

Ruth Ireland at Oriental Town Board Meeting September 3, 2013

I am Ruth Ireland, owner of Town-and-Country for 40 years. I am attending this meeting tonight as a business owner and taxpayer to the Town and County, to express my concerns about the prospect of a Walmart Express just outside Oriental and Walmart in Grantsboro.

When Dollar General opened outside Oriental, no one raised concerns that most of the business owners and citizens have about how it would affect our town. They filled a certain niche that maybe our town needed, but Walmart is the largest giant retailer in the world, and have thousands of stores to dominate the retail market.

I procured a SBA loan when I built the new store, and struggled for years for the ambitious effort Town and Country made to service the town of Oriental.

There are other small businesses in town have have opened recently and the last 6 years that are doing the same.

Walmart has their own banking, credit card system so they will not support our local bank, their own accountants and lawyers, so they will not support local businesses. They do not buy local seafood or produce, their meat is processed at a central cutting station, with a preserved system, so no local butcher is needed. They support national causes and this will hurt all local non-profit organizations, clubs, and churches. They will not do Thanksgiving dinners for the needy, carry out groceries for our senior citizens or deliver groceries to shut ins and the elderly.

It was stated that Walmart express will employ 20 people. How many will be unemployed when they take over the independent market?

They will not be paying town taxes.

We have one full time policeman and two part time for our whole town, no school, no fast foods, no convenience chain, no stop light, so the only reason Walmart has started the pilot program of Walmart Express is to move in to the small towns and take over the market.

And Oriental is smaller than most, and the economy has hit us hard down here, especially the last 6 or 7 years. Boarded up independent businesses in Oriental - and the existence of only Walmart left will be a monopoly and open a Pandora's box for the Town of Oriental.

Any help and support the Town Board can give us for the small businesses and concerned citizens of our small "village of leisure living" would be greatly appreciated.