



2007 City of Charlottesville City Council Candidate Interview September 2007

Candidate: Barbara Haskins (I)

On November 6, 2007, voters in the City of Charlottesville go to the polls to elect three members of City Council. This recording is Sean Tubbs' September 6, 2007 interview with Barbara Haskins, an independent candidate in the race. The other candidates in this race are David Brown (D), Satyendra Huja (D), Peter Kleeman (I) and Holly Edwards (D).

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

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

INTERVIEW

Ms. Haskins, 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.

- 1. Please describe your past political experience and what qualifies you to be on City Council.**

I would say there's three elements of my experience that are relevant to that question. First of all, I've been head of my treatment team for twenty years. I've worked in an actual state bureaucracy, so I have decades of experience of having to interface with a variety of regulatory agencies, a variety of

funding streams, a variety of rules, and a variety of constituent groups and have had to work in that model to get things done, so I think it's important for people to understand I've not been in private practice for twenty years. I've worked in the state system, and very familiar with competing constituencies and conflicting needs and priorities. So I would say that would be the first piece.

Then the second piece is for many years at the Hospital I was Chair of Medical Quality Insurance, and I think there's some important constructs, important constructs that are relevant. Namely, if you look at the whole idea of TQM, total quality management, the core idea there, or one of them, is that the people who are closest to the process are really the experts on how to improve the process. And what we have in the City are a lot of City Staff and hired consultants who spend many many, many work hours on a given assignment or project or idea or question, and generally speaking, they're the closest to the process, and then they bring their recommendations forward to groups like City Council, and I think sometimes City Council overreaches itself in questioning the work product of that group, and I just think that one should be very weary of doing that because generally speaking, those are the people who are on the ground in the trenches who understand the ins and outs of the question at hand. So, that would be my second answer, is, I think, a very deep appreciation of when you question something that's brought forward by the people who are in the best position to know the answer to the problem, you should be asking yourself why is it that I'm questioning that.

And, then thirdly I've also been on the Hospital Medical Executive Committee for 13 years, and it was our job, again, to look at policy recommendations, look at problems in the system, look at coming regulatory changes or mandated changes or changing populations, and really figure out the best solution for problems that are often thrust upon us rather than generated ourselves. We also had to solve those, but in a bureaucracy, or in a governmental type system, you're more likely to have problems thrust upon you then to be generating the things you're dealing with. So I would say those three things are my experiential background that I think would make me capable of serving on City Council.

- 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?**

And this would be an example of what I was just talking about, where you've had many, many people working many, many hours who brought a lot of expertise to the question. I know there were dueling constituencies and the people that were affected by the various proposals had very strong opinions and they all weighed in during the process. So, because there's been this expert panel convened to really look at the solution, and they've

recommended this as the best option, then I would support it because they're the people who we delegated to address it, and I think it's counterproductive to question it at this point. I see no red flags. There are problems with the solution, but almost every issue has an upside and a downside and for me, the problem in this issue really speaks to sort of the second part of why I'm running, which is does it make sense to the City the way the City is currently constructed.

We have endless boundary issues and turf wars with the County and the question I'm trying to raise with my campaign is, "Is it productive for the community at large in the long run to be having these kinds of endless territorial squabbles?" In the case of Ragged Mountain Reservoir, that's City land that we're going to have 142 acres flooded, and so City is losing City hiking areas and natural area for habitat, and the question is, how do you replace that in terms of the recreational value, let alone habitat value. And then immediately the squabble starts, you know, with the water authority, the City and the County. Where do you get the land to replace it and who pays for it?

And, it's a little ironic because these are all governmental agencies that are sort of birthed by the will of the people, so it's sort of like in Greek mythology when the Gods are born from the forehead of Zeus and then they fight with each other. In one sense, on one level, there's a bit of an absurdity here. But on a practical level, there's still a problem of where's the replacement land coming from and who's paying for it? And once again, the City is sort of falling on the grenade in terms of taking a tangible hit for a process that may or may not directly affect the city.

In the case of the water, the consensual agreement seems to be that our development needs are rather static and flat-line in the City. It's the County where all the growth is occurring; it's the County that needs more water. So we're losing the parkland for County water, and as long as there's this boundary between us, it's a problem. And, replacing it's a problem, too, replacing the parkland. So hopefully you think I've answered your question.

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?

The short answer to that is it's going to cost what it's going to cost. I think what interests me more specifically, and I'm not on that committee, I don't know the numbers, but they're going to charge what it costs to replace it. And all the consumers are going to have to pay for that, and the sort of specific

question will be, is the cost equitably distributed? There's been a lot of battles with the Solid Waste Authority about whether the cost is equitably distributed among the three players—the City, the County, and the University. So, one could imagine a recreation of that same squabble.

But for me, the issue is, taking care of infrastructure, and I think that as a society, we've done a very poor job of being level-headed and mature in our financial decision-making. I think that governmental spending priorities reflect personal spending priorities, and in the last several decades, we've moved towards a conspicuous consumption-oriented society, so that people have disposable income and they elect to spend it on something visible, whether it's a flat-screen TV or an ATV, I mean, you pick it, and there's no end to what you can buy. In personal circumstances, people neglect personal savings and are living on credit card debt. But society has also made spending decisions that have not supported infrastructure. This is nobody... this is not a secret. Not a surprise.

The bridge falling down in Minnesota is just the most recent example. So, I think it's a hallmark of a mature governmental agency that can put aside enough of the disposable income to prudently meet the needs for infrastructure maintenance. I know that the City has a capital development fund, and some funding streams for it in addition to grants to support this kind of infrastructure replacement. The City's sewers are old. They leak a lot of storm water, a lot of storm water gets into the City's sewer system, that if it weren't there, it would be less of a burden on the water treatment facilities, and also there would be less overflow during storms of this sewage into the water supply. There are solutions for fixing the aging infrastructure of the City's sewers, but there has to be a 5-year plan, 10-year plan, whatever, there has to be a willingness to do that, political will on the part of the people that are responsible for it.

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

This question comes up over and over and the more I've thought about it the more I've decided that there's no such thing as quality growth per se. And I would say somewhat ironically and facetiously is that quality growth is like Prince Charming for women. Women might have an idea in their mind of who Prince Charming is, and he would have a hundred positive attributes, none of which you'd argue with and you'd want all one hundred. But you're not going to meet Prince Charming, and quality growth starts to approach that. It kind of starts to get to the level of an oxymoron, because people have so many strong opinions about change and development that hardly any kind of growth is going to be quality growth.

There's clearly growth that could be not quality growth, you know. An all night poker joint with a strip bar attached in the middle of a residential neighborhood, I know that's not possible by zoning but, there's a lot of things

we could agree, well, that's definitely not quality growth, but defining what quality growth is I think is much more of an aspiration of the mind. I mean, it's not really going to happen the way people want it to happen. There's not going to be a lot of consensus on most projects. I would contextualize that further by saying that in our economic system there are real constraints on that notion because we, we have an economic system set up on the rights of property owners. And that's just the way it is. Maybe people don't like that, but it's true. So, if property owners have within their zoning laws an ability to do what they want with their property, then of course they're going to make decisions that other people don't like.

I think if you were going to try to capture the notion of quality growth, you would be talking about infrastructure support, and aesthetically pleasing, although again, just think of the Picasso statue in Chicago in front of their office building. You know, they put out this radical statue and half the people hated it, half the people loved it. So even if I say quality growth should have an aesthetic component, there are still going to be disagreement.

Certainly for me, I would hope we could maintain some of the visual quality of our area. I drove past the UVA Hospital this weekend on my bike and it's still ugly. You know, it was ugly when it was built. It's still ugly. It's like a giant white band-aid or something, a big gauze 4-by-4. So, one hopes that things that are built are pleasing to the eye, but that's in the eye of the beholder. And I hope that there can be preservation of our canopy and some feel for natural spaces within the development that occurs.

5. Do you support the Meadowcreek Parkway which VDOT plans to advertise for construction in 2008? Why or why not?

And this goes back to what I said for the first question, is that there have been thousands and thousands and thousands of work hours over many, many years applied to the question of this problem. And the consensus has been, built it. Here's where the road should go, and here's why, etcetera. So, I think I'm going to respect the people that made that decision and support it. And again, all of these kinds of decisions have upsides and downsides. This one is no exception. There are pros and cons to it, but I think the pros outweigh it. I mean, you and I could spend the next hour just talking about the parkway, so I won't, but I'll tell you some of the things that I am thinking.

A lot of people feel it will move traffic between points in the County, which immediately for me goes right back to again, why do we have a City and a County, you know? If it's one community it doesn't matter. When there's dueling political entities it matters, and it becomes a bone of contention, a symbolic reason to throw down the gauntlet. The downtown business owners and merchants and we rest on the backs of people who are in free enterprise and people who expend their personal and financial capital to run businesses. That's what keeps us going forward. They want the Parkway. They believe it

will be important to have some kind of reasonably unfettered way to get downtown. I would like to defer to their preference in this regard because I want to support them and without the businesspeople who are the core of the Mall, we lose a profound part of our character.

You know, other people would say it's not going to be [for traffic] to come downtown, it's going to go county to county. I don't have a crystal ball. I think it will be both. But the harder it gets to travel on every other road, that is a disincentive for people who did want to come downtown. I think that you know there are criticisms about the Eastern Connector. I've seen some of the County's responses. They make sense in terms of road-building is a multi-staged process, they're not sure what the route would be, they're not sure of the scope of the Connector; they've allocated funds to proceed in that regard. So, again, I'm not throwing down the gauntlet to the County and saying, "Oh yeah, well, then we're not building the road."

From what I understand VDOT now has guidance that they're supposed to include bicycle and pedestrian access on these new roads that they're putting in, and I think that those bicycle and pedestrian pathways running that distance are a wonderful asset to the community. You just have to look at the GW Parkway up in Northern Virginia that goes from D.C. to Mount Vernon. They have a bike path, and on the weekends you practically need stop lights it's so used. People love it. People get out there and use it. And, again, it's the way we do things here that we tend to put those bikeways and pedestrian pathways next to roads. So since we do that, good, we're going to get more bikeways.

Also, I think and I know some people will throw tomatoes at me, I think that the [Route 250] bypass in Charlottesville is a beautiful road. As roads go, it's gorgeous. Parks and Rec do a fabulous job of planting there with the azaleas and the flowerbeds. We have the Art in Place on that road. It's missing bike trails and pedestrian by-ways. But aesthetically it's very nice. And I think that from what I saw of the Meadowcreek Parkway plans, it's a curving road, it has a very low speed limit on it. There's a lot of opportunity for aesthetic potential as roads go, which is actually a plus. A lot of roads are built with zero aesthetic in mind, and I think we're going to have a high aesthetic factor. I just want to say that I live near where it's going in, so I've walked in those woods, sort of behind the CHS football field, for 17, 18 years. And as soon as I heard about the Parkway I started to be sad, so I understand what's being lost, too. But there is replacement parkland going... again, there are upsides and downsides and I think that the upsides outweigh the downsides for this road.

6. What are your overall transportation priorities for the City of Charlottesville?

Again, here we are. Everything comes back to this, which is the second piece of my campaign is, do we want to keep the City-County boundaries that we currently have? Do we want to continue to do business as two largely separate entities? I know that there's some cooperation, but there's a lot of non-cooperation and you know, "That's mine, not yours; No, I'm not paying for that because you benefit." So, are we going to look at this question and say specifically only in the City of Charlottesville, or the transportation issues or is that kind of silly, and really what we need to be talking about is a regional priority for transportation?

In the City, I was bike-riding this weekend and I went to look at a development, Cherry Hill, and when you get near UVA, the bike paths just disappear and there are certain big intersections where you really lose that non-vehicular right of way. If you're not in a vehicle, you've lost your right of way and you're sort of back to taking your chances. So, I think that there's a few intersections. Same thing when you're going past Snyder Tennis Courts, you're kind on your own crossing your fingers until you get to your bike path on the other side. Those would be City things.

I know that there's a part of the strategic plan to have all of the schools have sort of non-vehicular trails for a two-mile radius, I think, so that children within two miles could get to school using bikes or on foot if they wanted to, that's a wonderful plan. And God bless the Rivanna Trails Foundation for all the work they've been doing in making a loop of trails around the City and the County.

You know, the regional thing I think comes up again later in this interview. You're going to ask more regional transportation questions so I may not go too much into the bigger picture right now.

I guess nobody likes traffic jams, and everybody wants somebody else to try driving their car. Whether we're talking just in the city, or in the metropolitan area, the question is, when do you seduce people into an alternative form of transportation? And our system again, we don't, like, pull people's driver's licenses so there'll be fewer cars on the road. We have incentives so at some point people have to feel there is a juicy alternative to taking their cars. You see in the paper nice little stories about people that get Vespas for buzzing around downtown. That's great. They thought it made sense for them. A lot of people haven't made that decision yet. So, if it's all right with you, I think I'll defer the rest of this until we get to the bigger issue.

7. What are your views on working more closely with the County 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?

Okay, that's cheating. There are about eight questions in there. And you'll have to remind if I don't get all eight of your embedded questions there. Obviously, as I just mentioned, the Meadowcreek Parkway should be having bike and pedestrian trails so that will open up some miles of usage, and I just talked about intersections where non-vehicles have no clear access lanes. In the UVA, I was just talking about Prince Charming, and UVA is sort of like the big castle on the hill, and it has a drawbridge and it lets that bridge up and down as it sees fit and, they were just talking this weekend in the *Progress* about transportation and UVA was saying how they have their own system, they have their own schedule, they can run buses frequently, they have a smaller area, they have a lot of riders. They made perfect sense. And all of these transportation questions on one level come down to the same thing of the providers and consumers have to think it makes sense. So right now I can understand UVA saying we have a system that works well, and what, what is the guarantee that by joining a larger system we're not just hurting ourselves? Which is the same thing as a car rider who says, what is the guarantee by me taking the bus that I'm not just hurting myself?

So, I think if you're talking about transportation, and again, I just want to put in a statement that says my whole issue is, should the City stay the City the way it is? Should there be some kind of dissolution of boundaries or complete merger, etc, etc. I think that these kinds of questions come up every so many years and I'm hoping to really be a catalyst for that question being put front and center now.

I think the ambulance brouhaha with the subsequent formation of a taskforce to look at the emergency response system is an example of a one-sided decision— let's make a new city ambulance program. Then because of the outcry, being changed into a regional panel of experts trying to solve the problem. So transportation is another area, every area is like this, just about, of, well, why do we have two different entities?

But having said all of that, I think you have two different populations you're talking about. One are the people that lack access to a vehicle and for them, buses or taxi cabs are their main way of wheeled transport. For those people, the goal would be to give them enough access to their destinations in somewhat of a user-friendly fashion including Sundays, which I know they've just started, which is a good thing. Because nobody thinks its fair to have to spend a half a day to run an errand which I think was the anecdote in the paper this weekend, you know, six hours for two stops, which is partly why I think people haven't gotten out of their cars and on their bus because that's what they think, too, six hours for two stops. So, once you start talking about

moving people out of their vehicles and into buses, people are more likely to be seduced into it than punished into it.

Now you can punish people by really making parking more expensive, or you can open HOV lanes so that taking your private car is so depressing in the morning. You know that you're like I can't sit in that traffic jam one more day, I'm going to get on the bus. You can incentivize it by having really juicy parking spaces for car-poolers. As far as I know, and I really have no insider knowledge on this, you know, most people at UVA park by U-Hall and so they have to get to work a half an hour early so they can shuttle over, and then they have the extra half an hour home-time getting back to their cars. I have no idea if they could take their parking garage next to the Hospital and devote some of those spaces to car-poolers, you know.

Same thing with downtown, or any private business. If you can make it really lucrative, or if you can financially subsidize people that are carpooling. I know businesses all around the country have done those kinds of things. So right now, I don't know how many incentives are in place, you know, and the average commuter wants a bus to get him to work in about the same amount of time more or less as a car with about the same cost. It's even better if it's less. I mean, I think there are a lot of people who would like to read or sleep when they're going to work in the morning on public transportation. It just has to be reasonably similar. So I don't know if that means we need to have smaller more frequent runs from population centers like Hollymead, or, what-have-you, somewhere out on Pantops.

From what I understand, the apartment complexes built south of Old Lynchburg that are in the County, some of them have shuttles to UVA and they're not used much. So, again, those students are thinking, the roads are small and the parking is slim, but it's easier for me to drive. So again, even when there's a shuttle it doesn't necessarily get used. Now, students have wildly variable schedules and commuters don't. They pretty much all have to be at work by 9:00, they get off at 5:00, that kind of thing.

And lastly, if I were going to do a pie in the sky thing, I would wonder about jitneys, because when you go to foreign countries there's always jitneys which are just like minivans run by private individuals, and they just cruise a road, and if you stand on the corner, you know a jitney is going to be here within five or ten minutes. And, I have no idea if we have the population base, but I would certainly be open if an entrepreneur wanted to do that to, to licensing jitneys, so if you were down in Lovingston, you know, if you knew at 8:00 every morning, a jitney is pulling up in downtown Lovingston and taking you to UVA and Barracks Road or whatever, downtown, you know, I think any kind of private enterprise like that or with the public system is chicken and egg, in other words, people aren't going to start riding until it really works well, and it's not going to work well until you have enough riders, so you generally have to have an operating loss for a while before you— You have to have a

specified amount of time that we know we're going to have an operating loss for six months or what-have-you, and then we'll see if enough chickens are riding in the back of the van to make it viable, so that's my answer.

8. What is missing in Downtown's retail sector and what might City Council do about it? What will your priorities be for development in and around the Downtown Mall area, including the city-owned parking lots between Water Street and South Street?

It's one of those 20— You are cheating a lot here with these seven questions under one number. I think there's a pretty broad consensus that it's a food store that's missing, a grocery store and if you look at some of the City Council work documents that talk about a full-service, high-quality operation and, again, it's setting the bar too high. These grocery stores are huge business operations. They have entire marketing divisions and they do their analysis very carefully and they figure out do we have the traffic, do we have the parking, do we have the road size, do we have enough people that would shop here to make it worth our trouble to open the store. They've done the math. It hasn't added up. If it had added up, they would be here, you know, so, again, in a free enterprise system, you have to kind of respect that the marketers and the providers are voting with their feet, so then I would question whether the City Council work document that said we need a full-spectrum high-quality operation is in fact a viable— It's a nice wish. It's back to Prince Charming, you know, but are you going to get it?

And I think that we go towards higher density, and there really is a short-fall of places to go and get some kinds of groceries, then maybe we need to be thinking in a different way. In New York, there's a corner grocery store on virtually every corner, at least in Manhattan, not in the mid-town, but generally speaking, you know, maybe we need more smaller operations but, again, as long as they're run by private business people, they have to make sense economically to those individuals and I don't know if there's something we could do in terms of enterprise grants or something like that. I mean, it seems like we have lots of projects like that where we have incubator funds for things we value, so it maybe that we can set up some kind of funding stream to lower the tax burden or to start people out with incubator funds for a smaller-scale operation. I think a large-scale operation like Kroger or Harris Teeter, I think have done the math and it hasn't added up, so I think we need a different strategy. Is there more?

Follow up: What will be your priorities for downtown development including the two lots?

Yeah. The context in which I place development is that you have a choice—sprawl or density. You don't get to have neither, so in many ways, density makes sense, but you're going right back to is there any such thing as high-quality growth because when things change, people react usually in a

negative way. It's just our nature as humans. Nobody says thank God a skyscraper is coming next door to me. I mean, why would you, you know, so I think density makes the most sense in the long run. We're talking about where are people going to live, how're we going to expand our commercial base. It makes sense of there to be mixed use development there. I'm fine with a height limit.

To me, the specific issues that I would pay attention again are the natural environment of the buildings, so, you know, are you going to lose the skyline a hundred percent. I think there's some playful architectural things that can be done in building design that allow for better sight lines and horizon lines.

I would like the street level life of the buildings to be very inviting in some way on a human scale, you know, so that people are invited to pause and own the space, the street space, rather than just thinking, well, I have a bunch of bricks and windows at the end of the block, I'm done with this, so sometimes people have indentations for little green spaces or water spaces, play spaces, but to me, the most important feature would really be the street-level habitat of the buildings that go up and to the extent possible, some way to stay tied into the beautiful environment in which we find ourselves.

9. The City Council's 2025 vision statement identifies economic sustainability as a key objective. What do you think needs to be done to support that objective, and what role should government play to promote economic vitality?

Right now, the main sources of City revenue are homeowners, taxes, and commercial, and a lot of it is homeowners because we have a limited commercial base. Now, maybe with more development, that'll shift a little bit, but it's nothing like the County where the commercial tax base is just exploding, so they can take a lot more of their revenue from businesses, so because we rely so heavily on homeowners, to me, the economic vitality really—it's sort of a backwards question. I want to be able to sustain homeowners in what they can afford to pay and then the City's budget flows from that. Right now, we've been on a non-sustainable trajectory. We've had since about the middle of the last 10 years double-digit inflation in the assessments every year and that's been rising taxes for homeowners and I don't agree with that. I would change it if I were elected, so we're talking about the City but the City is funded by homeowners and funded by businesses and so my focus is really more on how do you protect the economic viability of the homeowners. I mean, again, this is another hour kind of question and this is my—the short-term prong of my campaign is protecting homeowners. There's just been too much of an increase in people's property taxes and very little regard for them. There's been lip service but not so much regard for them.

10. Do we have appropriate resources in City government to achieve the objectives in our 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?

Yeah. This strategic plan is a mix of reasonable, highly desired goals that are probably achievable and some very blue sky kind of goals like wouldn't it be swell if we had this and I'm not sure that— You know, it's nice to have dreams, but if you spend too much of a city's planning energy on the dream side of things when they're very likely not realizable or perhaps should not be pursued, then I think you divert attention from what you can do, the more achievable goals.

For example, let me just show you this if I can, there's something in the strategic plan I'd like to read it so I don't say it wrong. It's on page 36 under the section "America's Healthiest City" and you'll find with Charlottesville there's a lot of "-ests," you know, we are quite taken by being first or most wonderful or you-have-it, so here we are in America Healthiest City and it's says "create a City-operated urgent care health facility, contract for a turnkey operation that would provide option for employees to get medical care for simple medical conditions." Now, this is saying that the City would operate a City health facility for City employees as part of the plan. I can't support this at all. I think that's— My God, I mean, part of why we get a no. 1 rating is because we have so many doctors per capita and City employees have City health insurance, so we have the providers, we have the funding stream for employees to go to providers. How it makes sense for the City to use City taxpayer dollars to also open a City health care facility for City employees— This is the kind of remote vision that I would not support in the plan. I have a lot of problems with this. You know, if you want to help people get access to health care, give it to the Free Clinic, for goodness sakes. I mean, it just doesn't make sense.

But my global answer to this question is I think it's backwards. I think, you know, you've taken what you want and then you're going to figure out how to pay for it and that's that consumption-oriented ethic that I described in the beginning of this interview where our culture has evolved into one where we define ourselves by what we consume and what we surround ourselves with rather than any sort of inner space, our inner lives, and so this plan— It's as if you took a homeowner and you said— And the homeowner said, well, I want to have a three-car garage and five flat screen TVs and a vacation in Aruba and send all my kids to private school and shop at Whole Foods every week and whatever, I mean, they just— It's just this list of things that's out there. Rather than starting the other way around which is saying here's my cash flow. This is what I have to spend. What are my budgeting needs? Am I going to have savings? Am I going to have retirement? Am I going to have a college education fund? Am I going to use infrastructure repair and be aware that my roof is going to run out in two years? And then what's left

over? Do we get one flat screen TV, one private school tuition, you know, whatever?

So I feel that embedded in your question here is the reverse direction. It should be what are our economic resources and then given the constraints of reality about our economic resources, what are our priorities. I think that the strategic plan is the opposite.

11. The County 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?

Well, I've already told you what I think quality growth is like Prince Charming. You're not going to find it. It's certainly beyond my capacity to just picture 3,100 residential units. I don't know what that looks like. The problem is, again, we can have these discrete discussions but they're embedded in certain political economic matrix and our matrix is that the people who own that property, I guess they needed to sell it because the heirs wanted their assets, are allowed to sell it and so that's the done deal, is that private property owners can sell and everything else is secondary to that.

You know, there's a lot of talk about where's affordable housing. I have not seen the actual breakdowns of those 3,100 units how many would be considered so-called affordable, but to the extent that they meet pretty much anyone's criteria for affordability, that's a good thing.

I think the big nightmare is traffic. Well, there's two nightmares. One is just loss of canopy and unpaved areas and all that, but that's going to happen. I mean, you can minimize it. I know all developers say they need to clear cut, but you know when individuals build on a lot, they save trees. They say, no, I like that stand of trees over there, make sure you don't take out those trees and watch out for the roots of that oak tree when you put my house in, so it's obvious that it can be done, that you can build lots or develop lots and preserve the natural habitat that's there to some extent.

To the extent Biscuit Run is cleared a lot, that will be really a negative in the equation. I know they're putting in or want to put in a 400-acre park, etc., etc., but I think there's a lot of gratuitous losses of natural habitat. So there's the habitat issue and all the effect that has on water absorption and then you have flooding and you have erosion and all the habitat kind of questions. The other is traffic and this is human beings at their typical middle oh my God zone. Where are all these travelers going to go? You know, they're talking about putting that connector road over to the Sunset/Fontaine Connector Road and my thought on that is that's really great if when you get to Fontaine you turn left and get on the bypass and the interstate, but if you turn right, it's

right back to nightmare. I understand that JPA is supposed to have widening but it hasn't yet.

Another thing nowadays—everybody wants their subdivision— Their home on a cul de sac, you know, but that concentrates traffic and increases problems as opposed to having multiple exits in and out of a neighborhood. It's just inconceivable— And so I think that that development should have lots of in and outs and I know that that's not a committed-to kind of process.

Old Lynchburg Road is already so taxed and so inappropriate for high volume traffic that unless there's some really creative traffic planning that goes on, I could understand why they'd suggested closing it at the City line, but, of course, it goes right back to part two of my campaign and why are the City and the County— If you want to be able to close Old Lynchburg Road, you wouldn't want to merge, but it's going to be ugly I think.

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

Tax relief for homeowners. I just think we have had too many tax increases and I think that the way tax relief is handled in essence comes back to one's political philosophy and it appears to me that the philosophy of City Council as a group is in our wisdom, we will elect those to whom we will give the benefit of tax relief and that's not my philosophy. My philosophy is everybody gets it because the people who earned the money are the people who should decide how to spend the money, not a governmental agency and if you look at this process the City Council has come up with, they've got the 8-point program for you might be eligible if. Again, it's so— It's too detail-driven and it's not user friendly. No one should have to sit down after they have paid double-digit increases in their tax assessments for the last five or six years and say let's see, I've got one, two; I don't have three; I've got four and five. That's ridiculous.

And then they came up with this thing they wanted to model after a Tidewater kind of program where you could defer it until you sold it, but then they decided it was too hard and, again, this is where I would step in and say, oh, okay, that's too hard, why don't you just simply cut the rates, you know, just stop taking it. That's pretty simple and pretty straightforward.

13. 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?

When I read this this morning, I thought is this one of their trick questions because obviously there's only so much you can do if you're located in city government. I mean, you need to be talking to your delegates, you know,

Toscano and Bell and others, but once you're at the level of state government, your pull is much smaller and from what I understand, there're a lot of appointed boards that weigh in quite heavily on how things go forward and, you know, let's face it, if you saw my blog site, Haskinsforcouncil.blogspot.com, that's the f-o-r, not no. 4, money talks, you know, and our campaign system in essence is about buying and selling candidates. You know, the big contributors pull the strings and the big contributors and their progeny as we say in medicine are those— Those are the people on the boards, by and large, and there's a lot of stuff that goes on on these big boards that prevent commonsense consumer-oriented citizen-oriented solutions to problems and it doesn't matter what party the governor is with, the governor has people who paid for him to win and he owes them. It's just the way it is until we change our system and so as long as you have powerful people appointed to powerful boards with vested interests that they're representing that are not citizen interests, there's really very very little somebody like the City Council can do and that's why I think this is a trick question because you're so politically sophisticated you must know that.

14. The University of Virginia is moving forward with numerous major construction projects to improve and expand their facilities. In what ways does this impact our community? How would you characterize the level of cooperation between the City and the University and in what way will you seek to make changes?

Again, a multi-faceted issue. I mean, some of their improvements are in culture and the arts and athletics and that benefits the community at large. I mean, part of, you know, why we're such a nice place to live is the artistic and cultural fabric of our life here and to the extent the University is pursuing developments in those domains, they're adding to our quality of life.

Going past the construction sites right now is a problem. Let me just look at this again. Characterize the level of cooperation. The University cooperates when they perceive it makes sense to them and they play a very powerful hand and actually so do individuals. We just play a less powerful hand but we tend to cooperate when we think it makes sense for us personally, so the University is behaving the same way. They just have some really big high cards in their hand and as it pointed out, you know, they're the economic linchpin of this area and so it would be remiss for me to only mention what they're not doing and not also mention what they are doing but this is a relationship that has to be based pretty much entirely on seduction as opposed to punishment. We can seduce the University into thinking that's a really good idea and we'd like to cooperate, but it's almost impossible to sort of punish them or sanction them into doing something we want them to do that they don't want to do.

15. The City Board of Architectural Review and the City Planning Commission have recommended restrictions on by-right building heights in the Downtown Mall, Water Street, and South Street areas. If elected, would you support ordinance changes that would allow nine-story buildings only with a special use permit? Why or why not?

Maurice Cox was in the paper not too long ago talking about the Coal Tower project and he's obviously involved at multiple levels of planning in government and he said that they changed things to by-right a few years ago because nothing was moving forward and they've changed it and things are moving forward and I think we need to keep that in mind that there's something about by-right that sort opened the gates for development and so I would not go back to special use only.

16. What are your priorities for improving the City's public recreational facilities and urban green spaces?

You haven't seen much in the paper lately about the YMCA and the pools. Again, it brings up this whole— Let's see, the City and the County are supposed to pay equal amounts. We have less than half as many people as the County. We're giving the land and this is fair. Why? You know, if we were doing the YMCA project, we're going to cut down our trees in McIntire Park and match the County dollar for dollar, so I'm not thrilled about that.

Surveys have shown that in the City pools right now, 28% of the users are City residents, but we've assumed the administrative and infrastructure costs for that and then there was another study that came out that talked about how a survey of City residents showed that their no. 1 priority was like a leisure pool or a warm water pool and I think that's a very specious— My guess would be that that's a specious questionnaire because the people who answered it most likely, and I don't have intimate knowledge, most likely didn't have in their minds, well, let's see, we'll eliminate Crowe and Smith and then what would my priorities be. They probably assumed that Crowe and Smith would continue to be in existence and probably answered that by saying, well, my next priority would be a leisure pool, so to drag that study out and say what residents want is a warm water pool. I think I'd really want to know the context of that survey because I just think it's a mistake to get rid of both lap pools.

I understand that the mayor has said— I think he said that he wants at Smith to have both a lap pool and warm water pool or a leisure pool. That's fine. I don't have a problem with that. If we really need to get rid of both or change the lap pools because they're so aging, then I would support doing it that way I think and pairing up with the Boys & Girls Clubs more so than the YMCA project.

Other than that, I know there's a lot in the strategic plan about just building fitness in throughout the City more, whether it's in the school system or having fitness courses and what-have-you and those all make sense, assuming that the marginal cost is not prohibitive.

Urban green space— I know in the strategic plan they're talking about having arborists as consultants to private citizens and what-have-you. To the extent we can— And I was talking a minute ago about when there's development trying to maintain some kind of people-sized space and people do relate to the green spaces, to natural vegetation as well as to water and things like that, sky, so the more we can maintain our canopy and our green space, I think the higher our aesthetic quality of life here.

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

It's sort of an obvious thing that we have disparate constituencies in the City and so City Council is supposed to represent all of them. I personally would— I think it makes more sense to have districts. You know, if we stay the City which I'm not necessarily promoting, I think it's easier to represent different constituencies if you actually have delegates from those districts. I think you'll get a more clear voice and then people just have to be able to negotiate.

I think that you have to be a scrupulous steward of your cash flow and so, again, I think the homeowners have just been abused and disrespected and sort of it's been highway robbery with the tax increases in the last five or six years, so I think you have to have stewardship of your economic underpinnings and to a large extent, that's homeowners and, secondarily, it's the commercial base and so you have to do things to protect them.

I think that— You know, early on I talked about quality management and the belief system that you trust the people closest to the process and we set up these hundreds of work hours to come up with an answer to a question and then at times, City Council may be inclined to pick apart the recommendations. They just had the purchase of the Dogwood Housing and Jim Tolbert's group had brought in Piedmont Housing Alliance and had worked on this for a long time. Everyone involved, and these are serious advocates for homeless people and people who need low income housing, everyone thought it was a fabulous project and then it came before City Council and for a while City Council got swept up into this, well, I don't think I like this angle and, whoa, what about that, and to me, that just doesn't make sense in that kind of situation. Piedmont Housing Alliance is for the people who need housing who are disadvantaged. If they're saying we love this deal, then why aren't you trusting them, for goodness sakes. You're giving them millions of dollars, how can you not trust their judgment?

So, on the one hand, I think the tension and the responsibility for City Council on the one hand is to do this right and to trust their advisors. On the other hand, though, and this is the subtle part and the judgment part, there're also dialectical forces of business as usual, protecting sacred cows, protecting turf, and so there are going to be recommendations that appear that in fact are not so much based on expert opinion as inertia or turf protection and so City Council has to somehow have the collective wisdom or the emergent wisdom to figure out when it's one and when it's the other because they're very very different and you end up wasting a lot of money for the latter but not for the former.

And then I think it should have achievable goals. As I said, in the strategic plan, I'm not into the five flat screen TV model of planning. I'm into these are our resources, where do we go from here and how do we do that.

And then, lastly, you know, I'm probably the only candidate that— I'm almost like a poison pill candidate because I really want us to talk about should the City stay the City which, of course, means should the City Council exist on some level, because I think that's really— You know, we are 10 landlocked square miles surrounded by 690 square miles in the County. We have a very very limited financial base. We have a huge service burden. We carry the torch for our artistic and cultural underpinnings. We support the Downtown Mall. It just goes on and on. Just look at the camera on the Downtown Mall, the \$300,000 that the City's paying for it. Anyone who comes here to enjoy Downtown benefits from it, if you believe it's a benefit which is a separate discussion, but we're paying for it so, again, the City—endless examples—is paying a lot more in taxes. Residential property owners are paying 95 cents per \$100.00 of assessed value. The County is paying 68, so you cross that line over by Barracks Road, you can pay one-third less taxes versus here and so I just really want the City residents to be asking is this for sure the way we want to keep doing things because what's the trajectory of doing things this way. Where does this get us 10 years from now? Twenty years from now? Are we sure we want to keep doing this, so besides—

To answer the last question, besides what are the primary responsibilities of City Council, I would also bring dimension into it as well.

Well, thank you very much for speaking with us this morning.