



2007 Albemarle County Board of Supervisors Candidate Interview September 2007

Candidate: David Wyant (R)

On November 6, 2007, voters in the White Hall Magisterial District go to the polls to elect their representative on the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. This recording is Sean Tubbs' September 7, 2007 interview with David Wyant, Republican candidate campaigning for the seat. Mr. Wyant's opponent is Democrat Ann Mallek.

The audio of this interview is available online on the Charlottesville Tomorrow Weblog http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville_tomorrow_/2007/09/wyant.html

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

INTERVIEW

Mr. Wyant, 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 Supervisor candidates will be asked the same questions.

- 1. Please describe your past political experience and what qualifies you to be on the Board of Supervisors.**

Well, I'm finishing my first term. It's the only time I've been involved in politics. It's been an enjoyable four years. I think I'm qualified here. As a professional engineer, I look at things from a different perspective than others. I'm very analytical. I listen to constituents and I bring the information

in and then I finally work and make a decision, the same thing we do in engineering as we approach engineering.

The other perspective I bring to the Board is I'm a native of Albemarle County. I've lived here my entire life. I've lived in the rural parts of the County and grew up on a farm and the past, as I've learned from my past experience in working with [the Virginia Department of Transportation] VDOT in research, in order for me to have a vision for the future to do the work I did for VDOT I needed to know my past. The past helped me to see the future and I think that's one of the better qualities I have as serving on the Board.

- 2. 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?**

Yes, I support the plan and was heavily involved in it. As I stated, as a civil engineer, I've done a lot of work in water quality monitoring, storm water management, even erosion control. I developed a lot of those policies and procedures at the state level since VDOT was the largest state agency and I had worked with a lot of those regulatory agencies prior to us getting together with them with the City and the County and our citizens and the [Albemarle County] Service Authority. I was the one I'm pretty certain that recommended that we bring them all together at one time. Otherwise, you're going back and forth between the different agencies and trying to get a resolution on this 50-year plan.

The role of civil engineering in society as we've just seen with the collapse of the bridges is to look at infrastructure and part of the infrastructure is the needs of our communities in water and the development of their trunk lines and service and impoundments, plus you've also got to protect the environment and I did a lot of work in my 30 years with VDOT in environmental and so when we worked on the mitigation plan with this which is not spoken of much, I knew of a couple situations where we could do some mitigation and trade off. It was a win/win for some property owners as well as allowing us to meet the plan's requirements.

- 3. In addition to community concerns about an adequate water supply to accommodate growth and prepare for droughts, recent commercial and residential developments in Albemarle County have had to address inadequate sewer infrastructure. In general, what will the financial impact be on ratepayers for public water and sewer to complete the 50-year water supply plan and update and expand our aging sewer facilities?**

I think you're going to find your users will see an increase in fees, but it's one thing since I've been on the Board that we've started accumulating money for infrastructure development in the water and the sewer side. Also, as developers come on line, their connection fees will increase as we in the County have come up with our CIP proffer amount. They're going to need to do the same thing with the Service Authority so those connection fees will change with time, but in order for a developer to hook onto a system, they need to improve the system beyond what we have today. In most infrastructure development—bridges and these major ones are water and sewer—it's a 50-year design life and that's why I think you see here it was a 50-year water supply plan and then we need to do the same on the sewer side.

My big push in rural as well as in the urban area is for resource management. What controls it? If we don't have water, we cannot live. If we cannot handle our wastes, we cannot live, and so it's the same whether it's in the rural or on a public system.

- 4. In 2005, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved an update to the Rural Areas portion of the Comprehensive Plan. That revised plan calls for the County to aggressively pursue phasing of development in the rural areas, also known as time-based zoning. If elected, would you support a phasing policy? Why or why not?**

I have not supported phasing when it came forward, mainly as most of my constituents are rural and I heard a lot about it. They felt that was a loss of property rights. With that said, I have spent a lot of time encouraging them to move into other programs. I do not like to see development going on. There has never been a rezoning since I've been on the Board in the rural area. It's only been done by right.

I think if you look back at how zoning was done in the past, it was like Albemarle County and they talk about theoretically 50,000 development rights as though Albemarle County was flat and, truly, there's less development rights than that, but it did not take in account the resources that we have. The knowledge I have about geology and the water in the rural area—that's what sustains us and we did it more on how many acres you could put a house on versus how much can we support in the rural area, so I think we need to look at other approaches and the TDRs is one I'm very much interested in.

- 5. What is your specific strategy for protecting Albemarle's farms, fields, and forests, our rural countryside? What are your greatest concerns about new development in the rural countryside?**

The big push I've been working on a lot is conservation. Our Board has a strategic— One of them is to put I think it's like an additional 10,000 acres

into conservation easement. Over the last two years, I've introduced a number of large property owners— I've known them since I've lived here and I've gone to them and I've offered to them these programs that are available. Last year alone, I was involved with almost 700 acres on two parcels, a small one and a large one. This year I've got two more that have just come up and it's going to be about 650 acres. Take that. I'm averaging about 675 acres myself of the ones I've introduced and hopefully, there'll more come forward.

I've also said that we as a Board, as we publicize the conservation easements, we need to make a property owner aware of all the programs available—VOF, Nature Conservancy, our ACE Program and maybe even eventually, hopefully the TDRs.

6. How do you feel about an expansion of the County's designated growth areas, currently 5% of the County's land area, to support a transfer of development rights program or to support a developer's request to move land from the rural area to the growth area?

Well, I'm opposed to expanding the development areas and especially Crozet, if we do a Transfer of Development Rights, if it's ever considered. I think if you look at Albemarle County from up at 20,000 [feet], it's kind of unusual to have a development area outside of the major one of in the County, but I understand why years ago the Board selected that with ConAgra and the ACME [businesses] that no longer exist there.

Where were we on that one? Oh, okay, the expansion of the area, but when we get into the Transfer of Development Rights, what you're going to have to consider there, as I've said in engineering, I'm trying to provide services and the trunk lines and the other means for water and sewer, it really does change that. I as a designer of those infrastructures, it's difficult for me to design for that when those boundaries are changing on it. It changes the size of my plants. It's changes the size of my trunk line, so we need to be rigid on that.

If it requires a little bit of change for TDRs, I would do what I would call a sensitivity analysis and see what impact it has on the others. It's not just a straight change. It is a domino-type effect and I think we need to look at all that. As some of them have probably said, the devil is in the details here on this program, so we have a lot to do before we really go to a Transfer of Development Rights.

7. How would you define quality growth for our community?

Quality—I think it varies between where citizens live. We all want a nice home, but also in that comes hopefully the water, the sewer. We need trash [collection]. I'm very much concerned in our waste management, our recycling. I'm very supportive of recycling and I know a lot of folks are so I've

been trying to get the first recycling center in Crozet, so I go over to our transfer station and I just feel like what we're doing in our waste today, we're burying our children in our waste and people don't— The quality of life that you see in the development areas is folks love the sidewalks, the walking trails, the paths, the conveniences of having a store close by, the transit system and all. A rural person—quality of life is a little bit different. It's more open, but we both share in those qualities. People in the rural area like to come into the urban area and share in those conveniences or the stores and stuff that are out there in the country. We've got our little country stores like mine and all, but the folks in the urban area love to ride out in the country and look at the views and stuff that we have out there, so it's a sharing of what we all consider quality of life, but it is different depending on where you live.

8. What are your transportation priorities for the Route 29 corridor north of Charlottesville and how specifically will the community fund those initiatives?

We as a County in realizing the need for that infrastructure have been putting aside a million dollars into transportation. How that works with VDOT and being a VDOT employee and how do we get into their system is a challenge I think we will see. [Route] 29, I see that being that corridor and that's got to be a public/private partnership where those developers that would come along on the side of that road, they contribute to improvements of 29 but the state has to step up. If you notice in what— And since a long time when I was with VDOT, they always wanted to turn our transportation needs over to us at the local level which I think is really costly to my citizens and I think they need to step up on the partnerships with us on that major corridor.

Now, outside of that in the communities, I believe you need roads that can get through communities that aren't through-type roads. As I walk door-to-door, a lot of folks love those cul-de-sacs and those micro communities as they are, but they don't want a lot of cut-through traffic, so we have to account for a community transportation system and the main transportation system to move those folks through that are passing through the County.

9. What are your views on working more closely with the City and the University of Virginia to jointly operate a regional transit system? What will you do to promote the use of public transportation, pedestrian trails, and bicycle paths?

Well, a big gorilla in this whole room is the UVA and the number of students. If you're around here in the summertime, there's a lot less traffic and all of a sudden, they show up, come back to school. Contribute a lot to the economy and all, but it has a big influence on the traffic patterns coming into Charlottesville every morning and the ones going out in the afternoon. If we can promote a transit system that would bring folks who're living out, the

employees and even students that are off-Grounds, into the UVA, UVA wouldn't need as much parking spaces as they do today and then we can do those commuter parking lots. One I developed up in Warrenton and where it was to commute into D.C. Fully used today. It didn't start off well, but then all of a sudden folks realized it was there and they commute in. This transit system . . .

[There was a technical problem that briefly interrupted the recording at this point]

The last thing you said on the tape was you had designed the carpool lot up in Warrenton and that something similar for here so that UVA has less spaces and that's where you were. I don't know how much further you went.

I have advocated and said it several times about creating a lane coming in from, say, a Biscuit Run/Mill Creek area into UVA along with bikes and walking trails with it, just for buses where they have a gate that restricts so the folks living in those developments and working at UVA would ride that bus into or walk or bike into UVA. It would then allow UVA to have less parking spaces on Grounds and it would get folks out of their cars, leave them at home, and maybe we can get back down to having one car at a household.

Follow up: Is anything specific that you would do to promote use of public transportation, trails and paths?

I think one of the things is that you need to provide those facilities. Right now, we're looking at all our plans and providing transit stops. In Crozet, when I look at that, I'm looking to create a little trolley system within the community that would ride around. It needs to be on a regular schedule that people know. The biggest complaint I've heard when I go nationwide and talking to folks about their transit systems, and I even went to Bermuda and talked to those folks over there and they've got a great transit, is that they're on time. The people just hate waiting on it, but we need to promote a transit system within and then we need to have transit systems [done]. I think businesses would contribute because then they subsidize those to bring the people to their business establishments.

10. How do we ensure the community infrastructure—roads, sidewalks, fire/rescue facilities and libraries and so on—is in place to support new development in our designated growth areas? Will the County's new cash proffer expectations adequately address the community's needs? Will you support bond referendums to pay for capital budget priorities?

Ever since I've been on the Board and we've dealt with impacts, and we can't charge an impact fee because of [state] law, but there is the impact to our

community [from] development, commercial or even the residential. I have always been leery without data, being an engineer and needing data to do design and all, when the last person comes, they say I'll give you, say, \$2,000 per unit. Who says it's \$2,000 or \$1,000 or \$10,000? And what if somebody else does in another area that hasn't done a true analysis? So I have supported us coming up with data and doing an analysis, which we did to come up with our proffer numbers. Those only account for five of the infrastructure items. It gives us a guide and that we can then say there's more impact or less impact because you're doing something for the public good. I am not one to give credit for something that's not for the public good in the proffer allowance. I do not believe this will totally cover it because I'm not sure we yet know what will be the impact so what we'll need to do is revisit this. This is driven by our CIP. I sat on the CIP Oversight Committee and that CIP is reviewed every year, and every two years we do a major CIP review. So as we adjust that I would see these numbers [going up].

I am supportive of bonds. I believe in looking at all sources of ways of financing. The pay-as-you-go could be one way, but the bond referendum—they have tried them here, but it goes before the citizens and if the citizens support that, then, yes, I would be— We've had consultants come in and discuss that with us as a nice option available to us.

11. In the last County budget, significant attention was paid by the Board of Supervisors to finding new sources of revenue and to lowering the real estate property tax rate. Some proposed new initiatives were scaled back or eliminated. No reductions were made to existing local government operational expenses for fiscal year 2008. What improvements would you make to our budget process, our allocation of tax dollars, and the funding of new strategic initiatives?

Our budgeting process—I believe since it's really— And the Board has felt like—it's keyed to our real estate and that's an unfair tax. I've looked at other localities. Tampa, Florida has one. A couple of others I've looked at and how we could come up with a really fair tax. Also, on the other side of it, there's the expenditures. Sitting on the CIP Oversight Committee the last year when I worked with the Oversight Committee, I got \$39 million out of the CIP budget and I see us looking at being more efficient, more effective.

As an engineer and what we've done in the past has done value engineering. I have pushed that. We did it when we did the north fire station. We reduced some funds in that. I worked recently with the Stony Point Fire Company to reduce that down to be within budget. There are ways that you can do things at less costly way.

I expect for our government to be effective and efficient and look at the possibility of where they can trim. Our budget process only in the past has

dealt with any new initiatives. It did not look at the past budget and is there some areas back there that we could trim them. I would like to see that done. I have asked for that to be done and that'll be a requirement to changing the budget process.

Follow up: And the funding of new strategic initiatives?

The funding of new strategic initiatives—it would be maybe through bonds. I think we are looking right now— I sit on a committee— I chair a committee that is looking at the emergency ambulance transport, the recovery [of fees]. Folks are paying their normal insurance premium. It's available to us. We have not taken advantage of it, but I have held that up for us to do the analysis. We have completed that now and it is another revenue stream for us and we still have to subsidize from the general till to cover the rescue services that we get through the three rescue stations and our fire company.

12. What is your top priority for action by the Board of Supervisors if you are elected?

There are a number of issues and transportation and all, but the one that I'm directly involved with that can be a major impact over the years is fire rescue. Personnel and then being able to provide the services, the facilities that we put in, the equipment. As sitting on the Board, of the advisory board of the fire rescue, have now got us standardized equipment so when there's a piece of equipment that's needed in a fire station, we provide the same to each station. If they want extra whistles and bells, they can provide it.

Recently, I have asked for standardization of our fire facilities, our fire stations, and the reason for that is there are women that are coming in to be volunteer fire rescue or fire personnel, we need bunk rooms, we need to have kitchens, we need to have meetings rooms. It needs to be standardized. It has been in the past whatever that community wants, but now that we're subsidizing that out of the County and to be a good steward of our funds, we need to standardize those.

Also, the personnel. I have been working hard. Career service and that, it takes a minimum of five to give us a 12-hour shift. Some are on vacation. I have been working and trying to come up with these new methods of encouraging people to volunteer by providing additional incentives. We today provide personal property tax relief of \$300.00. Most of them in the volunteer fire company do not have personal property that gets to that amount, but is there some way of providing something towards retirement after so many years of credited service and other means. I want to look at other ways to get folks to give time to come to volunteer.

We don't have what we used to have in Crozet when we had ConAgra and ACME and the Barnes Lumber. When we had a call, our folks dropped

everything they did and ran on the call. Today, I'm down to one person who has that liberty in the town of Crozet.

13. The Board of Supervisors is currently reviewing the proposed Biscuit Run development. At 3,100 homes, this would be the largest single development in the County's history. Do you believe Biscuit Run will be quality growth in our community? Why or why not?

I'm still, on this issue of Biscuit Run, as I've stated earlier in some of my other responses, as an engineer, I'm an information gatherer and gather my data. I'm waiting to have our public hearing. I think public hearings ought to be true public hearings, not public hearings for sake of saying that you had one. Our citizens have asked that they be involved and have their say and I think we need to listen even though somebody might have a difference of opinion with me or somebody on the Board. On Biscuit Run, I'm waiting for that. I've listened to what's been offered, so I'll pass a judgment on that sometime in the near future I'm sure, the way that's moving ahead.

14. In your opinion, is the state government adequately funding our transportation needs? If not, what steps will you take to ensure priority transportation projects are actually funded and completed in a reasonable timeframe?

No, I don't feel like the state as we've seen how our funds here have decreased tremendously over the years and it started years ago before I got on the Board. The one thing that I offer I think because of my 30 years in knowing the organization of VDOT is how to talk to the people who are the key person to make those decisions. A good example is the Free Union Area Headquarters that I kept in the western, northwestern part of Albemarle County. Folks thought there was a certain person— Or certain people were making that decision. I knew how the organization was set up and it was an entirely different individual that I met with and talked to, to lobby to keep it, because it did decrease the service tremendously in that area because of the mountainous roads and all we have.

I think we have set aside a million dollars in transportation. [We] need to try to figure how we can use that to leverage against VDOT on the projects. We have the three—Meadowcreek, Jarman's Gap and Georgetown. I keep close tabs on the schedule and any changes that happen to Jarman's Gap because it directly impacts my constituents. I keep kind of a cursory look on all the other projects and I know the people to talk to. We have to stay on top of these major projects that are critical to our community.

15. What improvements, if any, do you think should be considered by the Board of Supervisors to create genuine public participation in growth and development decisions?

I can't remember how it came about, but in Rivanna Village I believe it was the people said, "We have not had a say about this development here." And we created this development review process. I think a couple of our supervisors went there to a public hearing. A little bit of that misunderstanding I think was folks move in and if it's just the previous year that something like a Comprehensive Plan is being reviewed every five years was just passed, they weren't aware of what was in place for the next five years, but I've always been an advocate of having the public participate. As I went through doing my work with VDOT as a researcher, I got a lot of input and I questioned other folks on what they thought about a particular subject. Even though they differ with me, they helped contribute to the solution that I was working towards and I've always recognized that.

This here with this development review process, the main thing I harped in committees every time we met was make sure we have the public involved at the right time to get their participation so it can be beneficial to the final solution. I think we developed 12 steps in that and that's being implemented today.

16. What lessons has the County learned from the Crozet Master Plan? What challenges does the County face with the Pantops and Places29 Master Plans and how will you address those challenges if elected?

I think the one thing since we were the guinea pig for master planning in Crozet and I happened to be the Supervisor for that. The Crozet Master Plan— We need that— We need Master Plans because they help so much in the overall plan. I was opposed to the Master Plan in Crozet because I was concerned about the infrastructure. If you didn't lobby hard and work on it, we couldn't make the Master Plan work. This Board has been good about providing infrastructure and it's starting to come to a fruition there with the sidewalks and we got other things to come, but the lesson in the Master Plan that didn't get asked by and this happens with any process. We all— If we were perfect, we'd be walking on water, but the people forgot to ask, you know, I look at the population by a certain method. You look at it one way and you'll come up with a number. If you look at another way, you could up with a second number and what we didn't do and staff and others, it's no one party to blame for this, the folks just didn't ask or the consultant didn't ask— do these match up? When they went to look at another form of a calculating the population, it was incorrect. I mean, it was not incorrect, I'm sorry. It was different than what the folks had thought it was going to be and so I think the lesson—

The other thing is our advisory committee has been very good. We formed that. It's been a good advisory committee. There had to be— They were schooled on what planning is. We call it [Planning] 101. How zoning and everything works. All— As we are now forming the Pantops Advisory Committee and taking applications, I talk about the diversity that we have within the community so they become our ambassadors. They are the communicators with all the neighborhoods so they can help us keep those folks informed. Communication has been a very difficult process and we need to do a better job of communicating.

17. What do you see as the primary responsibilities of the Board of Supervisors?

Well, we all come from— If you look at our districts, we're very much different. I have a big rural district with a development area in it—Crozet. But I run all the way from Greene County clean to Nelson County on the western part of the County. A lot of rural land. I bring a perspective to this Board of those particular folks that live in the rural area.

I believe, though, a Board of Supervisors is like a board of directors for any organization. It is a policy-setting group. We get into a lot of details of projects and I'm not sure that— That's what we have a Planning Commission for. I'm not sure if our process of reviewing things is in the right order. Maybe we should have input and then let staff and those go do it rather than let it come to us last and then make changes. It creates a lot of extra work, so we're a policy-setting group. We keep tabs on our staffing to make sure we've got adequate staffing in particular areas and approve additional staff and so we don't have a large staff. The other one is we've surely got to oversee our funding and how we fund all our services, whether it's schools, parks, libraries or whatever.

Thank you, Mr. Wyant, for participating in our interview.