



Charlottesville City Council Candidate Forum – Democratic Candidates April 21, 2009

The three candidates seeking the Democratic nomination for the two seats on the Charlottesville City Council spent two hours on April 21, 2009 answering questions on the water supply, the Meadowcreek Parkway, the City's efficiency study, Council priorities, and other community issues. The event was co-sponsored by [Charlottesville Tomorrow](#) and the [Free Enterprise Forum](#) in advance of the Charlottesville Democratic Party's unassembled caucus to be held on May 9, 2009. The general election is November 3, 2009.

About 50 people attended the forum which was held at Burley Middle School in Charlottesville. The candidates in order of appearance are incumbents [Julian Taliaferro](#) and [Dave Norris](#), and challenger [Kristin Szakos](#). The moderators for the forum are **Brian Wheeler**, Executive Director of Charlottesville Tomorrow, and **Neil Williamson**, Director of the Free Enterprise Forum.

*The **AUDIO** is available online in the Charlottesville Tomorrow News Center*
http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville_tomorrow_/2009/04/april21_candidates_forum.html

*The **VIDEO** is available online in the Charlottesville Tomorrow News Center*
http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville_tomorrow_/2009/04/citydems_video_transcript.html

Complete election coverage is available on the Charlottesville Tomorrow website
<http://action.cvilletomorrow.org/cvilleaction/elections.html>

INTRODUCTION BY MODERATORS BRIAN WHEELER & NEIL WILLIAMSON

Note: Questions 1-9 were provided to the candidates one week in advance of the candidate forum. The eight audience questions were among those collected on cards from audience members and selected by the moderators.

Brian Wheeler: The first question goes to Mr. Taliaferro, and that question is...

QUESTION 1: What is your top priority for action by City Council if you are elected?

Julian Taliaferro (D): My top priority would be to deal really immediately with the 13.2% drop-out rate within our City school system. I think it is a real issue. The last three years, I along with Council have been a supporter of giving our City sufficient money to improve both their instructional capabilities and to address many of their capital needs. However at this time I think we have to take a bold step to address this issue. Tonight I would propose to the City Council and the School Board that we convene an educational summit this summer to develop a strategy to reverse the drop-out rate in the short term and for the long term to establish a program with measurable objectives in order to determine the outcome and to keep things on track. And tonight I would call on all citizens of the City of Charlottesville, my fellow City Councilors as well as the School Board to commit ourselves to do what it takes to deal with this issue. It's a community issue that will require input from educators, citizens and students. And frankly, I know that in Charlottesville we can do a better job with this issue than we have been doing. And somehow or another we have to find a solution.

Brian Wheeler: Now the first question goes to Mr. Norris. **What is your top priority for action by City Council if you are elected?**

Dave Norris (D): There are many challenges facing this community, many needs in the community that remain unmet and I commend Mr. Taliaferro for bringing up a very important one, which is the drop-out rate. One of the issues that we've been working on in the last few years has to do with the future of our public housing communities in Charlottesville. One of the top priorities for action that I will be pursuing in my next term on City Council should I be reelected is to continue to take this idea of revitalizing our public housing neighborhoods, take it from an idea stage and actually work on implementation. We are in the very early stages of launching a master planning process for revitalizing our public housing neighborhoods. This is our best opportunity for expanding both the quantity and the quality of affordable housing in our community because the Housing Authority owns 40 acres outright. It's the best opportunity for changing the very dynamics of poverty in our community, moving away from a lot of us think is a failed model of segregating people by income, which too often means segregating people by race, and instead moving towards more of a mixed-income, integrated neighborhood environment. It's our best opportunity for ensuring the long-term financial health of our Redevelopment and Housing Authority. And it's one of our best opportunities for creating jobs and creating economic opportunities for some of our poorest residents – people who live in public housing. And through the process of revitalization of public housing, can have access to training opportunities, to job opportunities, to contract opportunities, to be part of the revitalization of their neighborhoods. For this to work, we need full and

meaningful participation by the residents of public housing. We have supported funded to make that happen. And it also requires a sustained commitment of housing funding that we can tap into. We're going to have to tap into federal dollars, state dollars, private dollars and local dollars which hopefully will include a dedicated affordable housing fund which we can use for projects of this nature.

Brian Wheeler: Now the first question goes to Ms. Szakos. **What is your top priority for action by City Council if you are elected?**

Kristin Szakos (D): Actually of course I have more than one, but I'll start with one. One of the things I'm concerned about is the responsiveness of the City to its citizens and I'm running my campaign in a way where because we have this new format where people are actually going to vote in a public way, of bringing people in who haven't been participating in the process before. I was the Obama campaign volunteer coordinator and was amazed at how excited people were about participating in the Democratic process, so I'm sure that's going to happen in this election. But, more importantly, I'm concerned about making sure that the City itself is responsive to its citizens. I think that we need to make sure that... the recent quality of service and efficiency study showed real concern about the responsiveness of City Departments to people, customer service responsiveness to requests, and that's something that we really need to pay attention to. I think we also need to make sure that people can address the City Council. I propose having City Council meetings in the neighborhoods, in the City schools, in neighborhood centers, so that people know that we are interested in what they have to say so that we make sure people come to the City Council and make themselves heard. I think we should provide pizza or some kind of dinner. I think we should provide child care so that people feel a real "welcomeness" that they should be able when they have concerns to address the City Council and that we're interested in listening. I think we also have to make sure in our responsiveness that we are consulting with citizens... we need to make sure that we consult with citizens in making our decisions. We need to make sure people are on boards and commissions. When we appoint people to our boards and commission we need to make sure they reflect the stakeholders of the decisions that will be made. So all of those are lots of different things but they all go to the idea that we need to be more responsive to all of its people which I think will help us to become not just a livable City for some, but a livable City for all. Because I think that the ideas for how to make this City more responsive to the people who are dropping out, to the people who are living in public housing. If we include them in the decision making, we're more likely to come up with solutions that are going to solve those problems.

Neil Williamson: The second question will go first to Mr. Norris.

QUESTION 2: Do you support the goal of establishing a 50-year water supply for the City and County designated growth areas? Why or why not?

Dave Norris (D): “I do support this goal and the reason why is because this is the time frame. We’ve been given a mandate by the Commonwealth of Virginia to develop a 30 to 50 year plan for ensuring we have adequate water supply for our community. I think this is an opportunity for us, it’s an obligation, but it’s an opportunity for us to engage with Albemarle County and the University and our other partners to come up with a good plan. I among many citizens in this community do not feel that we have come up with the best plan. We’ve come up with a good framework of a plan. A framework that includes expansion of the Ragged Mountain Reservoir which I support. It includes a new pipeline to connect the two reservoirs to maximize the advantages of both reservoirs, which I support. But it doesn’t go nearly far enough in terms of providing for a reasonable and achievable goal when it comes to water conservation and efficiency. Right now it sets a very low bar when it comes to what we can expect to save in terms of water conservation and efficiency in the next 50 years. And it also I think is based on some outrageously bad information when it came to cost projections for dredging the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir. And we cannot base a 50 year water supply plan on assumptions that are that faulty. So we’re going back now and getting better data on the cost of dredging. We’re getting better information on projections for conservation and efficiency. We’re getting better data on what it will take to expand the Ragged Mountain Reservoir... My strong goal would be to not build a massive new dam there but to simply repair and extend the existing dam if we can do it. So I am in support of a 50 year water supply plan that keeps our water local. We don’t need to go back to the idea of pumping our water from the James River. I want to keep our water local. I want to provide for the 50-year needs of our community but we need to do so in the most ecologically and economically responsible manner.

Neil Williamson: The second question now goes to Ms. Szakos. **Do you support the goal of establishing a 50-year water supply for the City and County designated growth areas? Why or why not?**

Kristin Szakos (D): Yes I do support a 50 year plan. I’m supportive in a lot of areas of having long term plans so we’re not constantly responding to emergencies, so that we’re actually proactive in our decision making. But I think that any long-year plan has to be based on good data and I share some of Mr. Norris’s concern about some of the data in this 50 year plan and I think we do need to be very careful because it’s a major commitment. I think that because an infrastructure plan by its very nature involves so much outlay up front, outlay in land, outlay in money, outlay in impact, that we really need to be right before we start building. We need to know exactly what 50 years could look like. We need to know that the City has been very committed to conservation, to water use reduction, and we need to have that reflected in the plan. I think that we have to be very careful that any plan doesn’t overly burden the City residents in the cost of their water. I think we need to be very careful that it doesn’t result in people who can’t afford paying high water rates. One of the things that has continued to pit the City and the County against one another in this issue and in lots of other

issues is the fact that over the past quarter century, largely with Republican administrations in Washington and in Richmond, we've had an erosion of funding available for infrastructure. It used to be that large regional projects like this would be funded largely with state and federal funding and that's not the case any longer. So not only do we have the responsibility for raising funding locally, but we also end up having far less of it to raise and so we find ourselves fighting against each other for projects like this and worrying about the economic impact of them rather than working together to try to figure out how we can try to leverage more funding from other sources... I'd like to see the City and the County work together. I don't want this to continue to be an issue that divides us. I think it's an issue that we need to work together closely on.

Neil Williamson: Mr. Taliaferro, to you, **do you support the goal of establishing a 50-year water supply for the City and County designated growth areas? Why or why not?**

Julian Taliaferro (D): Yes I do support the goal of a 50 year water plan. However, as a condition of my support, and I have consistently said this, I want to know what the total project cost is going to be. And this is a figure that continues to elude me and other people. I think to not know that fact is not acting in the best interest of the City residents who will ultimately bear the cost through their water rates. I think to get an accurate picture of where we need to go, we need to determine how much additional water supply can be created by dredging, and we're trying to put together a study of how to do that now. And once we have that, I think we need to look at the issue of conservation and apply conservation to determine how much additional water demand can we reduce. And I would hope by combining those two factors, that we could ultimately identify what the scope of the project should be and what plan we should select and at the same time, once we have all that information, we should be able to get an accurate cost of what the project is going to be, because as has already been previously mentioned, it's been like a moving target. The cost continues to go up, up, up, and I want to feel comfortable before we move forward. But I certainly support the implementation of a plan to give the community a sufficient water supply.

Brian Wheeler: Can everyone hear us o.k.? The third question now goes to Ms. Szakos.

QUESTION 3: How important is increased public water supply to the City of Charlottesville and its largest water customer, the University of Virginia?

Kristin Szakos (D): We certainly have to have an adequate water supply that takes into consideration both dry seasons, dry times and increased use, a growing population. I think though that we need to particularly pay attention to conservation, in the City and the County and at the University. I think that by

conserving water we'll do a much better job of ensuring a better water supply for all of us.

Brian Wheeler: The third question now goes to Mr. Taliaferro. **How important is increased public water supply to the City of Charlottesville and its largest water customer, the University of Virginia?**

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well, an adequate supply for the University is not only important to the City, but also to the entire region. And, as you all know, the University is our largest employer. Thus, they make a tremendous contribution to the local economy. Absent sufficient water could create many problems with that facility. They might be forced to limit expansion. There are a lot of issues associated with that. I would be remiss if I didn't say that the University has been a good community partner in seriously looking at ways to conserve water and taking action to implement plans that have produced results the past several years. But I will tell you that although they've been somewhat successful and they've actually reduced the demand, in talking with officials at the University... they said they've picked all the low-hanging fruit and the demand is starting to creep up again. But, I certainly believe that we have to ensure that we have an adequate water supply, not only for the University but the entire community.

Brian Wheeler: The third question now goes to Mr. Norris. **How important is increased public water supply to the City of Charlottesville and its largest water customer, the University of Virginia?**

Dave Norris (D): Well I agree with the comments that have just been made by Ms. Szakos and Mr. Taliaferro. We need an adequate water supply to make sure that we can sustain the economic health of our community and to make sure that our residents have access over the coming years. Now, in the City however, it's almost as much of a priority that we ensure that we have a water supply that is reliable and that's safe and is cost effective. Our water supply system right now is crumbling. The infrastructure is crumbling. So, from the City's perspective, where we're not envisioning a substantial amount of new population growth in the coming decades, much of the City's investment has to do with upgrading the infrastructure to make sure we can get water to our consumers, get water to the University in a reliable way... But right now, when you look at the amount of water that we pump out of the reservoirs, as of a couple of years ago, 18% of that water was not making it to consumers because it was leaking out of the pipes. Now we've gotten that number down in the past couple of years I'm told, but still, we have an enormous amount of water that is leaking out of these old pipes. We need to fix up these pipes. We need to make sure that the treatment plants are top quality and reliable so we can get safe drinking water to our residents. That is almost as important if not more important than increasing the amount of water because I think that through conservation and efficiency, we're going to get much smarter about how we use water in the coming 50 years."

Neil Williamson: The fourth question goes first to Mr. Taliaferro.

QUESTION 4: Given the long funding and implementation period for any major infrastructure project, what are the advantages and disadvantages to the current City Council revisiting previous Councils' decisions regarding such projects?

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well, I think it's always good practice to review past decisions and review them in conjunction with current changing conditions. I would say the positives may often lead to better solutions and more cost-effective ways of accomplishing some projects. Conversely, revisiting some long-term projects and attempting to alter them can possibly pose increased financial costs as well as the erosion of community support if City positions consistently change.

Neil Williamson: Mr. Norris, **given the long funding and implementation period for any major infrastructure project, what are the advantages and disadvantages to the current City Council revisiting previous Councils' decisions regarding such projects?**

Dave Norris (D): I think each City Council has an obligation to review projects that are in the works to make sure that they still make sense and to make sure that they're still planned well. We need to make sure that we're not implementing something just because that's the way it was planned all along and that it still serves the public good in a cost-effective way. I assume that this question reflects some frustrations about the fact that we in part thought that we had a good water supply plan that the whole community consented to back in 2006, and here we are three years later and still debating the plan, 40 years later still debating the Meadowcreek Parkway. But, I think that sometimes when you have a plan that's as enormous in scope and cost as the 50 year water supply plan, and some legitimate questions have been raised about the fundamentals underlying that plan, we owe it to the taxpayers and the ratepayers to get the best possible information and not just plow forward with a plan because that's what is in the works. I know we'll be talking about the Meadowcreek Parkway later but I would use the same criteria for reviewing that as well.

Neil Williamson: Ms. Szakos, **given the long funding and implementation period for any major infrastructure project, what are the advantages and disadvantages to the current City Council revisiting previous Councils' decisions regarding such projects?**

Kristin Szakos (D): I'm a great fan of the democratic process. I think that when we elect people in a fair and open election and they make decisions that that should have a certain amount of gravitas. I think that we should respect decisions made by previous Councils. On the other hand I think that both Mr. Taliaferro and Mr. Norris are correct that we need to constantly be refocusing ourselves and everything that we do to make sure that we're on track to what we want to

achieve and if that means looking at things that we've done and tweaking them or figuring out how to make them better, I think we need to do that. On the other hand, I think that with major infrastructure projects... I think if each Council comes and completely revisits every decision, that we never move forward and we need to move forward. And part of the process of making long-term plans is so that we can have direction. And if we keep changing the direction as we keep changing Councilors, it makes it difficult I think for other localities to work with us. It makes it difficult for people to know what to expect.

Brian Wheeler: The fifth question now goes to Mr. Norris.

QUESTION 5: How do you recommend the City evaluate its effectiveness on realizing its vision and accomplishing its stated priorities?

Dave Norris (D): Well I think the first thing to do is make sure you have a clear statement of vision which we have adopted back in 2006 I believe, early 2007. We adopted a vision statement for the community which was reaffirmed by the current City Council which lays out I think a very compelling vision where we'd like to see the city go in the next 20 years. So to have a clear statement of where you're heading and then to have a strategic plan that sort of lays out how you're going to get there. We've done that as well. So we are now able, whenever any issue comes before City Council, particularly in budget season we are able to weigh that against what's in the strategic plan, how does it help us accomplish our vision. One of the issues that's been brought up is, "do we have clear benchmarks? Do we have clear goals?" when it comes to some of the initiatives we're pursuing. We're working now in the affordable housing arena about coming up with some very clear and concise goals when it comes to what we can expect to get from our affordable housing dollars. We'll be rolling that out here in the next couple months. We need better information in the city budget when it comes to outcomes. How well are our tax dollars being used? What are the citizens getting out of their tax dollars? So that we can again help to evaluate the effectiveness of what we're doing in City Hall.

Brian Wheeler: Thank you. The fifth question now goes to Ms. Szakos. **How do you recommend the City evaluate its effectiveness on realizing its vision and accomplishing its stated priorities?**

Kristin Szakos (D): Well I think that we should put our stated priorities and our vision on a poster that's in every city department. They're right here, and they're wonderful. The vision for the City is that Charlottesville would be a great place to live for all of our citizens and that's something that I think we all share. I think that's one of the reasons that my family moved here. It's because we knew that this was a city that had this vision of being a livable city, and many people find it to be a livable city. I think that we need to apply a kind of outcome based evaluation on all of our programs to make sure that they are leading us to the priorities on this vision and on this plan. I think economic sustainability, a center

for lifelong learning, quality housing opportunities for all, those are things that we need to keep always in front of us and remember that that's what we're about as a city. I think that for probably 75% of the people in Charlottesville this is a wonderful place to live. It's a great place to live. It's great place to live for me, it was a great place to raise my children. But I also know that we have an appalling dropout rate in our schools. We have one of the highest achievement gaps in our city schools in the State, and those aren't new things. Our dropout rates are rising now and that's very disturbing but our achievement gap has been one the highest in the state for years. It was one of the highest when we moved here, 15 years ago. So these are long standing problems, these are things that we can't take our eye off the ball about. We have to make sure that we're working every single day, every single decision that we make needs to be focused at making sure that the 20-25% of the people in Charlottesville who do not find this a great place to live are served in order to make this a livable city for all of us. This isn't such a big city that we can't do that. We only have 40,000 people here and among us we have University professors, we have experts, we have doctors, and amazing breadth of talent and ideas. I had a house meeting recently at Midway Manor and I was in room with people who are generally elderly, although there was a mix of ages, a mix of races. The only thing that tied them together is that they have moderate income. These folks had amazing ideas for how to make it a more livable city for them. They knew what the problems were and they had really good concrete ideas for solving them. I think that we need to make sure that every policy we implement and everything that we review and everything that we do is constantly keeping these goals in mind.

Brian Wheeler: Thank you. The fifth question now goes to Mr. Taliaferro. **How do you recommend the City evaluate its effectiveness on realizing its vision and accomplishing its stated priorities?**

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well I'll start out by saying that in 2006 myself along with Mayor Norris and some other counselors had the chance to adopt what we called the City Council Vision 2025. I think the intent then was to use that as a road map when we did budget preparation in an effort to direct our financial resources to those things that we felt, and that the community felt were important to them. I think the way that you measure that is taking a look at some of these things, for instance, like, one talks about a connected community, and what you do, you need to do an annual evaluation. For instance how well you're doing with public transportation. We could look at quality housing for all, we can measure that and we can determine how many housing units we're creating, what we're doing to address the homeless problem within the community. I think that those visions and values and the objectives need to be measured annually prior to preparing the budget in order to use that as a guide.

Neil Williamson: Thank you. The sixth question will start with Ms. Szakos.

QUESTION 6: What are the highest priority recommendations in the City's recently completed Quality of Service and Efficiency Study and which will you champion?

Kristin Szakos (D): Well I typed out the ones that I liked to, that I thought would be the, I liked a lot them actually but the ones that I would personally champion myself. The first recommendation of the study regarded communications. It says, "It is recommended that departments that incur high customer inquiries and complaints develop a standard response protocol that provides timely feedback to the citizen about the status of the inquiry or complaint and if or when it will be resolved and addressed. The system should be monitored by the city manager's office to ensure that response standards are being met." I think that's something that we really do need work on. The other recommendations concern the department of neighborhood and development services which affects a lot of the people who need things from the city. The recommendation said, "An area that needs improvement is how resident and neighborhood complaints and issues are handled. A system that incorporates case management and quick response needs to be implemented and staffed. A clear need to improve customer service via email, phone or letter needs to be pursued based on comments from citizens. The department needs to establish a coherent affordable housing strategic plan that sets unit targets of replacement and new affordable housing based on federal family income brackets. Similar to what Boulder Colorado has done."

Neil Williamson: Thank you. Mr. Taliaferro, **What are the highest priority recommendations in the City's recently completed Quality of Service and Efficiency Study and which will you champion?**

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well I think there were a lot of important items referenced in the study. I will say that frankly I was a little disappointed in the study as was all of that there really were no specific items that I would personally champion. It would have been helpful to me to see more comparisons with other Virginia municipalities included as a part of the report rather than making general statements. One, for instance, larger departments do not have excessive staffing but there really wasn't any data to really support that. They did make mention of the *auditor* of public accounts comparative per capita reports which are published annually by the Commonwealth of Virginia. However, in using those they only gave general rankings with different cities. So, I really wouldn't champion any one thing within the report. In fact I think we need to take a closer look at it and it really needs some more work in my personal opinion.

Neil Williamson: Thank you. Mr. Norris.

Dave Norris (D): The report I think very clearly spelled out that there are two areas, in particular in which the City of Charlottesville spends more money than many of our peer localities. One has to do with social services and the other has to do with policing. Both of which can be ascribed to the fact, as Ms. Szakos and

others have mentioned, is we do have an unacceptably high poverty rate in our community which unfortunately leads in too many cases to an unacceptably high crime rate in our community. One of the areas in which the report suggests that we do take action is to increase our efforts on workforce development, vocational education and providing career ladder jobs for our residents. We don't have to accept the poverty rate we have in our community and if we really set our minds to it, work with our regional partners, work with the community college, work with neighborhood groups that we can create better avenues out of poverty for our community. I was a little peaked I have to say, when the gentleman presenting the report kept talking about how compassionate Charlottesville was because we spent so much money on social services and it makes us such a compassionate city. My response to him was, "I don't think throwing money at a problem really is the best measure of compassion." A better measure of compassion is how well you are helping people move out of poverty not just how are you making life more comfortable for people in poverty. So I really think that's the challenge is reducing the poverty rate in our community which will end up reducing expenditures in social services and policing. A couple other things, they pointed out in FY1999 we spent \$8,286 per student in our city's schools. In FY2009 we're spending \$14,269 per student in our city's schools while in many areas academic achievement has gone down. So, we have to take a closer look at how well our schools are meeting the needs of our students. I think they're making some changes now that are moving them in a better direction, and I commend them for that. But it's going to take a while for some of these changes to really produce long term effects. Lastly, they talk about how we need to take a closer look at consolidation of services both between the city and city schools and between the city and Albemarle County. So this is something we need to pursue as well.

Brian Wheeler: Thank you. I drew the lucky 7 question and it's a long one so you're gonna have to be patient with me, I will repeat it for each candidate. This goes to Mr. Taliaferro.

QUESTION 7: The construction of the Albemarle portion of the Meadowcreek Parkway is underway, absent a court decision that would block the project, do you support funding and design approval of McIntire Road Extended and its grade-separated interchange with the Route 250 bypass? Why or why not?

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well as many of you know I did decide to revisit my original support of the Parkway. I guess four or five weeks ago in order to listen to the concerns both pro and con on this important issue. I have decided that I will support the parkway for several reasons. First, I want to speak to the section that runs from Rio Rd. to Melbourne Rd. Although litigation is ongoing in regards to whether or not council needed a super majority to grant an easement for construction of that section I am of the opinion that if the plaintiffs prevail in that case, VDOT will simply turn around and condemn the property and build a road and connect it into Melbourne Road. Then we'll create another issue, particularly

if the next section is not built. Melbourne Road obviously is not designed to deal with that volume of traffic that this situation would create. The other reason that I am going to support this project is that state law clearly states that when a municipality enters into a contract with VDOT, which the City Council did by passing a resolution requesting that this be done, that they're legally obligated to repay the funds. It does say in this statute that that can be waived, however, given the current economic conditions, I don't think that's going to happen. To date we have over \$3 million invested in the section from Melbourne to the 250 bypass and I think over 2 million in the intersection design. Frankly, I'm not willing to gamble \$5 million of our money. I would be remiss if I did not say that I still have some concerns about the intersection design but I am going to support the parkway.

Brian Wheeler: Thank you. The seventh question now goes to Mr. Norris. **The construction of the Albemarle portion of the Meadowcreek Parkway is underway, absent a court decision that would block the project, do you support funding and design approval of McIntire Road Extended and its grade-separated interchange with the Route 250 bypass? Why or why not?**

Dave Norris (D): I do not support the Meadowcreek Parkway. I've consistently opposed the Meadowcreek Parkway and I will consistently continue to oppose the Meadowcreek Parkway. Do not believe, other than, there are some city residents who live north of the bypass on Park Street, for whom the Parkway is going to provide temporary relief. And I stress *temporary* relief for them being able to get in and out of their driveways. I feel for them and the answer to their needs I think is an Eastern Connector. The Meadowcreek Parkway, other than those residents, I don't see what the city gets out of this deal. And in fact, I think the city loses a lot with Meadowcreek Parkway. I can go down the whole laundry list, but the ones that, the disadvantages from my perspective of this road. First and foremost, we're putting a huge swath of asphalt through our largest city park. This is a side of the park that's been reserved for passive uses and enjoyment of nature and I can't imagine a more active use that's going to decimate nature than a road that's going to bring thousands of cars through the parkway. Secondly, it's going to clog our downtown streets with cut through traffic from the two largest growth areas in Albemarle County. On the south side of town, Biscuit Run when that's built out, on the north side of town with 29 north. This parkway is going to be a throughway connecting those two growth areas which is going to drive a stake through what many of us are now seeing as a real renaissance in downtown Charlottesville over the last 20 years. Why would we risk that? Why would we risk our vision of a thriving, vital downtown that we're now realizing? Which is pedestrian oriented and transit oriented to accommodate cut through traffic from suburban residents. It's an antiquated idea; I believe it's a wrong use of our money. I'd much rather see these dollars be invested in improving our transit system, in improving bike lanes, in improving pedestrian connections, in improving our park spaces for the enjoyment of parks and not for a new road.

Brian Wheeler: Thank you. The seventh question now goes to Ms. Szakos. **The construction of the Albemarle portion of the Meadowcreek Parkway is underway, absent a court decision that would block the project, do you support funding and design approval of McIntire Road Extended and its grade-separated interchange with the Route 250 bypass? Why or why not?**

Kristin Szakos (D): I've opposed the Meadowcreek Parkway since I moved here, fifteen years ago. I live very near to where it will be just on the outside of the bypass off of Locust Avenue. I think it's a poor use of land, I think it's a poor use of resources, I think it's a poor plan for the city. On the other hand, I do believe that we have entered into an area when it's too late to turn back short of a court order. I'm assuming actually that the wording of a your question came from my position paper that says short of court order, I don't support overturning the project. If it were to be overturned and we were to start over, I would definitely oppose the Meadowcreek Parkway. I think I would love to see a new design for the interchange, I understand if that's done, but I would love to see us explore the idea of a traffic circle rather than an elevated cloverleaf intersection there. I think we need to keep traffic moving through that area but I think that if we do continue to move forward and I do think the city has committed to do that we need to really put pressure on the rest of the state on the federal government through the stimulus funding and on our county to make sure that we do a bypass around 29 because if all we have is the Meadowcreek Parkway, Mr. Norris is right, we're going to be filtering traffic right through the center of what's right now a very vibrant city. We already gutted that part of our town when we got rid of Vinegar Hill. We took out a vibrant neighborhood and replaced it with urban development that was short sighted and not paying attention to the needs of our people I think we don't need to do that to that neighborhood again. We need to make sure that the rest of the original envisioned project that included the Meadowcreek Parkway which is a bypass around 29 around Charlottesville gets built. I don't think we can just accept that that's not going to happen. I think we need to make sure that it does.

Brian Wheeler: Thank you. We're going to pause briefly as we change our video tape and while we do that Neil Williamson is going to remind you about the cards that you may have been writing on.

Neil Williamson: We will be taking audience questions by way of index cards. We have folks walking through the aisles with index cards and pens. They'll be coming up here for us to sort through. We also wanted to let you know that the Free Enterprise Forum is proud to be partnering with Charlottesville Tomorrow on these candidate forums. We are a non-partisan public policy organization focused on local public policy in five jurisdictions. We are happy to be here and wanted to let Brian have a moment to speak about Charlottesville Tomorrow.

Brian Wheeler: Like the Free Enterprise Forum Charlottesville Tomorrow is non-partisan. Our goal is to make information and research available to the public on

the most important land use and transportation matters before local government. Charlottesville Tomorrow's built on the very Jeffersonian principle that when the public and local officials are informed and can reach their own conclusions, they will make decisions to protect and build upon the distinctive character of Charlottesville and Albemarle. If you're not currently getting our emails, we do have a signup sheet out front. We send one announcement each week; we'd love to add you to our list. We've also got an envelope and a mission statement out there with more information available.

Neil Williamson: If Fania would bring those forward that would be great. We've now changed out tapes and we're done with commercial announcements and we'll move forward with question number 8. Question number 8 goes first to Mr. Norris.

QUESTION 8: How important is the business community to the City of Charlottesville and what specific steps do you advocate to advance the priorities for economic development and workforce development established by City Council?

Dave Norris (D): The business community is vitally important to the City of Charlottesville for many reasons. One of which, obviously, is the business community is where much of the job creation happens in our community, keep our residents employed. The business community is a vital contributor to our tax base. If we had a weaker business community that would result in higher residential property taxes, and nobody wants to see that. We need a strong business community in the City of Charlottesville. I'm very pleased to say I think there is a rather extensive list of things that this City Council has done to try to support the business community in Charlottesville. Just recently for instance, we launched a yearlong initiative called shop Charlottesville to encourage our residents to patronize local businesses to recycle dollars here in our community. I'd like to see that expanded and I've already talked to the city staff about how we can do this, to encourage more procurement locally. Right now, so many times when we put projects out to bid we end up hiring businesses, contractors, from out of town which impacts our ability to recycle dollars locally. There's some state restrictions about how far we can go, but I think we haven't pushed the envelope enough. One of the things that we hear continually from the business community is a key aspect of maintaining a healthy local economy is having a healthy local infrastructure. Do we have the water supply, the sewer system, do we have the storm-water system, do we have the roads and the pedestrian, the transit amenities that are going to sustain a healthy local economy? We have also taken action to reduce, to get government out of the way on occasion. So, for instance, we worked very closely with the homebuilders this past year and got a bill passed in the Virginia General Assembly that whereby we now agree to streamline the review, the regulatory review process for new developments that agree to include a certain percentage of units as affordable housing. It's a win-win solution that makes sense for the business community, for the development community and

we encourage other localities to take similar steps. Just last night we cut fees, permit fees for new construction to try to support the revival of that particular sector of our economy. We have provided more support in the last couple years for a small business development center to help local residents start and sustain their own businesses. We started a technology incubator to support the local technology industry. We're providing more individual assistance to local businesses. I'd like to see that extended to provide more assistance to minority owned businesses in particular. Certainly, last but certainly not least, is one of the things we hear all the time from businesses is that they need a pool of employees who are ready to work, who come prepared to work. We need to

Neil Williamson: Thank you. Ms. Szakos, **how important is the business community to the City of Charlottesville and what specific steps do you advocate to advance the priorities for economic development and workforce development established by City Council?**

Kristin Szakos (D): Charlottesville has a very strong tradition of entrepreneurial businesses. Especially given the economic times that we're in right now we need to be very cognizant of supporting the local businesses to make sure they don't fail and to make sure that we try to encourage new businesses to start. We need to make sure that businesses and workers and city residents are brought to the table to formulate economic development plans we, I think we often are tempted to make plans without bringing all those stakeholders in. Under the new administration in Washington we have federal green jobs initiatives that are being proposed. I think that we need to position ourselves in Charlottesville to become a leader in that new green economy. I think that that's an economy that really is very compatible with our tradition of locally owned entrepreneurial businesses. I think what we need to remember is that that is the sort of development that, as Mr. Norris was saying, continues to recycle money within the community. When businesses are owned locally, employ local workers and are able to bank locally and to keep the money local. I think that we can avoid the kind of development that some communities have chosen to do, of bringing in chain stores and low wage jobs. I'd like to see us continue to support our local businesses in that. I think many of our local businesses have employees who can't afford to live in the city and so the idea of affordable housing is critical to our local business community. I think we also need to look at the idea of public transportation in supporting our local businesses. When employees can't get to work on time because they miss the bus and have to wait an hour for the next bus, I think that that makes it difficult for employers to keep a workforce. I think that we need to make sure that we have a, start thinking about a more modern system of buses for our city. Where we have trunk lines where they run more often so that people commuting to the city or living within the city know that along certain routes they can get a bus every ten or fifteen minutes, they don't have to drive they can choose to take the bus. Or if they have no car and have to take the bus they know they can get to work on time. I think that this sort of urban model is something that we need to really look at as Charlottesville kind of comes into its

own as a small city not as a small town that's grown too large. I'd also like to see regular buses running between Charlottesville and nearby communities like Crozet, Earlysville, Lake Monticello I guess if we get a train to Crozet we don't need a bus. But even Staunton and Waynesboro where a lot of our city workers live in the short term, until we are able to sustain a housing market where people can live locally. I would also like to see some of our local businesses participate in the city's internship program. The City has committed to doubling the size of its internship program for High Schoolers. It helps to give them job skills. It helps to kind of nurture and mentor them as they prepare to enter the workforce themselves. We've placed these interns in city offices, city departments, the fire department. My daughter has actually participated at the fire department and at the rescue squad. But I think we can also start placing some of these students with local businesses. In a time when people may not be able to afford to hire a lot of folks they can actually nurture their own young people to get training for those jobs so that they can actually work in our local community.

Neil Williamson: Thank you. Mr. Taliaferro, : How important is the business community to the City of Charlottesville and what specific steps do you advocate to advance the priorities for economic development and workforce development established by City Council?

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well I think we can't over emphasize the importance of businesses within the community. They are of vital importance to the wellbeing of our city. I am personally a big fan of public private partnerships, and I would certainly hope we can continue those. We've had some real successes with things such as the Virginia Discovery Museum, the City Center for Contemporary Arts, the Paramount Theater, the SNL building and the CSX redevelopment. All of these endeavors created jobs, created, putting more people downtown, and all contribute to improve the local economy. We even put the SNL building we got back on the tax rolls which helped us out a great deal. These are some examples of the things I'd like to support and continue to work on and maybe put more effort in that area. Recently I've been meeting some of PVCC and really in order to talk about enhancing workforce development within the community because I think that's important. Someone said we need to prepare people for jobs and that's one of the things we're trying to take a look at. We need to inventory jobs within the community and see what jobs are available. We need to assess skills of residents and try to match them up with those jobs. I also would like to propose that we do a really an inventory of opportunities for small businesses within the city. And in connection with that I would like to really take some money and perhaps provide some incentives for those businesses that are getting started and also some incentives for providing training and also incentives for those businesses that will agree to hire a certain number of city residents.

Brian Wheeler: Thank you. Alright, this will be the last of our questions that we gave the candidates in advance and then we will get to the audience questions. The ninth question goes to Ms. Szakos.

Question 9: If you could focus on one area for improved partnership with Albemarle County, what area would that be?

Now on your first question where you wanted only one thing and I had a hard time deciding I managed to come up with one but on this one I'm having a harder time. I think there are a lot of areas where we can work together more effectively. Most Charlottesville city residents spend a lot of time in the County. We shop there, we drive there, we hike there. Most County residents, especially in the area around Charlottesville come into the city regularly. They work there, they shop there, they come in to arts programs there and come to restaurants. I think that the arbitrary border that divides us should not be stronger than our common interests and I think there are a lot of ways we can and should continue to work together. Public transportation, special education, targeted educational programs within our schools, regional planning, roads – especially a bypass around 29—possibly trash hauling and recycling to a greater extent are all areas that we can work better together than apart.

Brian Wheeler: Thank you. The ninth question now goes to Mr. Taliaferro. **If you could focus on one area for improved partnership with Albemarle County, what area would that be?**

Julian Taliaferro (D): Rather than focus on any one area my approach would be to really look at any and all possibilities. I believe there are opportunities to improve service delivery in some areas and at the same time reduce some costs. However, that being said, in the past we've looked at police, social services, parks and rec, and recreation, and fire with no results. I think that most people do see this as one community and personally I am always open to look at any partnerships, go back and revisit some of those that did not produce results, and anything that is mutually beneficial to both jurisdictions.

Brian Wheeler: Thank you. The ninth question goes to Mr. Norris. **If you could focus on one area for improved partnership with Albemarle County, what area would that be?**

Dave Norris (D): I think as the other speakers have mentioned, there are many opportunities for improved partnership between the city and the county. Affordable housing, economic development, environmental issues, it just goes down the line. I unveiled a proposal in the course of this campaign to talk about how do the city and the county do a better job of planning for our recreational needs and stop pitting the recreational needs of certain users against each other or the recreational needs of city versus county residents. But instead, let's work together to expand the pie and come up with a better process for allocating recreational field space. That's one example where we can work closer together on an issue that affects many thousands of our residents. Homelessness is another issue where homelessness is a regional problem. Many of the homeless people that live on the streets of the City of Charlottesville and stay in shelters

like the one that I help to run, are from Albemarle County if not other counties in this planning district but they find their way to Charlottesville and the solution to homelessness needs to be a regional solution. The one area that I do want to point out in particular has to do with clean energy. This is an opportunity where the federal government and the state government are increasingly looking to localities to take the lead on really addressing this arena, clean energy arena, green energy arena, in a very comprehensive, holistic way, in a dynamic way. Cities like the City of Charlottesville are very well positioned to take the lead when it comes to helping our homeowners and our business owners to make energy related improvements to their buildings that are going to result in energy savings and cost savings to them. We were part of an initiative; our City Council endorsed a legislative initiative that senator Deeds took to the General Assembly this year, senate bill 1212, which would have allowed the City of Charlottesville to create a clean energy financing program to actually help local property owners to make these kinds of improvements to their homes and businesses. This, it took off like wildfire, because within days of senator Deeds introducing this bill Albemarle County heard about it and said we'd like to be part of that so we added Albemarle County. Then Arlington County said we'd like to be part of that. The Virginia Municipal League said we'd like to open it up to any city in the state. Virginia Association of Counties said we'd like to open it up to any county in the state. And eventually in the span of two weeks, this little bill that was our little bill ended up being a statewide bill, now any locality has the opportunity to create one of these innovative clean energy financing programs. It opens the door to the city and the county working in partnership to help our residents, our business owners, our property owners to make these kinds of improvements, to install solar panels on their roofs, to buy a more energy efficient appliances, to insulate their homes better, to use less energy, to use renewable energy and move our nation forward in that direction.

Brian Wheeler: Thank you. That concludes the nine questions that we gave them in advance. I do want to ask the candidates to pull the microphones a little closer to you. I forgot to mention that earlier. I think everyone's hearing us ok, I don't see anyone waiving their hands.

AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

Neil Williamson: The first of our audience questions reflects around education, which has been brought up already a number of times by the candidates, and we will go first to Mr. Taliaferro.

AUDIENCE QUESTION 1: City Council funds schools but does not set education policy or spending priorities within the school budget. How can City Council act given the limitations of this role in setting school policy?

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well I think what we have to do, and as I proposed earlier, is to have an educational summit sometime this summer. And I think that we

need to sit down with the School Board and we need to work together as partners. I can assure you that they recognize the problem and they're working on some of these issues and trying to do something about it. I just think we need to take a different direction with it. I think we really need to raise the awareness in the community. Because frankly it's embarrassing to me to think that Charlottesville is the position that we're in. I think that by collaborating with them, I think that they'll work with us. Obviously, we control the purse strings. I am not proposing that we cut their money off, but at the same time I think we've got to take some sort of bold step to really deal with this issue because we are losing one of our most precious resources, our children, in this community, and it creates all kinds of other social issues, gun violence, all kind of issues.

Neil Williamson: Mr. Norris, **City Council funds schools but does not set education policy or spending priorities. How can City Council act given the limitations of your role in setting school policy?**

Dave Norris (D): I don't believe we have a role in setting school policy per se, but I do believe we have a role, and we have an obligation, a responsibility, an opportunity, to rally the community behind the schools, and more importantly behind our school children. We have in the last couple of years... We are in the midst of making the largest investment in youth programs and youth opportunities in a generation in this community to try to support our school children. To try to support our families. When you look at the fact that we have a brand new Boys & Girls Club that's about to be built next to our middle school that provides quality after school enrichment, summer-time enrichment opportunities, for middle school kids. When you look at the fact that we are about to build a YMCA next to our high school, which is going to provide quality after school enrichment opportunities and summer opportunities for our high school youth. When you look at the fact that we are supporting mentoring programs, tutoring programs, at a higher level than before. We are supporting a fatherhood program, which we had never done before, to encourage young men in particular to take responsibility for their children and to be better fathers for their children. We have now for the first time in many, many years a Big Brother Big Sister organization here in Charlottesville that is recruiting volunteers to serve as mentors and positive role models for our kids. As Kristin [Szakos] mentioned, we now have a summer youth employment program, which we have doubled in size each of the last three years, which provides better opportunities for our kids and quality work experience for our kids. So there are many things that we are doing and can be doing to literally embrace our children and embrace our schools without getting into micromanagement of the school budget.

Neil Williamson: Ms. Szakos, **City Council funds schools but does not set education policy or spending priorities. How can City Council act given the limitations of your role in setting school policy?**

Kristin Szakos (D): I think we need to recognize that what effects children's achievement in school has to do with more than what just happens in school. I think we need to realize that it happens before they ever begin school. It happens in the morning before they go to school. It happens after they come home from school. It happens in their families, and their neighborhoods, in the recreational programs that are available. I think that jobs, both jobs that are available for kids after they finish school, and also for their parents... affordable housing, workforce development, adult education, neighborhood safety... all these are things that children need in order to learn. I think that those are commitments that the City has to continue to make to the children of our community.

Brian Wheeler: The second audience question will begin with Mr. Norris.

AUDIENCE QUESTION 2: What will you do about noise from restaurants and music venues that disrupts mixed use residential neighborhoods like Belmont?

Dave Norris (D): Well we have a noise ordinance in the City of Charlottesville which we are enforcing I would say more actively than before, and that's helpful, but I frankly believe that the best recourse in situations like this is simply going and talking to the business owners and asking them to be better neighbors. In almost every case where this has been an issue, a simple request to the business owner to turn the music down to stop being a negative influence on the neighborhood has resulted in a positive outcome. Businesses don't want to be seen as bad neighbors. We had a series of incidents last year with a particular establishment in Belmont, and once the business owner was made aware of these concerns, we didn't hear a single [complaint] from then onward. So I think most business owners want to be good neighbors. We need to combine that with better enforcement, and continued enforcement of ones that aren't so responsive, but in general I think the mixed use neighborhoods that we have now and that we are seeing more of are a good thing. We just need to make sure they don't have such a negative impacts on residences.

Brian Wheeler: Now the second audience question will go to Ms. Szakos. **What will you do about noise from restaurants and music venues that disrupts mixed use residential neighborhoods like Belmont?**

Kristin Szakos (D): Well I have to admit that until I started this campaign I didn't even realize this was an issue because my neighborhood is very quiet. I live in an entirely residential neighborhood. But I have been going to house meetings in various neighborhoods around the city and this has come up again and again. We have, especially some neighborhoods, largely lower income neighborhoods, that are severely affected by this. I think that the folks who live along the neighborhoods around Starr Hill, behind West Main Street, have had a lot of trouble. The folks at Midway Manor have a big problem with some clubs that are

open very very late in their community. And often lower income folks are more likely to have their windows open, less likely to have air conditioning, maybe a little less insulation in their houses. So these are really big issues for a lot of people. People who are trying to put their kids to sleep or trying to just sleep through the night to get to work the next day. So I'm afraid that maybe our current policies aren't strict enough...I don't know if we need to revisit the level of noise that's allowed or if we need to revisit the hours at which certain levels of noise are allowed, maybe have a graded system where after midnight we have to get even a lower level. But it's certainly something that I want to know more about.

Brian Wheeler: The second audience question will now go to Mr. Taliaferro.
What will you do about noise from restaurants and music venues that disrupts mixed use residential neighborhoods like Belmont?

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well I don't think I can add much to what has already been said, other than to say that in the past when the City has had issues with noise we have tried to be proactive in addressing it. And I think as the Mayor [Dave Norris] suggested, in many instances, the building owner, or property owner that was putting on the venue was willing to take action to reduce the noise because they did want to be a good neighbor, and that obviously doesn't work in all cases, and if that doesn't work obviously we have to enforce the [noise] ordinance which we have done in some instances.

Neil Williamson: Our third audience question will first go to Ms. Szakos.

AUDIENCE QUESTION 3: Do you approve of putting the Eastern Connector through Pen Park. Regardless of alignment, how important is this road as a transportation priority.

Kristin Szakos (D): I have to say that I don't have an answer to that question. I think that we have seen with the Meadowcreek Parkway that going through park land is not the best option in most cases. So my inclination would be to think that there must be a better way. But I think we absolutely need some bypass around [Route] 29.

Neil Williamson: Mr. Taliaferro, **do you approve of putting the Eastern Connector through Pen Park. And regardless of alignment, how important is this road as a transportation priority.**

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well I think it is very important because we have a real issue with moving traffic around the City. I would support an Eastern Connector but I would not support it going through the park. And I would not support the current route as planned, because not only does it go through the park, it also I think connects near the intersection of [Route] 20 and [Route] 250...that's already a nightmare there anyway. I would have thought that when this study

was done that they would have recommended routing that traffic down to [Interstate] 64 which looks like it would make a lot more sense...I really never have understood why they routed it through the park, but anyway, I would not support it going through Pen Park.

Neil Williamson: Mr. Norris, **do you approve of putting the Eastern Connector through Pen Park. And regardless of alignment, how important is this road as a transportation priority.**

Dave Norris (D): I don't support the Eastern Connector if we are going to build the Meadowcreek Parkway. I don't believe building more roads and tearing up more park land or green space is the answer. However, I have always said that if it's one or the other, I would much rather see an Eastern Connector because I think it actually solves a transportation problem rather than create more of a transportation problem. And when you look at the amount of traffic that is going from the north side of town to the east side of town and vice versa it does argue for a transportation linkage that steers that traffic away from our residential neighborhoods. But again, if we are going to build the Meadowcreek parkway, I don't want to then turn around and pave over another park, and even if we don't build the Meadowcreek Parkway I don't believe Pen Park is the right place for the Eastern Connector.

Brian Wheeler: We have a couple water questions, I'll get to one of them now, we may have time to get to the other one...This audience question number four will begin with Mr. Taliaferro.

AUDIENCE QUESTION 4: The fifty year water supply plan has only a 5% conservation goal built into its size and expense. Do you think this is reasonable and if not what do you think is a more reasonable goal?

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well I don't really know whether it is reasonable or not because I don't really have all the information on it. As I said earlier, I think that's something that we need to take a further look at as we put the plan together because obviously if we can increase the amount of water that we can conserve we might ultimately be able to reduce the scope of the project thus also reducing the cost.

Brian Wheeler: The fourth audience question will now go to Mr. Norris. **The fifty year water supply plan has only a 5% conservation goal built into its size and expense. Do you think this is reasonable and if not what do you think is a more reasonable goal?**

Dave Norris (D): I do not think it's reasonable. When you look at the fact that the City of Charlottesville is now in the business of distributing these small water conservation kits to home owners and business owners, that cost...we buy them for about \$7.00 each, and the projected water savings for each homeowner that

installs one of these kits is anywhere from 20-35%. So with \$7.00 we could save up to 35% of water usage for our residential properties. When you look at the fact that we are already losing 10-20% of our water through leaky pipes...When you look at the fact that the low flow toilets that are now becoming standard in new construction and in renovation are saving a tremendous amount of water...When you look at the fact that plumbing fixtures are using much less water...When you look at the fact that we haven't even skimmed the surface of use of rain water, use of gray water, I think we have surrendered. I think 5% is far too low a goal, not nearly as ambitious a goal. The second half of your question is...we are trying to get better information about what is a better goal. Many of the people who now support the fifty-year plan, the current fifty-year plan signed a letter a few years ago when it looked like we were going to go to the James River, and there was a letter signed by some of the same groups that are now supporting the plan that actually, in that letter, said we should at least be aiming for 10% water savings per capita in fifty years. I think that might even be too low. However, we just don't know yet. We have commissioned a study of water conservation, looking at what we are doing now, what we can be doing more, what are some of the best practices in other communities....Last night we got the first draft of that study at our City Council meeting. It was a very impressive list of initiatives that are either under way, might be under way, or that we could pursue. I asked a very simple question, 'If we were to implement this wide range of initiatives, what could we see in terms of water conservation?' And they simply had no idea. The response was, 'Well we don't know.' And I don't think that's an acceptable response and we've asked them to go back and get us some better information. It may not be exact, but at least to get us a good range of information that we can then incorporate in the long term water supply formula.

Brian Wheeler: The fourth audience question will now go to Ms. Szakos. **The fifty year water supply plan has only a 5% conservation goal built into its size and expense. Do you think this is reasonable and if not what do you think is a more reasonable goal?**

Kristin Szakos (D): I think that, even divorcing the whole thing from the water supply, I think that we just have to do better than that. I think that we can, and we need to just as planetary citizens. The issue of water is not so much an issue of water, because there is a finite amount of water on the planet, and there is plenty of water. The issue is drinkable water. It's water that we have to chemically process, or in some way rehabilitate in order to drink it, and then we throw it away again in a condition in which it needs to be cleaned again in order to use it. I think that there are lots of ways in which we can reduce our need for potable water. We could flush our toilets with water coming from our roof. We could do a lot of things, that use plenty of water, and don't mean that we can't take showers anymore, but that we can use our water more wisely so that we are not having to chemically treat our water so much.

Neil Williamson: The next audience question goes first to Mr. Norris.

AUDIENCE QUESTION 5: What are your concrete plans for increasing the affordable housing stock in the city and keeping it affordable?

Dave Norris (D): There are many plans. One of which I continue to believe is a necessity is a dedicated source of funding in our City budget for affordable housing. This is something that over three-hundred communities across the country have done. It's the best way to create a pool of funding that can then be leveraged with other funds, that you can create plans around, create projects around....It is, I think, the smartest way to go about meeting our affordable housing needs. But there are many plans and initiatives that we can pursue to develop more affordable housing. I talked earlier about revitalizing our public housing neighborhoods. We have seven public housing neighborhoods that sit on about forty acres, much of which is either low density or vacant property. We can create higher density, mixed income, higher quality neighborhoods, neighborhoods with higher quality housing, with better amenities for residents, better opportunities for residents, and in the process you can create more Habitat for Humanity homes, you can create more affordable rental housing. We need to make sure we replace on a one-for-one basis the public housing units that are there, but we have an opportunity to infill some other affordable housing opportunities. When you look at inclusionary zoning, which is where we partner with the development community and create incentives for the development community to be part of the solution. On a very concrete basis, last night we took action to pave the way for development of single room occupancy (SRO) housing in Charlottesville, which is in many ways the best opportunity we have for reducing homelessness in our community is creating permanent supportive housing for people that have been on our streets and been in and out our shelters for many years. We have an organization out of Richmond, called Virginia Supportive Housing, which has built a number of these single room occupancy housing facilities around the state, and they have agreed to come and do one in Charlottesville. SRO housing is a strategic priority of City Council. You know I can just go down the line. Another initiative has to do with what we are doing with our trailer parks right now. You look at Habitat for Humanity which is getting some national acclaim now for their plans to take a trailer park like Sunrise or Southwood and convert it into higher quality housing where you allow the residents that are there now to stay and move up in the world, when it comes to the quality of their housing, but also create a mixed income neighborhood that has better amenities, a better quality of life for the residents.

Neil Williamson: Ms. Szakos, **what are your concrete plans for increasing affordable housing stock in the city and keeping it affordable?**

Kristin Szakos (D): I think we are very fortunate to have an expert on affordable housing on our City Council. I think that Mayor Norris has a great deal of understanding and strategic thought about this, and I support all the initiatives that he has talked about. In fact, I was really shocked last year when his

proposal to establish a dedicated fund for affordable housing in the city, which is something a lot of cities have done, it's something that supports housing for working families, it's not public housing, it's for people like teachers, and firefighters, and people who work for our City, and it didn't pass. And I think that that's really unfortunate, and I am hoping that he will reintroduce that if I am City Council because I would certainly support it. My step brother lives in Upstate New York, and is involved in a firm that does consulting and work on affordable housing issues there, and I have been talking to him about this. He has got a couple of interesting ideas too that I would love to see us consider or at least look at. There is one in Ithaca, NY, which is the home of Cornell University. It is a very similar community to ours. It's a moderate size small city with a large university in it. He is helping Cornell University to develop a project where they are providing \$10 million dollars over the next ten years and they are working to leverage a combination of government and private investment to create affordable housing so that they'll have affordable rental housing for their employees, for low income elderly or moderate income elderly, and for adults on Medicaid. So kind of a mixed use community of rental housing, and I just think that's the sort of thing we need to look at, is creative ways to solve the housing issue in our community.

Neil Williamson: Mr. Taliaferro, **what are your concrete plans for increasing affordable housing stock in the city and keeping it affordable?**

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well my concrete plans would be to continue to look at a variety of options, as our resident expert Mayor Norris has stated, and I often refer to him as that. And I think one of the most important things that we as a City Council, and myself, can do is to ensure that we continue to have funds to carry out some of these projects. We have made a substantial commitment over the past number of years. We have committed over a million dollars a year and we are committed to continuing that process and I would certainly support that.

Brian Wheeler: We are going to do three more questions and I think we are going to get you out a little early. This is audience question number six and we had a similar question that was submitted to Charlottesville Tomorrow electronically so I'll ask the one from the audience here tonight, and we'll begin with Ms. Szakos.

AUDIENCE QUESTION 6: Would you support greater participation by neighborhood associations in the decision making process of the City, and if so how would this be achieved and please provide specifics?

Kristin Szakos (D): Yes. Boy I am not sure I can provide a whole lot of specifics off the top of my head with the question. It's something that I am very committed to. I think that we really need to work on not only on working with our neighborhood associations, but making sure that we revitalize some of our neighborhood associations in neighborhoods where they are less effective. I have been talking with Bruce Odell who was one of the people who brought

together the Alliance of Neighborhood Associations and I am very interested in working with them in the future, but that's about as specific as I'm ready to get right now.

Brian Wheeler: Next to Mr. Taliaferro. **Would you support greater participation by neighborhood associations in the decision making process of the City and if so how would this be achieved and please provide specifics?**

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well I would support that. I think we try to include the neighborhoods now in the decision making process. I know that the City Manager meets on a regular basis with the Presidents of the neighborhood associations and frequently members of Council are asked to attend meetings with groups of citizens to discuss issues. I certainly support that and I can frankly say that the input that I have received from many neighborhood associations has certainly influenced my decision on certain issues more than once.

Brian Wheeler: The sixth audience question will go to Mr. Norris. **Would you support greater participation by neighborhood associations in the decision making process of the City and if so how would this be achieved and please provide specifics?**

Dave Norris (D): I certainly do. I agree with both Mr. Taliaferro and Ms. Szakos. I fully agree that we need to have broader and more meaningful and constructive participation by neighborhood associations in decision making by the City. Too often the City will send an e-mail out to all the Presidents of the neighborhood associations and consider that to be public engagement. That is not public engagement. Too often they'll have a meeting with the neighborhood association, and you may have three or four members of a neighborhood association show up, and then they can check off the box that says they have had a meeting with the neighborhood. And that's not a meeting with the neighborhood. We really need to go above and beyond when it comes to engagement and not pay lip service to engagement but have real, meaningful, constructive, consistent, ongoing engagement with the people whose lives are going to be affected by City decision making. A perfect example was this new sewer line that we are doing that is affecting many of the residents on the north side of town. Until some of the residents came forward and demanded, rightfully so, more of a role in the decision making process for this new sewer line, which is going to dramatically affect many of their properties, the City was just moving forward with this plan. We had to slow the plan down and we created a group which hopefully is now going to start meeting regularly to make sure that there is more regular neighborhood input into that particular plan. We have an issue with park planning, where we have not had adequate neighborhood and meaningful, constructive neighborhood involvement in park planning. We have just adopted a new process for master planning our parks which guarantees more of a role both for neighborhoods but also for key affected parties in park planning. The

City created a monster, frankly, in the way that we went about planning for the western side of McIntire park where we moved forward with a plan without fully engaging the softball community. We certainly heard an earful from the softball community, rightfully so, who felt blindsided when they found out that the City was planning to swap out softball fields for a new soccer field. And we have since had to go back and say we need to revisit that. We shouldn't have to go back and revisit these things we should do them better from the start.

Neil Williamson: Our seventh audience question goes first to Mr. Taliaferro.

AUDIENCE QUESTION 7: There's been a great deal of discussion outside of Council chambers regarding McIntire Park and the YMCA. What will be your stance on the YMCA in McIntire Park if it comes before Council?

Julian Taliaferro (D): I will support the [YMCA]. The only condition I have attached to it is that the County supports it as an equal partner.

Neil Williamson: Following up to Mr. Norris. **There's been a great deal of discussion outside of Council chambers regarding the YMCA and McIntire Park. What will be your stance on the YMCA in McIntire Park if it comes before Council?**

Dave Norris (D): It has already come before Council. The YMCA is going to be in McIntire Park and it's going to be a great asset for our community, primarily because of its location next to the high school. Again, the opportunity for high school kids to have positive after school enrichment activities available to them...for those who cannot afford a membership in the [YMCA], they will have free membership in the [YMCA]. They will have opportunities there, they will have employment opportunities. It's going to be a wonderful asset to the community. We will have transportation available to take them home afterwards. People have said, 'Why not put the [YMCA] in one of our other neighborhoods where it might have more direct access?' But the reality is that anywhere else in the City that you put the [YMCA] it's going to have less access to the high school kids who need those services and who will benefit from those opportunities. There's a lot of misinformation out there. I still have to battle the myth that's out there that the [YMCA] is going to destroy the softball fields. It is absolutely not true, but we still have to battle [the myth] and I hope none of you continue to perpetuate that myth. The plan for the softball fields, as I mentioned earlier, was to replace them with a soccer field and to have the softball fields relocated. We have since said we are very interested in reopening the master plan for the western side of the park to keep softball in the park, to keep the [YMCA] in the park, bring more city residents into the City's park and provide more opportunities for our youth in the park.

Neil Williamson: Ms. Szakos. **there's been a great deal of discussion outside of Council chambers regarding the YMCA and McIntire Park. What**

will be your stance on the YMCA in McIntire Park if it comes before Council?

Kristin Szakos (D): I agree it already has been decided, but had I been there I would have voted for it. I think it is a perfect use for a park. This park is a park that has had a difficulty bringing in and being of service to kids from across the City and I think that this is a great way to get kids in the park. I also think there is sort of a false connecting of these issues that's been unfortunate and the YMCA, I think, is not something that is going to destroy the park, it is going to enhance the park and I think it's great. And also, I must put in my plug, since I have a little time left, that my husband is an avid softball player and I would never be forgiven if I didn't support this.

Brian Wheeler: And the final audience question, number eight, we will start with Mr. Norris.

AUDIENCE QUESTION 8: What creative or innovative ideas will you bring to a term on City Council?

Dave Norris (D): Well I like to think that I have brought a lot of creative and innovative ideas, maybe too many for some people's sake. I think on a whole range of issues, that we have all been talking about, that we all care deeply about...When we talk about opportunities for our youth and families, when we talk about opportunities on affordable housing, environmental sustainability, infrastructure...There are many opportunities that we have to make this a City that really lives up to the vision statement that we have laid out. During the course of this campaign, I have talked about four in particular, and had four different issue events, because this is what really motivates me--opportunities for positive change in our community and talking about issues and how do we get to where we want to be. The first event, I was part of a Democratic breakfast, talking about a new way forward on our water supply plan. How do we pull the best aspects of both camps that have aligned on either side of this issue and ask some harder questions and explore the opportunity for having a water supply plan that truly is the most ecologically and economically responsible path forward. At another event, talking about an issue that's near and dear to many in our community which has to do with jobs, and employment in our City and particularly having to do with diversity. Diversity of employment opportunities in our City, in our schools. Forty-five percent of the kids in our schools are African-American yet only fifteen percent of the teaching staff is African-American. How do we create a City workforce and a community workforce that better represents the community in which we live. So I spelled out a number of creative proposals to do that and was very pleased to have the support of a number of community leaders on that initiative. I had another event where I talked about how do we preserve and expand green space in our community? How do we increase our tree canopy? How do we take rivers and seas of asphalt and convert them into green streets and green parking lots? How do we promote green roofs in our

City? We want to be a greener City, let's take that literally and be a greener City. And then lastly, as I mentioned earlier, I had an event where we talked about a better way to allocate recreational field space in our community, which to some people may seem like not that important an issue, but I can guarantee you for families in this community, and adults in this community, who enjoy recreational pursuits, it's a big issue. And right now all the leagues are sort of fighting over crumbs and we need to work together. So I called for a regional field allocation, field utilization study, and that's now on its way to getting before City Council and Albemarle County. So these are just some of the ways that I think we can move forward in a creative way to address some of the challenges in our community.

Brian Wheeler: The eighth audience question now goes to Ms. Szakos. **What creative or innovative ideas will you bring to a term on City Council?**

Kristin Szakos (D): Well the perspective that I try to hold the most is the involvement of people who are less listened to in the City and I think that a lot of the things that I would have to do with that. The idea of moving City Council meetings around the community I think is innovative and I think it is something that can really increase participation in decisions, often so that we make the right decision the first time because we've talked to the right people. I think that we need to be proactive in involving citizens in lots of ways and those are things that I will support when I am on the Council. Another thing that I would support, is this idea of the... "village approach" to raising children. I think we need to make sure that everything we do makes sure that all of our children have an equal opportunity in this City. I think that this City needs to be a livable City for every family and a place to raise our children, where all of us can raise our children to succeed, whether that means college or not, but at least so they can live a successful life and get work. I think that the idea of a bus system that's a more urban model of bus system is something I would like to push over the longer term, I think, that it is not something that is going to be done next year. I would like to see us explore a trunk and feeder line system of buses. Where we have frequent buses going on main roads, less frequent buses coming in from side roads, so people know that there is a reliable set of transportation choices for them to make. So that people with cars can chose not to drive their cars in the City to help reduce the traffic, the congestion, the parking, and also to preserve our environment by having fewer cars on the road, and also to make sure that people who don't have cars have a reliable way to work and to play, to the park. I think that we need to make sure that we include people not only in decision making, but in the actual work of running our City. I was the state coordinator for the National Day of Service that was on Inauguration Day in January and one of the things we saw was that in Charlottesville we had two-thousand people who participated in local events for that event, and all of them said they would love to get involved and do things more. A lot of our non-profits have opportunities for people to volunteer and our Parks Department certainly has good opportunities for people to volunteer. But I'd like to see more of that. I'd like to see every City Notes that goes out in our utility bill have opportunities for people to volunteer,

either with local non-profits that [support] this idea of “the village,” of supporting our children as they develop and as they live in our community, things that support the vision and the priorities of our City, I think that we should encourage people to volunteer for those as well as support them with money from the City.

Brian Wheeler: Now audience question number eight for Mr. Taliaferro. **What creative or innovative ideas will you bring to a term on City Council?**

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well, one of the things that I’m really interested in and that I have some ideas about is improving customer service in the City, although I think we do a reasonably good job of it. It is something that is near and dear to my heart. I think that we need to not only improve it, but have fast responses and try to get to the root of the problem to get the issue solved quickly. And I think there are some ways to improve that. Another thing that I think I will bring is that I have some ideas and suggestions for City staff to really develop some measurable objectives to measure service levels of certain services within the municipal organization. We can measure input, how much money we spend, but we still do not have a good methodology to really measure the output. And I think I have some ideas about how to do that. Also in terms of the educational system, and I stated that earlier, I think we need to address that, and I have some ideas, as I suggested, a summit to address [what] I think is the most critical issue in the community. Also in the area of job development, I talked a little bit about assessment of skills, training, and creation of jobs, and I think I have some ideas to bring to the table on that. Beyond that, as always, I want to try to continue to develop ways to listen to not only people in the community but also to our employees within the City because sometimes they bring some really great ideas forward that we can use to address some of the issues and some of the problems that we have to contend with on a day to day basis.

Brian Wheeler: We are going to pause real briefly to change [video tapes] and then we are going to conclude with closing statements.

Neil Williamson: We’d also like to encourage all of you to stay engaged with the process by visiting the websites of both Charlottesville Tomorrow and the Free Enterprise Forum, we will have podcasts and questions. And please engage with your local officials, local government is really your government and it is where you can make a difference on the local level.

CLOSING STATEMENTS

Neil Williamson: Now we are moving into closing statements, and by staying in the same order, the first closing statement will be Ms. Szakos.

Kristin Szakos (D): Well I am running for City Council because I have seen what can happen when ordinary people can do when they come together and do extraordinary things. I was the volunteer coordinator for the Obama campaign

and I saw people coming together and getting excited about civic participation. And that's what I am hoping that we can generate in the City, is an excitement about civic participation, not just a grudging acceptance of civic participation, from both sides. I want people to be excited about participating and I want the City to be excited about hearing that input. But I think at a deeper level I'm running for City Council because I have benefited from living in this City in an amazing way. I have raised two children here, we moved here fifteen years ago. My kids have played soccer, my husband has played softball, my kids have come up through the public schools, we have accessed the special education system, we have accessed the sports system, my kids have swam on the City swim team, we have used the City pools, we have used the City parks, we have walked on the City trails, my dog loves the dog park—We have really benefitted from living here and I feel this is a time, my youngest daughter is a Senior in high school, she's off to the University of Dubuque next year to study nursing, I feel that it is a time that I can give back. But it's also a time when I think I need to recognize that the experience that I've had, the wonderful experience that I've had of raising my family in Charlottesville is an experience that's not shared by every family here, and I feel that I have an obligation that we, all of us, have an obligation to make sure, that we do everything in our power to make sure that that sort of opportunity is available for every family, and every child, and everyone who lives in the City. And I am not even going to use my three minutes because that's all I have to say.

Neil Williamson: Mr. Taliaferro, your closing statement.

Julian Taliaferro (D): Well first I want to thank all the people in the audience that have taken the time to come out this evening to listen to what we have said in regards to some of the important issues facing our community. I am running for City Council again as I believe in public service and I have dedicated the best part of my life to delivering public service or service to the public. I guess my greatest satisfaction comes with helping people with their problems in the community along with supporting initiatives that improve the quality of life for all of our citizens. The City Council, the past three years, has worked to make many improvements, and a few examples have been—we worked with and supported the School Board and we have been able to get all our schools finally fully accredited. We have allocated over \$1 million annually to address affordable housing initiatives. We listened to people in the community talking about public transportation, we have improved public transportation, improved routes, increased routes, and provided Sunday service. And as a City, we have taken the lead in the state and nation in implementing green initiatives to protect our environment. Today, as many of you are aware, cities across the nation are facing difficult economic challenges. I have over forty years experience in local government budgets and I have had to face many difficult times in the past. During other stressful periods of economic downturns I had to make many difficult choices. We went through force reductions, we went through downsizing, a lot of issues during the forty-three years I spent in City government. I know

how to make the difficult choices and I know how to do that without materially affecting critical service delivery of core services in the community. I also want to say that this past year we were able to produce a budget in this City with no tax increases, no layoffs, no reduction in critical service. In addition to that we were able to create an economic downturn fund to protect us in next year's uncertain economic conditions. And I would dare say you will not find another municipality in Virginia that has been able to do that and I am proud to have been able to participate in that. And I want to continue to serve you and I want to continue to be a member of an effective Council team that has helped to maintain and protect the quality of life in our City. So tonight I ask for your continued support and I ask for your vote on May 9th.

Neil Williamson: Mr. Norris, closing statement.

Dave Norris (D): Well I first want to thank Charlottesville Tomorrow and the Free Enterprise Forum for hosting this event. And I think our community is enriched by the engagement of organizations like Charlottesville Tomorrow and the Free Enterprise Forum who actively promote community dialogue, public dialogue, about issues of interest and concern to our residents. Many communities don't have such organizations and we are blessed to have them. So thank you again. I ran for City Council three years ago on a set of issues that were of great concern to me personally and to the entire community. Issues like affordable housing. The fact that we continue to struggle to make sure that the citizens who do the hard work of making this City function can afford to live here. To make sure that we have housing available for our elderly, for our disabled, for our working parents, for our public servants—this is an area in which we have made significant gains. We are not where we need to be, but we have had a five and six fold increase in funding for affordable housing in the last two and three years. Youth opportunities—as I mentioned earlier we have made major investments in youth opportunities in the last two and three years. When you look at the new facilities that are coming online, new parks and recreation programming, continued funding for our schools to help close the achievement gap. Again we are making progress, we are not where we need to be. Poverty in our community—depending on how you measure it, it's anywhere from 15 to 25% of our residents, of our neighbors, who live below the poverty line. The reality is that even if you are living at 150% of poverty you are still struggling in this community. There are too many people having to work multiple jobs to afford the cost of living here, having to make significant sacrifices for their kids, having to go without health care, having to go without adequate transportation—we too often leave them behind when it comes to the efforts that we make to play up Charlottesville as this wonderful place to live. The fact is that there are many people to this day who do not experience Charlottesville the same way that we do. And environmental sustainability, where we have made significant gains. We are getting statewide and nationwide attention now for our efforts to promote the green agenda, to promote recycling, to promote energy efficiency and conservation, to promote tree canopy, to promote hybrid vehicles, just down the

line, the green roof on City Hall, I could go [through] a whole laundry list. We have made good progress, we are not where we need to be. On each of these areas we have made good progress, but we are not where we need to be, which is why I decided to throw my hat back in the ring for another four years because I think we need to continue moving in the direction we are moving in. There are certain issues where I think we are moving in the wrong direction, which we have talked about tonight, but in general I think we are doing some good things, and I'd like to be a part of a Council that continues to make progress on each of these fronts.

END