

Friends of Buckingham
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The demise of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline vindicates Friends of Buckingham

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News of the cancellation of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) on Sunday, July 5, spread like wildfire, liberating the extensive environmental community in opposition to this fraught and needless project. This spells independence for Friends of Buckingham (FoB) after six long years of a hard-won frontline epic challenge to the tyrant Goliath that Dominion Energy was. We congratulate Dominion Energy and Duke Energy for finally seeing what we've been saying all along — our shared environment, climate and human condition will vastly benefit by their decision.

FoB Council are happy to speak with the media. Please call Chad for a direct connection to other Council members. In addition, FoB can make arrangements for reporters who are interested in visiting Union Hill in the coming weeks for a retrospective on how the community has navigated this major intrusion into their lives, how they came together and persisted, and how they will move forward. *Strict adherence to all coronavirus precautions would be observed, including physical distancing and wearing of masks. And plans may have to change abruptly depending on the situation.*

The FoB Council share their thoughts on this momentous and historic decision below.

Chad Oba, FoB President:

"Sunday afternoon July 5 was a day of great reckoning and validation as I learned the news, with phones ringing, texts pouring in and emails exploding my inbox. Dominion had cancelled their plans for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline! All that clean air I had hoped to preserve for my neighborhood, suddenly I was unable to breathe as my heart and mind reeled in elation with the news. Immediately I got to work calling my neighbors who are without internet to tell them the glorious good news. Six long years of relentless, persistent, committed work, taking action and looking for all avenues to achieve our goal had brought us to this moment. In the face of many odds and a powerful foe, we had finally won!

"When something is important enough as protecting and sustaining life, you are called to respond and respond we did, always looking forward. It was Martin Luther King's quote that kept me going in this neighborhood of 84% African-American, rural and lower-income residents that I

am fortunate to live in: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." We were not silent and we will not be silent anymore. There is still work to do to restore justice and to keep on sustaining life for all of this glorious creation we are gifted with. It is good work, we are up to the task and now we know what we are made of. Glory be."

John Laury, Treasurer, FoB Council:

"First of all, I am thankful to God for protecting and enabling us to persevere through these difficult, challenging years dealing with Dominion and the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and the proposed compressor station. I am truly thankful for many of the coalitions from across the Commonwealth and beyond; for the many friends and activists for their continued support and encouragement."

Heidi Dhivya Berthoud, Secretary, FoB Council:

"This feels like a makeover of Independence Day. This year we can get it right by throwing off the yoke of tyranny for ALL residents of this great land. At this critical juncture of the climate crisis, the pandemic, calls for global racial justice, uplifting the poor and demilitarization, we know clearly that our hard work over these past, very long six years is precedent-setting and serves to help liberate and bolster other beleaguered communities under attack from extractive and exploitive corporate injustice."

Marie Gillespie, FoB Council Executive Committee:

"Praise God who is greater than all of us. I am overjoyed and overwhelmed with the news. Thankful for the work of Friends of Buckingham and everyone who contributed. It is their diligence and constancy that made it all possible. I am so grateful that we will now have the opportunity to continue to enjoy this beautiful environment and be able to pass it on to the next generations in Union Hill."

Ella Rose, FoB Council:

"Hearing the news from Chad, I felt like it was the best day of my life. I feel that all the hard work that all of us have done was finally for good. I feel like I have my life back. I can now sleep better without the worries that threatened my life for so long."

Ada Washington, FoB Council:

"All I can say is 'Thank God'. We accomplished a lot. We made new friends. If it hadn't been for this experience, we never would have come together in Union Hill. This experience changed everything in this community."

Ruby Laury, FoB Council:

"I am so thankful first of all to the Lord for being with us in these trials we were going through with ACP and Dominion. I was so elated when I first heard the news from one of my fellow activists. I am also thankful for everyone who stood by and supported the Union Hill community. We could not have done it without all of you. Thank you so very much."

Lakshmi Fjord, FoB Council, Union Hill historian and demographer:

“As Rev. Martin Luther King said, 'The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.' Dominion and Virginia officials gave false testimony to allow ACP's 600-mile route to most impact African American, Native American, low-resource and rural people. We are living now where even over-consumers reckon the unfair burdens and costs of fossil fuel borne by these communities led to our climate crisis. We who are volunteers from and allies to those communities celebrate this day, and seek justice for all those still under the knee of corporate polluters, using facts and truth as our tools.”

Richard Walker, FoB Council, Founder and CEO of Bridging the Gap in Virginia:

“Dominion will no longer hold the Union Hill community hostage. Their exploitation and dominance over African-American communities throughout the entire state of Virginia must be stopped! My roots and family *were* directly impacted by the proposed ACP and Buckingham compressor station. Our land was bought by my great-grandfather Taylor Harper, a former slave. I am a 5th generation heir. We were threatened by Dominion to seize our property through eminent domain.”

Marie Flowers, FoB Council:

“I am so elated that people stuck together through all the hard times. We were more concerned about our human family more than money. I have met so many wonderful caring people by being involved with this crusade to save our Earth. I see this as a victory for Black Lives Matter also.”