise; and to reduce the smoke and remove its creosote content.

Therefore, we request that the Council expeditiously and thoroughly coordinate with Columbia Forest Products personnel to solve the immediate problems, as well as set appropriate noise and emission standards for ongoing industrial activity within the town.

Yours truly,

Henry + Patricia Mitchell

Henry and Patricia Mitchell