



2009 Charlottesville City Council Candidate Interview September 2009

Candidate: Andrew Williams (I-Write In)

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 9, 2009 interview with Andrew Williams (I-Write in). Mr. Williams is being challenged by Bob Fenwick (I), Paul Long (I), Dave Norris (D), and Kristin Szakos (D).

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

http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville_tomorrow_/2009/10/williams.html

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

INTERVIEW

Mr. Williams, 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?

Yes.

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

Well this past year I was on the PVCC, Piedmont Virginia Community College, Senate. It's a group that's comprised of student senators, individuals from the faculty and staff and some administration and we carefully look at, ultimately the operations of the school funds and even issues such as do we want to change the sexual harassment policy.

I was involved in various student governments, the biggest thing this past year was the Virginia Community College Strategic Planning Task Force. I was one of two students state wide selected to contribute to their strategic planning process which will roll out later on this year and it will last for five years. All of those experiences have led me to be very enthusiastic about the idea of representation.

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?

Yes. I do support that idea of a Regional Transit Authority, but we do have to consider its usage, its costs and its return. You can't force individuals to make decisions, you can definitely talk about the benefits of making changes and you can encourage people to do so, but I think that we would really have to consider the cost and the return.

Secondly, to alleviate the congestion is very important to me especially in the near and distant future. It's like a growth, the region of course has been growing, Virginia as a whole, but the relationship that we Charlottesville have with Albemarle County, I think it's very important to consider a Regional Transit Authority, at least in the near future, but maybe now isn't the right time.

Follow up: And did you want to comment on the funding?

I think it is very important to scrutinize how the funds are being allocated currently. We don't want to cut corners, I don't want to take money from initiatives that have a need for it, but I would like to as much as possible consider how resources are directed currently and if we can redirect resources to contribute to an initiative that may be needed more at the time.

Follow up: And just to make sure and we also ask about regional transportation priorities, so are there any projects or plans that you would put at the top of your list?

Well, ultimately just looking at ways to alleviate congestion in future planning, future planning, for the expected growth in Charlottesville and even with Albemarle County because of the relationship that we have with Albemarle County.

- 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?**

Well, honestly I believe that the population will ultimately cap itself if jobs don't exist. It will cap itself if people don't see opportunities to build new businesses. It may exist, there may be a limit on how much people could see as far as opportunity. The cost of living is factored in to the population growth in my opinion.

Ultimately, as far as trying to cap the population it would be difficult for me to support something like that at this time due to the fact that, do we want to ultimately just turn people away? Do we want to set limits on ultimately people's decision? We can influence that, whether it be through residential development, with the relationship that we do have with Albemarle County, perhaps there's some things that they can do that we can work with them jointly regarding that matter. Honestly I think the population might cap itself and that is something I am going to look more into.

- 4. Is neighboring Albemarle County's rate of population growth, too much, too little 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?**

I believe as of July 1, 2001 the population of Albemarle County was roughly 93,000. It's just the right amount based on the regional growth, and the right amount as far as how the growth is measured between Charlottesville and Albemarle County. Now as far as [whether] it's too much or too little, the only way I could be on the side of saying it's too much, is it increases the pool of students who go to Piedmont Virginia Community College, UVA and don't live in the City. But as far as being too much, they are their own separate entity and yes of course people in Albemarle County come to Charlottesville and vice versa. But as far as saying that's too much, it's at a number that we need to consider, but we do have a relationship with Albemarle County. The

advantage of the population growth locally [is it] contributes to Charlottesville's economy and their own economy I might add.

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?

Along with dredging, yes, I believe. Ultimately because of the costs, the cost of building a new dam based on the current economy and then the economy we just got out of, we do need to carefully watch how we spend funds in the near and distant future. Building a dam would be a last resort for me at this point in time due to the cost.

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

Definitely the transit. Congestion between Albemarle County and Charlottesville is an issue now, but it would be a bigger issue if there's not a joint decision that would contribute to both Charlottesville's and Albemarle's residents. Ultimately, yes, we are separate entities, and there has to be a compromise, but most importantly a decision made to move forward with initiatives that [are] oriented around alleviating the stress.

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

Economic development I would like to see it balanced across the board, meaning across all 8 precincts. Workforce development, making sure that existing infrastructures, existing initiatives oriented around workforce development, whether it be businesses, whether it be incentives for businesses, [we] should carefully monitor all those elements around workforce development and figure out how to contribute to ultimately a stronger system, a stronger infrastructure. The more people work, the more jobs [that are] available the more money is going to be spent in the local economy.

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

Due to how many people I speak to regarding the homeless here in Charlottesville and even Albemarle, I would like to see it turned into transitional housing for the homeless or people in need. I haven't seen too much discussion regarding that, but in my opinion I would like to see it happen. I do talk about spending and allocation of funds, I do know that that needs to be considered, but we do have to consider the homeless here in

Charlottesville and even Albemarle County because of the relationship that we have with them.

9. What is your vision for McIntire Park?

I want to see McIntire Park stay the way that it is, I really do. Really I don't want to see any changes, but based on the circumstances looking at the future, we do have to consider how we are going to alleviate the stresses in the City even with Albemarle County because of the relationship that we have with them. Change is difficult, but if we are going to be proactive or at least try to be proactive, we do have to move forward with that existing plans.

Follow up: And when you mentioned stresses in the City what specifically did you mean?

Transit, congestion, definitely change is difficult, it is something that I think about often because a lot of people now don't want to see that type of change. But if it's your responsibility to contribute or at least to make decisions on what is best for the residents, you do have to make difficult decisions.

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?

I would pay particular attention to the communities that would be affected by this addition [of the Western Bypass]. We are providing affordable housing in payment, we are spending funds on important things or what we see as important, but if there are alternatives ultimately, I am not saying that the decision for the Western Bypass is extreme, but at this point in time I would see it as a last resort.

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?

The advantage, I think it's important to adjust to the current circumstances and monitor performance--previous initiatives and previous decisions. The only disadvantage, if any, regarding monitoring performance, I would say is it takes time away for Council to address the issues in the City still in their infancy.

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?

Yes, because we have to consider--I keep speaking about the relationship between Charlottesville and Albemarle because there is in fact one, as an example if we were to move forward with Regional Transit Authority how can we not? It is something that we, Charlottesville and Albemarle must consider looking into the near and distant future for the population perhaps being proactive and there should be some discussions regarding revenue sharing.

13. In June 2006 the City and County signed off on a 50 year water supply plan that includes a new dam at 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 do support taking action, but as far as a new dam, I think that's a last resort. I think it's a last resort and we should definitely consider, ultimately just moving forward with our existing resources and making better our existing resources, and not spending a lot of money unless it was absolutely necessary which isn't too far in the horizon, but I would see a new dam only as a last resort because of the cost.

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

Action. Balanced representation and in this process I have learned many things and spoke with a lot of people and I talk about balanced representation, but I think that balanced representation in Charlottesville will be difficult without a ward system. I would like to see discussions regarding a ward system and at-large election for Charlottesville Mayor.

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?

As far as the City meeting their strategic plan, it's difficult to say, due to the fact that we had this economic crisis nationwide. I do believe that we can still meet those goals if we carefully monitor how we are spending funds and reallocating funds making sure that we are getting the highest investment, the highest return for our investment, it will be challenging.

And as far as staffing and the annual budget, I wouldn't want to take away anything from the staff and their families and clearly it's necessary because they wouldn't be working and ultimately contributing to Charlottesville in my

mind, but ultimately how we spend our funds is very important to look at and to monitor performance, to see if we need to make changes.

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

Ultimately to make decisions intended to benefit the major populace and to adjust to the changes whether it be the challenges, the present, or trying to be proactive and making decisions is going to benefit the major populace in the future. I believe that that's the primary responsibility of any governing body.

Thank you.

Thank you.