



**FORUM ON GROWTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES  
for 2009 CANDIDATES for  
the ALBEMARLE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

October 22, 2009  
in the library of Westminster Presbyterian Church

**Cosponsors:** Advocates for a Sustainable Albemarle Population (ASAP), Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation (ACCT), Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC), and Rivanna Conservation Society

**Moderator:** Moderating the session will be Bob Gibson, Executive Director of UVA's Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership and the host of WVTF Public Radio's *Evening Edition* program. In addition to his work as a reporter, editor and columnist for the *Daily Progress*, he has served as news director of WCHV radio, host of a weekly political call-in show on WINA, and of a public radio talk show on WVTF in Roanoke and Charlottesville. He has received several Virginia Press Association awards, a Virginia Bar Association award in the Field of Law and Justice, and a Southern Journalism award for investigative reporting.

**2009 Candidates for Supervisor:**

Jack Jouett District:

Dennis Rooker

Samuel Miller District:

R. Madison Cummings (D)  
John C. Lowry (I)  
Duane Snow (R)

Rio District:

David Slutzky (D)  
Rodney Thomas (R)

**Agenda:**

Introduction by moderator (10 min)  
Candidates' responses to 3 questions submitted in advance (45 min.)  
Stretch break (5 minutes)  
Further Dialogue among candidates on the three questions (45 min.)  
Concluding remarks by moderator (5 to 10 min.)

## Questions Submitted to Candidates in Advance

### Question #1:

**Background:** Albemarle County's **Comprehensive Plan** acknowledges the value of our community's natural resources and points out that "unwise use of these resources constitutes a potential danger to public health, safety, and welfare." It states that "It is the County's intent that development and other human activity should adapt to the natural environment, rather than unnecessarily modifying the natural environment with unknown consequences to accommodate development and man's activities."

Some of those consequences are now known. Research by Jantz and Manuel (funded in part by the County) provides estimates of the impact of local population growth on certain water-related and air-related ecological services. The questions this research was designed to answer were: "How many people can the ecosystems in this community support; and how many people can live in this community before those ecosystems services become degraded?" (The full report is available at [http://www.asapnow.org/OSPSFinalReport\\_Aug05.pdf](http://www.asapnow.org/OSPSFinalReport_Aug05.pdf) )

**Research results:** Using Charlottesville/Albemarle's population of 124,285 in the 2000 census as a **baseline**, the researchers found that:

- A population increase of 50% (to 186,000 people) would result in a marked decline in ecological services **within** the developing sub-areas of Charlottesville, Crozet, Rivanna, and the Route 29 corridor.
- An increase of 75% (to 217,000 people) could drastically reduce the ability of the landscapes in these growth areas to sequester and store carbon and clean the air and water.
- Once population growth surpasses 125% (280,000), degradation of ecological services would become widespread, impacting all of the rural area.
- After a 200% population increase (344,000), the Albemarle/Charlottesville area could lose 45% of its agricultural open space and 37% of its forests.

### Question:

(a) In light of these findings, in addition to the County's official position on the importance of natural resources to public health, safety and welfare, what policy implications do you envision for the pending revision to the County's Comprehensive Plan?

(b) What additional facts would be necessary to help you form your opinion about the desirability of capping County growth at an optimal sustainable population size?

## **Question #2:**

**Background:** According to the Places 29 transportation plan, increasing traffic congestion could more than triple travel time for drivers on Rte. 29 by the year 2025. And throughout the County's growth areas, increasing congestion threatens to reduce overall convenience and accessibility to the City of Charlottesville, while exacerbating the harmful impact of our transportation system on local watersheds, air quality, public health, and climate change.

One approach to solving these projected traffic and related problems is through the creation of a better network of parallel roads, bus rapid transit, grade-separated interchanges, and better facilities and access for pedestrians and bicycles. Central to this approach is the concept of shifting current and future transportation demand to more efficient and less harmful modes of transportation, such as public transit, carpooling, bicycling, and walking. This approach to our traffic problems has gained increasing public support because of the many environmental and quality of life benefits it offers, as well as its potential for reducing the costs of automobile use.

### **Question:**

Do you support this approach? If so what will you do to secure the necessary funding and what are your priorities? If not, what is your plan for solving the transportation problems of this County?

## **Question #3:**

**Background:** Embedded in the Albemarle Comprehensive Plan are a number of recommendations that reflect this community's commitment to the care, protection and health of the Rivanna watershed. However, many of these critical provisions have not been implemented, or positions critical to implementing them have not been funded. (See the list of examples following this question.)

### **Question:**

(a) On any large-scale development or rezoning proposal it is usually argued that the proposal must be approved to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Can you comment on this enthusiasm for the Comprehensive Plan when it supports development proposals, contrasted with the all-too-ready dismissal of the Comprehensive Plan where it supports steps to protect the natural environment?

(b) Also, given this community's location at one of the headwaters of the Rivanna River, that flows into the James River, and ultimately into the Chesapeake Bay, do you agree that stewardship of this watershed carries a responsibility to enact ordinances that protect our watershed and those of our downstream neighbors? Please explain your answer, and give examples of the ordinances that you would support and those that you would not.

## **List of examples of environmental provisions and recommendations to the Comprehensive Plan yet to be fully implemented**

### **From the Albemarle County Natural Resources and Culture Assets Plan:**

- Page 108: *Specific recommendations for a Mountain Overlay District addressed soil erosion plans, driveway requirements, protection of ridge areas, and building and subdivision requirements to use building sites located outside the mountain district if they are available.*
  - Status: This recommendation was tabled by the BoS.
- Page 12: *Maintain the integrity of existing stream channels and networks for their biological functions and drainage. Protect the condition of state waters for all reasonable public uses and ecological functions. Restore degraded stream and wetland ecosystems where possible.*
- Page 12: *Protect the safety and welfare of citizens, property owners, and businesses by minimizing the negative impacts of increased stormwater discharges from new land development.*
- Page 12: *Preserve designated stream valleys in their natural state in order to protect significant resources associated with stream valleys and to provide buffer areas.*
- Page 73: *Develop illustrations and other materials that demonstrate biological resource protection efforts that developers can consider utilizing when developing a site.*
- Page 107: *Discourage applications of fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and other chemicals in areas of steep slope where they may be ineffective and can increase probabilities of surface and groundwater pollution.*

### **From the Albemarle County Rural Areas Plan:**

- Page 19: *Preserve large areas of forest, protect or create forested stream buffers, and support good soil management in order to protect watershed services.*
  - Status: This recommendation was tabled by the BoS.
- Page 19: *Adopt measures to protect the quality and quantity of groundwater, both as a critical portion of the County's overall water system and as a water supply for rural residents.*
  - Status: Groundwater Manager position frozen by the BoS
- Page 37: *Require Rural Preservation Development (clustering) for all Rural Areas subdivisions.*
  - Status: This recommendation was tabled by the BoS
- Page 37: *Adopt standards and restrictions for subdivisions that are consistent with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan and of the Rural Areas Guiding Principles.*
  - Status: This recommendation was tabled by the BoS.