



## **2009 Charlottesville City Council Candidate Interview September 2009**

*Candidate: Dave Norris (D)*

On November 3, 2009, voters in the City of Charlottesville go to the polls to elect their representatives to two seats on the Charlottesville City Council. This recording is Brian Wheeler's September 3, 2009 interview with Dave Norris (D). Mr. Norris is seeking re-election and is being challenged by Kristin Szakos (D), Bob Fenwick (I), Paul Long (I), and Andrew Williams (I-Write In).

*The audio of this interview is available online in the  
Charlottesville Tomorrow News Center*

[http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville\\_tomorrow\\_/2009/10/norris.html](http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville_tomorrow_/2009/10/norris.html)

*Complete election coverage is available on the Charlottesville Tomorrow website  
<http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/elections>*

### **INTERVIEW**

**Mr. Norris, thank you for participating in this interview with Charlottesville Tomorrow. The complete audio and written transcript for this interview will be available on the Internet. Information from this interview will be used in the compilation of Charlottesville Tomorrow's non-partisan voter guide. Charlottesville Tomorrow does not endorse any candidates and our goal is to provide information to the public so they can make an informed vote on issues related to land use, transportation and community design.**

**As you are aware, some of the questions you will be asked have been provided in advance, others have not. All City Council candidates will be asked the same questions. Are you ready to start?**

I am.

**1. Please describe your past experience that qualifies you to be on City Council?**

Before I answer that, I want to first thank Charlottesville Tomorrow both for this opportunity today and also for all that you do to keep our citizens informed about their government and you guys provide an invaluable resource to our community. So thank you for that.

In terms of my own past experience, I am an incumbent on City Council. And so I have been on City Council for three and a half years, or I will be, once my term is up, and I do have a record that I am running to defend. And so I have learned a lot about a whole variety of issues, been fully immersed in any number of community concerns, challenges, opportunities--ranging from water supply, housing, education, environment, infrastructure, transportation, you name it. And so I feel like I have had a good grounding. I feel like we made good progress in the last three years on City Council.

We have record level of investment and youth opportunities with our early childhood education program, with our after school and summer programs, with the partnerships with the Boys & Girls Clubs and the YMCA, summer youth employment. We have had a record level investment in affordable housing, hundreds of households in Charlottesville that enable either stay in a housing they can afford or access new affordable housing because of these investments.

We have had record level investment and environmental sustainability, environmental stewardship, green energy kind of initiatives, clean energy, protection of green space, alternative transportation. And we have taken some pretty bold action on some of our infrastructure challenges both with renovations in the Downtown Mall and looking at our buildings. Our building stock and looking at our transportation infrastructure etc, water sewer etc.

We have done all of these things while holding a line on the tax rate and while reducing taxes for moderate income families and we continue to be ranked as one of the best managed cities in the country. We have highest possible bond rating. So I feel like we are in good shape.

However, there's much work left to do to realize our vision of a truly great place to live for all of our residents. We still have too many of our families living in poverty. We have too many kids dropping out of school. We have too many people who can't afford housing. We have major issues to resolve on water supply and transportation etc. So I am running because there are a lot of issues yet to be resolved and addressed and I look forward to devoting my energy and experience and time over the next four years in trying to make even more progress.

**2. Do you support the formation of a Regional Transit Authority with Albemarle County? What are your regional transportation priorities and how do you recommend we fund them in the absence of new state funding and without the ability to raise a local sales tax?**

I was on the MPO, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, when a lot of the work went into creating the framework for a Regional Transit Authority. I fully supported it then, I continue to support it. I was on the working group that crafted the legislation that we took to the General Assembly. One was to authorize creation of the Regional Transit Authority. The other one was legislation that would have allowed the City and the County to put to a vote to our citizens whether or not they would like to invest more sales tax revenue and increase the sales tax for critical transportation needs in our community.

The first piece of legislation passed without much controversy allowing us to create a Regional Transit Authority, I was glad to see that. The second legislation, I think it was frankly rather shameful, the fact that... the historic bargain in this state is that the state, generally speaking, is going to pay for transportation [and] localities, generally speaking, are going to pay for schools. I mean that's sort of the historic bargain and the state has been not living up to its end of the deal when it comes to transportation funding. And so we have many unmet transportation needs in this community and we can't wait for the state to provide the funding that's needed to address them.

We have to figure out how to do more locally. Most recently the City said look we have got one piece of Hillsdale Drive Connector that's ready to go, let's go ahead and get that one done with local dollars. Even though again traditionally that's a project that would have been funded with state dollars but it's so important to get that done that we want to go ahead and get moving on that.

So I thought it was really unfortunate, the General Assembly... So not only are they not providing the revenues that we need but they are not even allowing us to ask our citizens if our citizens were willing to pay a little bit extra in sales taxes for transportation needs both for roads and for transit, for better bus system, better bike and pedestrian amenities, etc.

So now we are sort of back to the drawing boards on how do we fund these transportation needs since the state is not living up to its end of the deal and since we had not been given the authority to hold a referendum on a sales tax increase. It's a very difficult bind that we are in because there's not that many other options left to us. The main option that we do have available to us is increasing property taxes to fund transportation and nobody wants to do that or very few people want to do that. I certainly don't want to do that. So it's really going to require the City and the County to take a hard look at what are the alternatives, do we go back to the state and try again, maybe the

composition of the General Assembly changes this year in November so that will see bolder action on the state in filling its transportation commitments.

But at this point I have to say I am a little frustrated and it's a kind of a question mark for me as to whether or not we even create the transit authority which is going to entail some significant administrative cost just in establishing this new government entity, this new authority without any assurance that there's going to be additional funding for improved transportation infrastructure and improved transit.

The whole rationale for creating the Transit Authority was that the City would give up control over the transit system, the bus system in exchange for more resources, more funding from the County to expand the transit system help make sure that our buses go more places, more reliably, more frequently, in a more user-friendly manner and get more people on to the buses and out of their single occupancy vehicles. If there's no more funding available for that I am not sure it makes sense to create a new government bureaucracy to run it.

**3. In August 2009, Advocates for a Sustainable Albemarle Population (ASAP) released the first report in their research seeking to identify an optimal sustainable population for the community. Should City Council explore policies that would cap the City's population growth at a number below the potential build-out population? Why or why not?**

I am not convinced that the issue is so much the rate of population growth versus the manner in which we are growing. I am an advocate for what is often called smart growth, urban-infill development that's transit oriented, that's pedestrian oriented. That reduces suburban sprawl.

And I think what we are seeing with this report is that the way in which we are growing now is not sustainable and particularly when you look 30, 40, 50 years into the future the impacts on our natural resources, on our carrying capacity as a region to sustain growth, it's going to put our environmental health at risk and I think it puts our community at risk.

Frankly the way that we are growing now, the continued sprawling out into the countryside, we are paving over our fields and forests and we are becoming more and more dependent on the automobile. I think a healthy community is one which figures out how to become less dependent on single occupancy vehicles and focus more on the kind of urban-infill development that we want to see happen in places like the City of Charlottesville and that we are taking steps to encourage in the City of Charlottesville.

**4. Is neighboring Albemarle County's rate of population growth, too much, too little, too much, or just the right amount? What in your mind are the advantages and disadvantages to population growth in Albemarle and the operations of the University of Virginia?**

Again I would just say I don't know that it's necessarily the rate of population growth. The County has been growing. The City's population has stayed roughly the same over the years and we don't project it will increase dramatically in the coming years. The County's population has been growing. It's projected to continue to grow but again it's about the quality of the growth, the nature of the growth. And is it going to be based on truly looking at a development area/growth area kind of growth strategy or are we going to continue to see so much of our countryside chewed up by sprawl development that I think is really detrimental to our social health and our environmental health.

So I commend some of the initiatives that have been taken to encourage more growth in the growth areas. I would like to see that even tighter frankly and I would like open conversations with the County about... there's I think a very interesting idea that's has been floated within the last six to 12 months with transfer development rights in the County where perhaps the City can be a partner in that where we are taking on some of the growth in the City, in areas of the City where we want to see more infill-development in our commercial corridors that are ripe for mixed use, transit oriented, pedestrian oriented development where we want to see more activity.

Not necessarily in our single family neighborhoods but in those commercial quarters like Downtown, West Main Street, Preston Avenue, Cherry Avenue, High Street, Emmet Street. Could we partner with the County and be a receiving site, I think they call it, I don't know the technical word for it, but for some of these transfer development rights and it's a very intriguing possibility. I am meeting actually tomorrow with the people to sort of brainstorm how that might work and it's going to be an interesting conversation to have.

**5. Should the community invest in repairing or enlarging the existing Lower Ragged Mountain Dam built around 1908 as part of the 50 year community water supply plan? Why or why not?**

Before I answer this question I neglected to mention, you also asked in the last question about the University of Virginia and I wanted to add one quick thing about UVA, it is that I am not necessarily opposed to growth in the student body or the staff or faculty of UVA, but we have had ongoing concern about their unwillingness or inability to build sufficient quantity of housing on grounds for their students and faculty and staff. And that's put a lot of pressure on our City's housing market, driven up housing cost in the City. And I am hopeful that we can continue to push UVA to build more housing on

grounds to manage their growth, so again it's more the way in their growing versus the rate of growth.

In terms of the Lower Ragged Mountain Dam, my strong preference is to see us both repair and enlarge the existing dam at Ragged Mountain versus building a large and very expensive new dam at Ragged Mountain that's going to have tremendous environmental impacts. But that obviously requires some other pieces of the water supply plan to be adjusted.

It requires us to figure out how can we, if we are not going to expand the capacity of Ragged Mountain as much as we would be able to with the new dam, we have got to be able to expand it elsewhere. This is one of the reasons why I am very intrigued about the idea of dredging the South Fork [Rivanna] Reservoir because it will give us some of that capacity. It's one of the reasons why I am very interested in seeing if we can safely adjust our demand projections on water to where we may not need as much capacity because I don't believe we are going to be using as much water as the current plan envisions.

The current plan envisions that we are only going to be using 5% less water per-capita in 50 years than we are today. I think that's very unrealistic. I think the reality is that we are already saving much more than 5% than we were when the plan was crafted and I think with the new technology coming on, with rain water harvesting, cisterns etc. Rain barrels with new plumbing, new fixtures, that number is going to be much different and we should plan accordingly.

**6. If you could focus on one area for improved partnership with Albemarle County during the next two years what area would that be?**

You know there are so many areas where the County and the City have a lot to gain from working closely together and it's hard to name just one, but one that we have already started working on which I think is going to bear a tremendous amount of fruit in both the City and the County in the next two years is with energy. The clean energy initiatives that we are both working on where we are about to enter into a partnership called LEAP (Local Energy Alliance Program). We have gotten some startup funding through a major grant from the [Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance] (SEEA) and it was a very competitive grant. Initially there are about 50 cities all over the Southeastern US that were going to pursue it and we ended up winning that \$500,000 grant. We are hoping to leverage that with some other resources from our own coffers, from the Federal Government etc.

And this is an initiative that will allow the City and the County to work closely together to help our citizens, our homeowners, our business owners to save on average... The goal is to help 30% to 50% of our property owners save

between 20% and 40% of energy use. Reduce their energy use by 20% to 40% in the coming years and so it's a very ambitious goal.

That's very deep market penetration and would result in tremendous cost savings for our citizens, for our homeowners, for our business owners, it will result in lower carbon emissions. It's a win-win all the way around and it's going to require us to work closely with the County to get that moving and look forward to the results that it will accomplish.

And it will create jobs. That's the other important thing, the business community is behind it, there's a lot of home builders, people who do home renovations, people that do energy audits, people that do HVAC work etc. Renewable energy, solar panels, etc, who are happy to see us moving in this direction because it means jobs, it means new business for them and it's going to help us recycle more dollars in our community.

## **7. What are your priorities for economic development and workforce development in Charlottesville?**

In terms of economic development, we want to continue to focus on development of our commercial corridors. I mentioned some of them earlier. Downtown Mall--we have invested about six million dollars at the request of our Downtown business community. About six million dollars in renovations to the Mall, both with a new brick surface but also new lighting and there's a new wi-fi system down there, there's new benches, there's new granite banding, there's some new trees, it is a total overhaul of the Downtown Mall infrastructure. That was a major economic investment that's going to pay off we feel in over many years to come.

We want to see West Main Street--the pace of development there pick up because there's still a lot of empty store fronts on West Main Street. There's still too many empty store fronts Downtown. We want to see some of our other commercial [areas]--Cherry Avenue, Preston Avenue. Again, that's in terms of economic development, that's a priority for me.

I was in a meeting last week or two weeks ago in DC where there was a lot conversation about green jobs and about how do we retool our manufacturing sector in this country to take advantage of some of these new investments that are coming down the pipe in terms of clean energy, renewable energy, energy efficiency etc. The one example that people kept talking about was a Maytag Appliance Factory out in Iowa that had shut down and all the jobs shifted overseas and it had been sitting dormant. Well, now that plant recently reopened as manufacturing parts for wind turbines.

So I made some connections while I was in DC and I'm having a meeting next week I believe with some of our local economic development officials to figure

out if there are opportunities. We have been hemorrhaging manufacturing drops by the thousands in this region in the last decade and are there any opportunities to bring some green jobs, remanufacturing kind of jobs here at Charlottesville, take advantage of this new green energy economy. That's a major part of our economic development.

In terms of workforce development it's been an area of interest for the City primarily because, again we had too many of our families living in poverty or just above the poverty line. Depending on how you read the statistics, it's anywhere from 10% to 15% to 20%, 25% of our citizens living below the poverty line. We know there's many children in our schools that are living below the poverty line. The best avenue out of poverty is a good job and the best way for people to get jobs is: a) make sure they stay in school and graduate from school and have a good educational background; but b) make sure they have access to training workforce development kind of opportunities to be able to climb the ladder and not get stuck in low wage dead end jobs.

We want living wage career ladder jobs, so we want to work closely with our business community. Charlottesville was recently named one of the best cities in the country to grow a business and we feel like we have got more work to do to attract the kind of jobs that are going to provide those living wage career ladder opportunities.

One of the best things that we can do is support our small business community. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. I mean the University of Virginia is obviously the sort of 800 pound gorilla in the room when it comes to jobs, but there's so many small businesses in our community that have been struggling and we have been ratcheting up our support. We have invested more in the Small Business Development Center, be able to provide technical assistance. We have been doing a lot more outreach to small businesses. Working with them to help them stay afloat and continue to create jobs and create economic activity in our community.

**8. What would you like to see happen to the old Martha Jefferson Hospital site in Charlottesville?**

Well, I don't think it's so much what I would personally like to see happen. I think it's really: a), what the market demands; and b), what the community wants. And so the question is do we have a good process in place for balancing those two interests. And I think we do.

I have nothing but praise for the work that the management team at Martha Jefferson Hospital has done to engage the community, engage the Martha Jefferson neighborhood throughout this process so far. They have kept them informed.



We have met with the staff and the leadership team at Martha Jefferson Hospital numerous times. So they keep us informed. They brought in a highly reputable firm, Crossland Development, to take this project to the next level and look at what is the market opportunity? What does the market want to see happen with a property of that nature and is that an office? Is it retail? Is it residential? Is it grocery? Is it convention? Hotel? I mean some of the above? All the above? They are the experts. They are going to come forward with a good plan.

What the neighborhood has been assisting on all along: a) in addition to just making sure the neighborhood is kept informed and engaged in all this, but they want to make sure that whatever happens in that site respects the character of the neighborhood. I fully agree with that, we have worked closely with the neighborhood to support historic preservation initiatives in that neighborhood. That doesn't mean we don't want to see new development happen there, but it's got to be done in a way that stay in character with the neighborhood.

Martha Jefferson Hospital in response to those concerns agreed to preserve a number of the formerly residential structures on Locust Avenue and not knock them down and bring them in with the new development. Preserve them as single family residential structures. They have agreed to preserve the Patterson Wing which is the old original hospital building, at least the original piece of the hospital on that site. So whatever happens there they may end up knocking down a big chunk of the more modern part of the hospital, if they don't find a good way to re-use it, but they are going to keep the Patterson Wing. They are going to keep those single family structures on Locust and whatever happens with the rest of the property will be in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.

We want that site to be available for economic development. I mean there are so many jobs that are attached to that site now and the loss of all those jobs and all that business activity would be a major blow to our economy. So we want to see something happen there that's going to continue to create a job base for our community. Continue to create economic activity in our community and meet community needs and I have confidence that whatever happens at the end of the day, it's going to be a good project. It may not necessarily please everybody, but they have got a great team in place and I think they are moving in the right direction.

## 9. What is your vision for McIntire Park?

Well, I think the issue with McIntire Park for me always boils down to the fact that it's our City's largest park and right now the status quo for McIntire Park is one in which only a very small number of local citizens and even smaller number of City residents use McIntire Park in any kind of regular basis. And right now the way it is today, the eastern half on the park is reserved almost exclusively for golfers and we are about to put a major road in there that's going to cater primarily to County interests. On the western side of the park, it's primarily used by softballers and little leaguers, most of whom are County residents.

So we have the City's largest park whose primary users now and in the near future are County residents and the goal for me should be and I think the goal for the community should be to figure out how do we open up that park to more of our residents, particularly more of our City residents and create some amenities in that park that are going to reinforce what parks are for.

Which in my mind are promoting recreation, promoting community building, promoting youth enrichment, promoting appreciation of nature. So that's the metric by which I am going to judge any proposal for McIntire Park or any of our parks. Is it going to advance those kinds of goals? I certainly don't think a large new road that's going to chew up two dozen acres of that park accomplishes those goals.

There are other projects that have been proposed that are in the pipeline for the park, that I do think are going to accomplish those goals. You look at the YMCA, which I am pretty excited about, it will mean the loss of one acre, the building has a one acre footprint, but it's a one acre piece of land right now that's used for picnic shelter. This isn't sort of virgin green space that we are chewing up and those picnic shelters will be relocated elsewhere in the park. And that facility is going to be an invaluable resource for the kids who attend Charlottesville High School next door of the park and provide positive opportunities.

We know we need more positive opportunities if we are going to help our kids stay in school, graduate, stay away from the life of crime, stay away from some of the negative opportunities that go along the street. YMCA is an organization, there's 2,700 YMCAs all over the country. YMCA is an organization that has a history around the country and here in Charlottesville of providing positive opportunities for our young people and for our families, it's going to be one of the only facilities in the whole area that's going to be affordable for families who cannot afford to join a private gym. This is a community supported nonprofit organization that I think is going to be a real asset for our community.

I am very interested on the other side of park, if and when the Meadowcreek Parkway is built, what happens to the rest of the park then? And we are going to be kicking off a master planning process hopefully in the next six to twelve months to engage the community in a discussion about what happens then with the eastern half of the park.

There is a proposal to maintain a golf presence there. There is a proposal to incorporate a botanical garden there. I know there is a lot of interest in maintaining the wading pool there. There is clearly a strong interest in maintaining the Dogwood Memorial there. It's the first Vietnam veteran's memorial in the country. So we have lot of interest we need to balance and we have a good process in place for bringing all those voices to the table.

Last thing I will say about McIntire Park is there has been a really I think unfortunate effort made and a real reckless effort to spread a lot of misinformation about McIntire Park and I hope people will take the opportunity to learn really about what's on the table and what's not on the table. There's no plans to get rid of the fireworks at McIntire Park. There's no plans to get rid of the Dogwood Carnival in McIntire Park. The softball fields... City Council has said we want to keep softball in McIntire Park. So don't believe all the misinformation and we believe at the end of the day that all the good things that are in McIntire Park today will be supplemented and not replaced with some of the other things that are planned for that park and then will open up the park to the community for more residents, particularly more City residents to enjoy.

**10. Do you support the Three Party Agreement reached in 1990 between Albemarle, Charlottesville and the University of Virginia which identified a sequence of transportation projects to be completed before the construction of a Western Bypass of U.S. Route 29?**

Well, I think that agreement is essentially dead at this point because the County has said pretty loud and clear that they had no interest in building the Western Bypass. They have said fairly loud and clear, the best that I can tell, that they have no interest in building some of the grade separated interchanges that were envisioned in that agreement.

We are being asked to uphold our end of the agreement which was construction of the Meadowcreek Parkway, which I don't support, but I think a lot's has happened since 1990. And the current reality is we are in a different era now and I think the focus right now in terms of [Route] 29 is more on building some of these connector roads and parallel roads, Berkmar and Hillsdale being the main ones. And improving the flow of traffic on 29 itself.

I was very involved in some of the discussions around the easement for the Meadowcreek Parkway even though I don't support the parkway, but I got

involved in those discussions because I wanted to change sort of the quid pro quo if you will. The quid pro quo before was, we will do the Meadowcreek Parkway if you do the Eastern Connector or the Western Bypass or North Grounds Connector or whatever the initial agreement and the revisions agreement set forth.

My goal in engaging on those conversations on the easements was to say if we do the Meadowcreek Parkway which at that time there were four votes in favor of doing the Meadowcreek Parkway. If we do the Meadowcreek Parkway what we want in exchange is a significant new investment by the County in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, significant additional investment in transit and support for connector roads like the Sunset/Fontaine Connector, the Hillsdale, other connector roads that are going to steer traffic around our residential neighborhoods rather than dumping more traffic into our residential neighborhoods.

We haven't seen the support from the County on those other kinds of transportation improvements and it's partly because they are in a difficult budgetary situation now, but we want to make sure that as we move forward they don't just pay lip service or that we don't for that matter, the City doesn't pay lip service to the need to increase alternative transportation options and to identify good roads rather than some of these roads are going to tear up park land and dump more traffic into the heart of the City.

**11. Given the long funding and implementation period for multi-jurisdictional projects like the Meadowcreek Parkway and the community water supply plan, what are the advantages and disadvantages to the current City Council revisiting previous Council's decisions regarding such projects?**

Well, I think we really owe it to ourselves, to our residents and tax payers to not turn a blind eye when new information comes to the fore that may cause us to revisit some pieces or some assumptions underlying projects that former City Councils have agreed to.

I don't think just because you have a plan in place that you are bound to stick with that plan and every iteration of that plan and every component of that plan merely because that's what had been agreed to. I think sometimes you have to be flexible. You have to adjust your plans to accommodate new realities and better information.

And so on the water supply plan, there's a perfect example where we had a water supply plan that council did agree to, that the County has agreed to. Now I think we know was based on some faulty assumptions about the potential cost of dredging the South Fork [Rivanna] Reservoir, potential demand in water, about the potential rate of conservation in water etc.

So what we have said is that we are not going to move forward with that plan until we get some better information and then let's present all the alternatives in a very public way and let's figure out the best path forward once we have this better information in hand and we are able to do that. We have the luxury of doing that because the project has been delayed anyway because the cost of the dam at Ragged Mountain had gone through the roof. So we have been revisiting the dam project and so while we are doing that we are also revisiting the dredging possibility and the conservation issues etc. And I think that's the responsible way forward.

But I also agree with those who say we cannot just drag this thing out for many more years to come. We have water needs in the short term and the long term that we have to meet and the longer we put off some of these infrastructure upgrades... keep in mind that much of the cost of the water supply plan isn't for expanding water supply, it's for improving our existing infrastructure which is crumbling.

We have in any given year 5% to 15% or more of water that is coming out of the reservoir, it's not getting to homes and businesses because it's leaking out of the pipes. There's some serious infrastructure challenges. We have to upgrade our treatment plants. We have to do something about the pipeline that's connecting Sugar Hollow Reservoir to Ragged Mountain. The current plan envisions taking that pipeline offline, replacing it with a new pipeline that's shorter and involves fewer easements that will connect the two reservoirs and maximize the benefits of the two reservoirs. I happened to support that idea. That pipeline is crumbling and needs help.

So whether we are going to replace it or take it offline entirely, we've got to do something there so we are going to come to a point and hopefully by spring or summer of next year we will have all this information together and we are going to have to make a decision and then move forward in implementing it and I can guarantee you it's not going to please everybody because this issue has become very polarized. But what I have tried to say is there may be good ideas on either side of this debate that we can incorporate and let's figure out how to do so.

**12. Should Albemarle County officials be able to revisit or renegotiate their past decision on the 1982 revenue sharing agreement with the City Charlottesville? Why or why not?**

They certainly cannot unilaterally revisit the agreement. It's a joint agreement that was blessed by the General Assembly, it was supported by the citizens in referendum. Supported by both City and County government. It's an agreement that's worked well frankly for both the City and the County. It's an agreement that was borne out of a truly dysfunctional system of local government in this Commonwealth...It's the only state in the country where

cities are fully independent of the counties that surround them. Which means you have a lot of duplication of services. You have cities, you have the City of Charlottesville 10 square miles surrounded by 700 square miles of Albemarle County and yet we both have our own police departments, we both have our own public works departments, we both have our own parks and recreational departments, we both have our own school systems that can go down the line and I don't think that's a smart way to run local government. If this were anywhere else in the country, the City of Charlottesville would be a City within Albemarle County and they would share certain services, reduce the cost to tax payers and have a more efficient system of government.

So what cities have done historically in Virginia is, because they don't have access to the tax base that you would have if you were a City within a County like Albemarle, we've been annexing commercial land in the counties that surround the cities to be able to improve the City's tax base and deal with the urban challenges that cities uniquely face. The General Assembly sometime ago decided to put a moratorium on City's ability to annex County land which has resulted in many cities really suffering and declining.

The City of Charlottesville and the County of Albemarle in their great wisdom back in early 1980s said you know this is not a good situation, let's come up with a better situation. This is before the moratorium went into effect, let's come up with a better way to avoid the City annexing land and to support the City in dealing with its urban challenges. So they came up with a revenue sharing agreement, it has worked well.

We get less in revenue from the revenue sharing agreement than we would had we gone ahead and annexed the lands in the parts of the County that we decided not to annex when we entered into the revenue sharing agreement. So it's been a good deal for the County. If they hadn't signed that agreement, they would be actually in worse shape.

So one piece of the agreement which lot of people maybe forgot or do not know about is that it requires the City and the County to continually explore ways to collaborate, to consolidate where possible, where we can work together and there are a lot of ways in which the City and the County do collaborate.

We have a joint jail authority, we don't have our own jails anymore, we have a joint water and sewer authority. We jointly operate our airport, we jointly operate our library system, we don't have our own library, we do that together. There are many other ways in which the City and the County... transportation planning and go down the line, youth and families. Many ways which do collaborate, we need to continue to do that.

There are some potential areas of collaboration... look at parks and recreation for that manner, does it make sense for the City and the County to each have their own parks and recreation departments where 70% of the users of our City recreation facilities are County residents. The City owns park land in the County that we manage, the County owns land in the City, and we are already collaborating in the management of some of these areas. So that's one where maybe we should take a close look at emerging parks and recreation.

There may be others, some people have suggested fire, or public safety, or policing. And we did a fire consolidation study and it didn't show there would be great cost benefits and there are some other logistical issues involved that might prevent that from moving forward. But I think that's the spirit in which we would move forward, is to continue to figure out ways we can collaborate and work closer to meet the needs of our citizens.

**13. In June 2006 the City and County signed off on a 50 year water supply plan that includes a new dam at the Ragged Mountain Reservoir and a new pipeline connecting it to the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir. Do you support this plan, why or why not?**

I have said many times I support the general framework of this plan meaning we need to improve our infrastructure, our water supply infrastructure. We want to keep within our watershed. I don't agree with the idea that we should go back to exploring piping in water from the James River. I also don't agree with the idea that we should go back and look at building a massive new reservoir somewhere else when we have got two reservoirs right now that can be upgraded and should be upgraded and rather than building another reservoir, that's going to be very costly and have a lot of environmental impact.

So the general framework of the plan now, I do support which basically envisions keeping within our watershed, linking the two reservoirs. We have got the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir which is a great collection tank for water, has a huge watershed hundreds of square miles, but it's a terrible holding tank for water. Silts in and there is lot of sedimentation there. Meanwhile you have got the Ragged Mountain Reservoir which is a terrible collection tank for water and that has a very small watershed, there is very little in terms of streams etc that drain into that reservoir, but it's a wonderful holding tank for water because it doesn't have the siltation or sedimentation.

So this plan envisions linking those two reservoirs with a pipeline to take water from where the water is coming and send it to where the best place to hold it and it envisions upgrading the pipes, the treatment plants, taking the pipeline from Sugar Hollow offline. Right now we are draining water from the

Moormans River in order to fill up the Ragged Mountain Reservoir. That's had negative environmental impacts on Moormans River's ecology.

So I think the framework is good, but the particulars need to be revisited, as I mention earlier, and I am not convinced we need to max out that framework. And if we can show that we can reliably use less water than the current plan envisions, if we can show that there is a way to increase the capacity at South Fork Rivanna Reservoir, cheaper than the current plan envisions by dredging, and perhaps if we can get some flexibility from the state on stream flow requirements, perhaps there is a way to reduce the size of the Dam at Ragged Mountain and perhaps even avoid building a new and simply enlarge and repair the existing dam which will save the ratepayers and taxpayers tremendous amount of money and will have much smaller environmental impact in the plan currently envisions.

#### **14. What is your top priority for action by City Council if you are elected?**

Well there are so many priorities. I have been involved with a wide range of issues as I mentioned earlier in terms of expanding opportunities for youth, for families, in terms of moving our city forward on the environmental front. We are named the greenest city in Virginia last year for our population size, we are getting national and state wide attention for clean energy initiatives. So I want to just keep moving forward on all those things.

Specifically one project that I have been heavily involved in for years now, even well before I got on City Council, regards our public housing neighborhoods. We have seven public housing neighborhoods in Charlottesville that were built sort of on the old model of public housing which essentially has meant segregating people by class, by income, creating pockets of poverty in our community that have then neglected over the years and have become areas of high criminal activity, or higher criminal activity than the rest of the City. And areas of low educational attainment.

And I think it's a huge-huge challenge as to re-envision public housing in a City like Charlottesville and to think about how do we change the dynamics of poverty in our community and basically take these seven neighborhoods and, where possible, and working very closely with the residents of these neighborhoods, because it can't be seen as something that's been done to them, they have to be fully engaged in this... changing the dynamics from isolated pockets of poverty to mixed income neighborhoods, maybe even mixed use neighborhoods and areas of a better community amenities, better opportunities for families that are more tied in to the neighborhoods that surround them, that have more services on site, and that create in the process of doing redevelopment create jobs and create contracting opportunities for residents.



It's a win-win all the way around, it's a very expensive undertaking. This isn't going to happen overnight, this is going to be a period of years, but we've got to start and we've got to start somewhere and it's also frankly our best opportunity in the City for expanding our supply of affordable housing. It's 45 acres that we own, the public owns, of those Housing Authority properties, and much of it is low density and there is even vacant land that the housing authority owns. So to have an opportunity to create mixed income housing, create some workforce housing, that working professionals can afford to buy in the City. And the reason why I say it's our best opportunity for creating affordable housing is since we already own the land – land costs are the biggest driver of housing costs right now in Charlottesville and the County for that matter, it's not so much the building, it's the land. And if you can eliminate land costs you have some real opportunities there.

It's also frankly the best opportunity for making our housing authority less dependent on federal subsidies which have been declining rather significantly and it's put them in a very difficult posture. We are trying to maintain housing stock that's crumbling, it's getting more and more expensive to maintain, they are putting more and more expensive bandaids on it and they need to find other sources of revenue without becoming dependent on local government either. But right now they are overly dependent on federal subsidies and if we can create opportunities to develop market rate housing that will help generate revenue to sustain some of the affordable housing, public housing, then we should certainly pursue that.

I have worked very closely with our residents association, PHAR, and with Legal Aid to craft what we call the residents' bill of rights which is now becoming a model for the nation, I am very proud to say. And it's a set of commitments that the Housing Authority agree to and City Council actually agree to, even though technically the Housing Authority is not a City department, but we wanted to sort of put our stamp of approval on it, that's a set of guarantees for residents.

[The guarantees] say you are not going to be displaced, there might be temporary relocation while we work on your neighborhood, but you are not going to be displaced, we are not going to make people homeless as a result of this. Residents will be fully engaged. They will have priority for jobs and contracting opportunities created by redevelopment.

There is so much good that can come out of this, but we have a history in this community, Vinegar Hill and other efforts, that have created lot of fear and suspicion on the part of low income families rightfully so, and African American families rightfully so, that we are going to go in there and knock down the neighborhood, put something different in its place, displace the people and never let them come back. And that's not what we want to see happening in that process.

**15. Do we have appropriate resources in City government to achieve the objectives in the City's strategic plan? In what way, if any, do we need to make changes? What impact will your recommendations have on staffing and the annual budget?**

I do believe we have appropriate resources. You know we have a pretty ambitious vision for the City. The City Council has come up with a vision statement that I am very proud of, but it's not an overnight vision. This isn't where we expect to be in 2010, this is a 20-25 year vision for our community. We feel like we are making good progress in working towards that vision and implementing our strategic plan.

The City is a pretty fiscally conservative municipality, and this is one of the reasons why we have been able to maintain the highest possible bond rating, the analysts who look at municipal finances, who look at municipal budgeting, look at municipal financial management, have looked at Charlottesville and given us their seal of approval because we had taken a pretty responsible approach when it comes to managing or taxpayer dollars. Not everybody is going to agree with.... We still hear, how many years later, about the \$30,000 Christmas tree on the Downtown Mall or you know people don't like the \$5,000 being spent on public art or they don't like the, whatever it was, \$1,000 that somebody spent to take a trip to a sister City, whatever it was, some people don't like the fact that we had to spend \$6 million to upgrade our Downtown Mall infrastructure, etc. etc. I think generally speaking there's not a lot of fraud, waste, and abuse in our City budget, we are pretty tight with the money.

There are very few cities, very few communities in Virginia, in this economy and with revenues declining that have not chosen to either increase their property tax rate or not chosen to slash basic services. We are one of the few that has been able to avoid increasing taxes, increasing the property tax rate, and avoid slashing basic services. It meant some difficult decisions. For instance this year we were not able to give our City employees a raise, that's hard because we know times are tight, but I think a lot of people felt like well at least they have a job and they have good benefits. So for the short term they can get by without a raise.

We have got a little bit flack, although not a lot, but a little bit of flack for setting aside over \$3 million in our budget this year and sort of a "what if" fund, the rainy day fund with the thought that the state revenues might further decline and and/or that local revenues might further decline. In hindsight that was a very smart decision because it looks like we are very likely going to need much of that money if not all that money to make up for the cuts from the state and make up for declining revenues locally. So I am glad we didn't take the advice of some who were saying "oh, no you should use all that money."

I am very pleased with the fact that we have been able to increase our tax relief program even in spite of all the new investments that we have been making, in spite of the fact that we have held the line on the tax rate, we have actually increased tax relief for low and moderate income homeowners. There are many families in Charlottesville today who are paying less in property factors, not just a lower rate but actually paying less in taxes, now than they were three years ago because of our tax relief program. We have only one or two localities in the state that have a program like that and I am very proud of that fact.

So I think whenever we look at new initiatives for the City, for staffing etc, the first question should always how do we do it within our existing resources. There are some challenges like transportation, we were talking earlier, where we don't want to have to take money away from our schools or take money away from some of our other critical community services in order to do something that state has committed to do over the years.

#### **16. What do you see as the primary responsibilities of City Council?**

I think the primary responsibilities of City Council are we are here to listen to the citizens and to gauge the interest of citizens in seeing how they want to see their community improved. We are accountable to the citizens unlike the staff in City Hall who don't have to go up for re-election every four years. We are directly accountable to the tax payers, to the citizens and so we are their voice and we get a lot of public input.

I get at least a 100 emails a day from citizens or City staff or what not on City issues. I am always out there, I have been to hundreds of community events, I have a blog, I have a Facebook page, I have a weekly radio show, I have a public access show, I am doing everything I can to be accessible and be approachable and my telephone numbers is in the public domain, my email address in the public domain. I think just being that conduit for citizen input is vital.

Secondly is obviously making policy decisions and also in terms of the financial and budgetary decisions. The City budget is the most important thing we do every year and it's a significant amount of money and it's a pretty big obligation, a big responsibility that we have to make sure that we are spending the money wisely. Setting that sort of broader vision for the City, the vision statement if anybody hasn't seen it, we encourage them to check out the City's vision statement. I find it to be a very compelling document and again it's aspirational, this isn't where we are now, it's where we want to go. It's a living document as well, it can be tweaked, modified as necessary.

I think also we have to hold staff accountable even though they are not directly accountable to voters, but they are accountable to City Council and to

the community at large just by nature of their positions. And when the staff aren't doing their job or aren't doing their job well enough we have to help bring them around.

I think a lot of people don't fully understand that in many cities the mayor is the CEO, the person that runs City Hall and in Charlottesville we have a City manager form a government which not everybody really understands what that means. Basically City Council is responsible for big picture policy kind of directives, approving the budget, being a conduit for citizen input, there is a lot of ceremonial things that are attached to that, but at the end of the day it's the City Manager and his staff who runs City Hall on a day-to-day basis and for the most part I think they do a good job. But there is always room for improvement and so our job is to help them improve.

**Thank you very much.**

Thank you for the opportunity.