

2011 Democratic City Council Candidate Forum July 20, 2011

On July 20, 2011, the seven candidates vying for Democratic Party's nomination for three seats on the Charlottesville City Council met at a candidate forum sponsored by Charlottesville Tomorrow and *The Daily Progress*. Participating candidates included: Paul Beyer; Colette E. Blount; Brevy Cannon; Kathleen M. Galvin; James Halfaday; Satyendra Huja; and Dede Smith. The event was held at Burley Middle School and was moderated by Brian Wheeler of Charlottesville Tomorrow.

The audio and video of this forum is available online in the Charlottesville Tomorrow News Center http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville_tomorrow_/2011/07/city_council_forum.html

TRANSCRIPT

Brian Wheeler:

Good evening. My name is Brian Wheeler with Charlottesville Tomorrow. This evening we are co-hosting, along with *The Daily Progress* this City Council Candidate forum for seven people seeking the Democratic Party's nomination. Three of the five seats on Charlottesville City Council will be on the ballot this November.

The Charlottesville Democratic Party will hold an unassembled caucus, also known as a firehouse primary, on Saturday August 20th from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., here at Burley Middle School, to select three nominees. One candidate for clerk of the Charlottesville Circuit Court will also be nominated.

In the city council primary, Charlottesville Democrats may vote for up to seven candidates, and rank them by order of preference. This ranking is to facilitate an instant runoff in the event there is not a simple majority. So not only does your vote matter but so does your ranking of the candidates.

Charlottesville Tomorrow and the Daily Progress will hold another City Council candidate forum this fall which will be open to all candidates on the ballot, including the Independent candidates.

Let me talk a little bit about the format, because we've changed a few things if you've been to our past candidate forums. Because of the large number of candidates here, we've developed a new format which is going to allow us to cover a large number of topics. The candidates will respond to three quick answer questions. They will take audience questions. And they will ask each other question.

There will be opening statements from the candidates, but there will not be closing statements. One week ago we provide the candidates with the three topics of the quick-answer questions, and seven topics for the questions that I will ask as moderator. The candidates have not seen the exact wording of these questions. Each candidate will answer three of the seven moderator questions which we will draw at random.

I will announce how much time the candidates have for their responses for each part of the forum. Tracie Cabler on our staff will be keeping time directly in front of the candidates. A yellow card indicates thirty seconds remain for the candidate, and red card indicates that the candidate must stop.

After the moderator questions, we will ask questions from the audience. There are pens and cards available in the lobby, or from our volunteers who will be in the aisles. If you look out for my children, Abby and Sam Wheeler, they will be the ones walking up and down the aisles collecting audience questions.

McGregor McCance is the managing editor at the Daily Progress. He will be screening the audience questions, but unlike past forums you will be able to direct a question to a specific candidate. Each candidate will respond to one audience question. After the audience questions, the candidates will get a chance to ask each other questions, however no candidate will receive more than two questions from the other candidates. Some candidates may not be asked any questions in that segment.

The forum will run until 8:30. At one or two points we're going to have to change the video tape in our camera. We'd appreciate your patience when we do that.

Finally, our goal, Charlottesville Tomorrow's goal, the Daily Progress's goal, is to help you make an informed choice. If you r question though, is not answered tonight we hope you will seek out the candidates directly and get the answer yourself.

With that I will remind the audience to silence your mobile phones, please. And we will begin with candidate opening statements. You will each have two minutes, and we will begin with Ms. Blount.

Colette Blount:

Good evening, my name is Colette Blount and I am seeking a position for the Charlottesville City Council. I bring to the job my experience, integrity, and dedication to ensuring equal access to the future. My 17 years of classroom experience have shown me the diverse path taken by our children and have identified the various supports that will ensure their continued success.

In the pursuit of extending strong educational opportunities to the broader community, I ran for and was elected to the school board in 2007, where I've worked to ensure the division followed the policies it has set forth, paying special attention to those that directly to the advancement of underrepresented students. My community activities include dialogue on race, facilitator, volunteer, coach and tutor. It is my unwavering support of children and their families that leads me to serve on city council. I believe that when the adults in our community feel respected and experience stability in their lives, then the children of the community will follow suit and be more actively engaged in their own educational journey.

Premise 1: Providing access to quality education affords a community its children and adults the opportunity to advance towards this. I will continue the partnership between council and the city schools to achieve the common goals set forth in each agency's strategic plans. I will support programs that focus on continuing education and expansion of job training, including reentry support for ex-offenders.

Premise 2: Environmental stewardship is how we will ensure that our natural surroundings are intact for the benefit of future generations. Toward this I will strengthen our transportation infrastructure by incorporating more efficient forms of movement around our community. I will preserve our natural resources through policy conservation measures and early education.

Premise 3: Charlottesville will experience expansive growth when the decision making is shared by diverse cross-sections of our community. Toward this I will bring to the forefront matters that address the needs of underrepresented areas of our community. I will investigate economic initiatives, such as cottage industries that encourage small business activity.

With our combined vision we can make Charlottesville City a place for all.

Dede Smith:

Good evening. My name is Dede Smith, and I'm running for city council because I love Charlottesville. And I want to maintain the high quality of life we have here for many years for generations to come. I sum up my vision for Charlottesville with I "CARE."

"C" is for conservation, because I believe in the protection and preservation of our natural and historic resources. Just in the last decade we've had five major infrastructure projects that have been proposed or approved in our city parks. Such as recently, the three story waste water pump station in Riverview Park in Woolen Mills. I do not believe our city parks should be open for business.

"A" is for accountability, because I believe in a responsive and responsible government. I've been concerned of late, to see decisions made on out of date and incomplete information and decisions that are not in the best interests of city residents. I will use upto-date accurate information, and I will seek out the best information possible.

"R" is for respect, because I believe in equal opportunity for all of our citizens. I think we all know that not all of our citizens in Charlottesville share the high quality of life here. We need to honor the diversity of income, ethnicity, and race that define our city, and be sure our tax payer dollars are used equally well for all of our citizens.

"E" is for education, because I believe all children can thrive. And sharing an excellent education is more than just what happens in the classroom. It is about ensuring children a safe affordable and stable housing as well as healthy foods and activities.

My decades long service to this community, I think, speaks for itself. And I encourage you to look at my website to see it. I can guarantee you that there will be nobody who will work harder for this city than me should I be elected.

Satyendra Huja:

Dear friends. Please pay special attention today. I'm told I have a slight Virginia accent here. I know I look like one for sure

Charlottesville is great community. I've spent much of my life helping in this effort. I bring a proven record of service. I have experience and expertise in finding creative solutions. Over the years I have been privileged to be part of many projects. Including downtown pedestrian mall, historic Court Square, start of the green belt, energy programs, art-in-place, tree commission, affordable housing, such as the shelter for homeless, neighborhood improvements, and 10th & Page and Starr Hill. Social

programs like Meals on Wheels, mediation center, summer internship for youth, aquatic center, and many other programs like that.

I feel privileged that I've had the opportunity to do that.

I have a bright vision of the future of Charlottesville. I will work to preserve and enhance the quality of our environment. I've promoted a balanced transportation system, with a connected network of sidewalks and bike lanes, more frequent and dependable bus service, improving the deteriorating infrastructure. As you know, our water and drainage lines are deteriorating. Promote quality education, especially for early childhood needs. Promote targeted workforce development, so people can have a decent job. Provide for safe and decent housing and neighborhoods.

I'm excited about the possibility of serving on city council. I will listen and be proactive in dealing with community needs. I will work with all the citizens to make sure Charlottesville a better city, a better community for all. Let me repeat Charlottesville a better community for all. I welcome your support in this manner.

Paul Beyer:

Good evening everyone. My name is Paul Beyer. I'm a small business owner in Charlottesville. I went to NYU with a degree in film, and writing, and history. And the perspective I would like to bring to council is one that is...is that a small business owner that listens to small businesses, and respects the critical role they play in our city. The business I'm engaged in is RL Beyer Custom Homes. It's a family business. I've been involved for six years, but we've been building houses here in the region for 40. WE have 20 employees; the average time they've been with us is 19 years. And we hire dozens of subcontractors. I think this is a perspective that recognizes the dignity of working class people, and the tremendous need to support our businesses, particularly in this climate. I would like to think that council can support its business by showing that there's a council that listens. I think it's a diverse perspective, and council needs diverse voices on it.

I'm also young. I'm actively engaged in the arts and community and cultural life of the city. And that is what keeps me here, and it what keeps, I'm sure, all of you here; the sense that we have something special in Charlottesville, the sense that we're unique. I think boiling it down, I'm for the vitality and vibrancy of our city, and promoting the economic vitality of it, and also the cultural expression we all enjoy.

Brevy Cannon:

Hi, my name is Brevy Cannon and I'm running for city council because I believe that our community's biggest challenge is the need for more middle class jobs and that we need to take some pragmatic measures to bring those to town. I think we do a lot here in Charlottesville to help people in poverty, but we need to do more to help people out of poverty. And the only route out of poverty is through a job. That requires... that means 21st century, middle class jobs, and clean industries like green energy, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and skilled trades, of course, coupled with appropriate job training.

These days businesses can locate anywhere in the world that they want to. We're competing against Richmond, Northern Virginia, Albemarle County, and the rest of the world. Where there's a lot of brand new office parks beckoning. Fortunately, we have one key advantage: our great quality of life. We just need to do a better job of leveraging our quality of life to attract and retain businesses here, and we can do that with property tax incentives. When businesses look at locating in Charlottesville, or expanding, or continuing in Charlottesville, they face challenges that are unique to Charlottesville, like renovating old buildings, and it means investment in our community if businesses are going to locate here. We need to offset that with property tax breaks. Good quality jobs are the real answer to our high cost of living and affordable housing. Thank you.

James Halfaday:

Good evening. My name is James Halfaday, and in the name of Harvey Milk, "I'm here to recruit you." I used to be considered morbidly obese at the weight of 377 lbs. Over the course of a year and a half, I lost 201 lbs. I was able to do this through hard work, determination, and perseverance. I bring the same characteristics to my campaign, and believe I would make an effective member of city council for the same reasons. I've lived in Charlottesville for five years. Since coming here I've grown to love the people and the sense of the community that we have here. Charlottesville is one of the best places to live in the country, and the people of our community are our strongest resource we have.

One of the highest priorities of any community should be the education of its members. I also believe in the importance of every member of our city having the same opportunities to advance themselves and make their lives happy, prosperous, and fulfilling. In this sense, my views are very similar to one of Charlottesville's more famous citizens, Benjamin Tonsler. He believed in the priority of education for all and made his

life goal to promote equality in education. Although it has been almost 100 years since he passed away, his values and goals are still relevant for our city today.

The next four years will be a very important time for our city; we have a number of important issues regarding the growth and development of our infrastructure. These include current topics the council faces. Such as the dam, Meadow Creek Parkway, the Western bypass, and the challenges of our growing traffic problem. None of these issues have easy answers. By working hard to consider all of the aspects of these problems I believe that a solution can be found which will be beneficial for our city for both short term and long term. I love my community...

Brian Wheeler: We're going to need to stop now. Thank you. The next opening statement will be from Ms. Galvin, you have 2 minutes. You may begin.

Kathy Galvin:

Thank you, my name is Kathy Galvin. I'm running for city council. Thank you, Brian. And thank you all for coming. I come from a blue collar city, Brockton, Massachusetts. My parents were children of immigrants, Ireland and Lithuania. My father was an automechanic with an 8th grade education. He became disabled due to illnesses he contracted in the Philippines as a paratrooper in World War II. My mother was an army nurse, and earned her Bachelor's degree on the G.I. Bill, even though she had to become the sole breadwinner for our family on a school nurse's salary, she still dedicated herself to education.

She secured the first head start grant for Brockton, and my brother and I spent our summers as teacher's aids. I saw factories close, neighborhoods wither, and sprawl eat away at my hometown all before I went to college. It's no wonder that I studied economics and geography, and pursued a Master's in architecture at UVa. I've been designing, studying, and building where children and families could flourish ever since.

In the 80's, I managed public housing. By 1989 I was a registered architect in Virginia. Since then, I've grown my own practice, raised two sons with my husband Michael. We sent our two boys to Johnson elementary school because it was excellent, even though we lived on the north side of town. I was Johnson's PTO president for three years. During the 90's, I served as chair of Albemarle County's 20 plus member Development Initiative Steering Committee, which, through consensus, created the county's growth management tool known as the neighborhood model. In 2007 I was elected to the city school board. These experiences gave me opportunities to forge consensus and work for the common good. My vision is greener, smarter, stronger Charlottesville, by design.

A city that expands economic opportunity especially for our most vulnerable while minimizing our region's driven footprint.

People should be able to live, work, and play in a place the respect's community character without compromising community prosperity. People need to see an accountable government that works hard and follows through. I have the skills knowledge and perspective that the council needs to be visionary collaborative and results-oriented. That's why I'm running. Please vote for me on August 20th, at the Democratic Primary. Thank you very much.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. We are under way here. Now we're going to go into the quick answer questions. Again, the candidates have been provided these topics but not the specific questions. You were provided the topics, as I said. Please let me know if you need me to repeat the question when it's your turn. Our goal is to have a short yes or no response. I will call your name...

(laughter)

I will call your name before you respond for the benefit of the audio podcast. The first question for everybody relates to the Meadow Creek Parkway...

Quick-Response Question: Do you support construction of the Meadow Creek Parkway in the city of Charlottesville?

Kathy Galvin: Yes.

James Halfaday: Yes.

Brevy Cannon: Yes. Once the legal challenges are dealt with.

Paul Beyer: Yes.

Satyendra Huja: Yes.

Dede Smith: No

Colette Blount: No.

Quick-Response Question: Do you support the Western Bypass route now in place if the state fully funds its constructions, as well as fully funding other local transportation priorities such as the Belmont Bridge replacement, Hillsdale drive extended, Berkmar Drive extended, the widening of Route 29, and the improvement of the Best Buy ramp on the U.S. 250 bypass?

Brevy Cannon: Yes. That's exactly why I would support it.

Paul Beyer: Yes.

Satyendra Huja: Maybe.

Dede Smith: No.

Colette Blount: No.

Kathy Galvin: No. Because it will not be necessary with those local improvements.

James Halfaday: Yes.

Quick-Response Question: As the primary approach for adding to our long term water supply, do you favor dredging and water conservation before construction of a new or taller dam at the ragged mountain reservoir?

Satyendra Huja: No.

Dede Smith: Yes.

Colette Blount: Yes. And we need to also address our population growth issues

regarding all three.

Kathy Galvin: No.

James Halfaday: 100% yes.

Brevy Cannon: Absolutely. Dredge first, dam if we need it.

Paul Beyer: No.

Brian Wheeler: Now we are going to enter the unscripted portion of the night, where these candidates have not really been prepared to answer exact questions that we've come up with and your questions. So I want to remind you that my children, Abby and Sam, are collecting questions in the aisles. If you have one or need a card just raise your hand, and they will come your way. McGregor McCance, from *The Daily Progress*, is reviewing those questions. He is going to provide me seven questions, one for each of the candidates. But the next part of our forum relates to the moderator questions, which we're going to draw at random. And this is going to be a little dynamic; you'll have to bear with us here. But there'll be seven questions; each of these candidates however is only answering 3 of them. And we're going to rotate through in groups of three.

Moderator Question 1: What is your transportation agenda for the city and how will you fund and implement it?

Colette Blount:

As I was saying at the tail end of the previous round, we need to examine our population models, that projections for the next 50 years are quite elevated. I appreciate the diversity of our environment here in Charlottesville, our access to allowing our pedestrians and other low-impact vehicles to get around safely, also mass transit, as far as buses. But I do have a concern that if we make our town extremely accessible that we are going to have to accommodate the increased amount of people who are projected to come here. And that means either going vertically in our construction or going out into other areas, and it forces Albemarle County to expand as well. What makes Charlottesville the place that it is, a woodland area is because of the woods. And we can agree to change our topography if we agree as a community, but I am against that.

Dede Smith:

Thank you. I think we need to focus on innovative ways to get people out of cars and into either public transit, bicycling, and pedestrian transit. To do that, we should be looking at models in other parts of the country. Particularly in the Northwest, has innovative ways of connecting places through multi-use trails and through other kinds of public transit. I think we should certainly be looking at the model of our free trolley, which is one of the most heavily used public transits, and one of the most integrated public transit. And look at other places that are high volume and high popularity and increase the frequency of transit to those places. We just need to constantly be looking for ways to get people out of their cars and into alternative modes of transportation.

Satyendra Huja:

There are three parts to my plan for transportation. First and foremost, having an interconnected network of bicycle ways and pedestrian ways. It needs to be interconnected and it needs to be going places. Second, a more frequent and more dependable transit system. If it is 15 minutes than I think people will ride, but no one wants to wait for an hour for a bus. Third, I would like to finish the Meadow Creek Parkway, that's been going on for 45 years.

I have another plan, and I hope you will enjoy this one. For vertical travel, I usually use a rope trick. For ground travel, I use elephants. And for long distance I use magic carpet.

Moderator Question 2: Much is made of the status of city/county relationships, and the importance of maintaining and strengthening this relationship. On a grading scale of A to F, how would grade this relationship? And how do you think it can be improved?

Paul Beyer:

I would give it a "C." I think there's a lot of room for improvement. I think there's a lot of areas where we do cooperate currently. My overall philosophy is...I grew up here. And I'm from this region. I've lived in Charlottesville for six years. I grew up in Albemarle County. Overall I see the opportunities more than I see the negatives. That's the overall perspective. That's a very broad question; it's difficult to get into it. But I think overall, it's the spirit that you're coming to conversation with. And it's also the recognition that you follow through with what you do, or what you say you're going to do. I think that sort of mentality is very important on both sides.

Brevy Cannon:

I'd give it a "B." I think that relations have been a little bit strained recently. But we're still one community. We rise and fall together. And I think the vast, vast majority of us know that. I think that said the city and the county sometimes have competing interests, and each side needs to come to the negotiating table fully representing their side, and do that in a way that's respectful of their constituents. And if they do that, I think we'll end up with a compromise that both sides can abide for a long time.

James Halfaday:

I would give the city-county relationship a "B." A strong "B." The individuals that are assigned to delegates to the commissions or along with the local city officials, I believe the Charlottesville local officials do work absolutely well with the county officials. I have noticed a majority of the time it has been the county that has been the person that has

the final say. Our elected city council members, they do an outstanding job representing the city council. So, how can we improve that? By offering diversity on the city council. I have a mixed diversity...asking the question "why" here in this community, and also holding people accountable for their actions. That is how I would improve our relations with the county, by asking questions why, and then also turning it over to the citizens here in the city, since it's ultimately the city residents who run the city as well.

Moderator Question 3: Do you think the city is doing a good job of measuring its performance on the implementation of its vision and council priorities? Would you favor any specific other approaches or methodology?

Kathy Galvin:

I do believe that the city has articulated a vision; it has put in place a few tools, but I have not seen those tools being implemented fully. Several years, I believe in 2006, there was a strategic planning process. It did outline key areas of the city that it wanted to focus on, however, when you look at the implementation of it, those cells, if you will, in that strategy were not filled.

For example, wanting to talk about a sustainable economy. It did talk about wanting to provide funding programs for youth employment, and yet there were no criteria, no metrics that indicated, well what was the problem they wanted to solve in the first place? Is it unemployment? Which neighborhood? High unemployment? Where? What were some of the other considerations that were needed in order to address chronic structural unemployment? Adult literacy issues? So secondarily, there was also a management efficiency study done in 2009. Again, there was several, several good recommendations not the least of which was to improve communications with the city residents. I have not seen those updated.

Colette Blount:

The city is on a very good start with its current strategic plan. I would encourage everybody in the community who has not, take a look at that. I think if we were able to accomplish, in a reasonable timeline, even 70% of what is on that thorough document that we would be in very good stead and a lot of our community issues would be addressed. My experience on the city school board with implementation of strategic plan, and the strategic plan development that we just finished, feels me to bring that expertise to this process. The only thing I would add to the city's strategic plan is to identify explicitly the key players and the broad community agencies that would be dedicated to working on those particular issues.

Dede Smith:

Yes. Thank you. Having spent an awful lot of time the last few years at city council meetings, I think they do a good job at reporting what is going on, but not necessarily of measuring it. I was actually involved six years ago with the first strategic plan when I was on the school board, where we set goals with measurable objectives so that we could actually monitor our success. And I think that is a model that would serve the city well. I also think the city has to also measure itself on a sort of a matrix, on multiple objectives, because so many of their decisions have repercussions in other areas. But there's a great opportunity with a comprehensive plan coming up, there will be revisiting of the comprehensive plan and I would hope that we could implement many of those kinds of strategies there.

Moderator Question 4: Are you planning to seek a new vote by the council on the previously approved 50 year water supply plan, and how would you change the plan if at all?

Satyendra Huja:

No I'm not planning to seek a new vote on this water plan because I think city council has done an excellent job. It's a plan which works. This plan meets our needs. It will be economical. It will be environmentally sensitive. So I don't see any need for another vote. As you know, this plan has been reviewed by many people and it is the best plan for our community. It protects the long-term interest of our community. It's an important resource for all of us. When you turn the faucet you need water, not hot air. So it's important that we have enough.

Paul Beyer:

No. I don't plant to change the vote. I think we need to move on to more important issues. I could leave it at that, but I think that more important issues that I think were brought up at the council meeting a few nights ago were applicable. How much time have we spent talking about this plan and not focusing on workforce housing, not focusing on economic vitality in the region, talking about our jobs, talking about a diverse middle class. What conversations have not occurred because we have continued talking about the water supply? For all the reasons Mr. Huja has just said...

[30 minute power outage]

Brian Wheeler:

Let me just say thank you for your patience It sounds like that was a wide spread outage and it's good news that it came back on quickly so somebody is looking out for us and we appreciate that. We are on the moderator question No. 4 and the last person,

or the second to last person to address that will be Mr. Beyer and I'll read the question again. Are you planning to seek a new vote by the Council on the previously approved 50 year water supply plan and how would you change the plan if at all?

Paul Beyer:

The only thing I wanted to finish was just to say Mr. Huja's analysis of the situation is correct and it's something I agree with and again it's about the conversations we need to have going forward it's about looking towards the future.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. The fourth question now goes to Mr. Cannon. Are you planning to seek a new vote by the Council on the previously approved 50 year water supply plan and how would you change the plan if at all?

Brevy Cannon:

Absolutely. I think that we are definitely on the wrong track with the earthen dam versus a concrete dam. I see a number of disadvantages to the earthen dam versus the concrete dam. But more importantly every dam that's ever been built when you build it you know you have to dredge it and we haven't been dredging our dam. We need to get that taken of, we need to get the RWSA to be doing what they should have been doing for the last 20 years before we give them a big pile of money to go build a new project.

Moderator Question 5: The question is what are the top responsibilities that you believe City Council should be actively and consistently engaged in?

James Halfaday:

That was a test. The top 3 responsibilities the the City Council is supposed to be accountable for is one accountability at all times, accountability for the residents of the City of Charlottesville, not the County of Albemarle, the City of Charlottesville residents is the top priority of the City Council. The second one is education here in our city. City Council should be working better with the School Board along with closing the graduation rate and making that a higher rate than what it is currently at this time. So our City Council should be working better with the School Board to ensure that all of our high school students will proceed forward. And also City Council needs to work better with saving money, not spending money, not spending money on all these studies here in this area. We need to be fiscally conservative here in the city of Charlottesville so our taxes don't go up. Those would be my top 3.

Kathy Galvin:

I think the City Council should be actively and consistently engaged in visioning, strategic planning, and in monitoring its own performance measures. The idea of a City Council being involved with day to day operations is going to be something that just really retards progress in the City and begins to confuse chain of command. The important thing for City Council to do is to step back, look at what the overall needs of the city are, engage the public in continuous and ongoing public process so that they are fully engaged, and then they set the goals for the community. Once that is done, it's going to be up to City Council to then make those prudent decisions as to how to first fund which project first. That is called strategic planning. That is what I don't think has consistently done in the last few years. So finally as I mentioned earlier the idea of monitoring our progress on these strategic, important goals like what are we doing about upgrading our infrastructure—

Colette Blount:

I would say that one of our top responsibilities will be in gathering community input, broader community input, on the issues that are affecting us all. Soliciting that actively will increase our trust between and among our various communities and also provide accountability measures for our City Council in the policies that it sets forth going forward. I also think City Council, as representative of the City and its citizens, should do what it can to keep our economics local. That will help us reduce our footprint of waste, if we keep our economy local. So looking at partnerships, healthy partnerships, between the Albemarle County, rich in farmland, lots of potential there, and also the City as well that we can build cooperation around that way and so in that regard helping the County not have issues of great sprawl—

Moderator Question 6: Are you satisfied with the performance of the city schools? How would you support continuous improvement as a member of City Council?

Dede Smith:

Well good, thank you. Well first and foremost, we must assure that every child has the opportunity to walk across that stage at Charlottesville High School as a senior in high school and graduate. That we need to be first and foremost in our concerns and I think the School Board would agree with that. Secondly, I spent 10 years as an advocate in the Jackson-Via when my children were there for low income children and I think we've made tremendous progress, and I was on the School Board for 6 years, and when I was first on the School Board we had a staggering failure rate for our African American children. We have seen a lot of progress in closing that gap but we have a long way to

go. In terms of the relationship between City Council and the School Board, as I said in my opening statements there is it is not just about what is in the classroom. I think the School Board really needs to be looking at stabilizing families through housing and safety and that will go a long way to helping our academic success with children.

Satyendra Huja:

I think we hired a very good superintendent in Ms. Atkins who has made a number of improvements. I think there still needs to be more improvements. For example the dropout rate in high school is not acceptable in my mind. That should be improved. We also need to focus on childhood, education for the younger children, 3 and 4 year old children. Because if they don't start well, they're not going to do well in the future, so I think that's what we can improve upon. Also every child needs to be challenged to do their best to their fullest potential. Not every child needs to get an A or a B, but they need to make sure they are trying their best. The mentoring done at the school system makes sure they are doing best. And I think those are the ideas which I mentioned to you the idea the dropout rate in high school is of concern to me.

Paul Beyer:

Well I think first off we need to acknowledge that the City Council is not setting school policy it's an elected School Board. But, what I think City Council can do is they can focus on jobs, and obviously that's what I'm running on; the sense that our kids need jobs when they get out of high school. For kids whose aspirations are not to go to college, I think we really need to focus on the vocational training, making sure that our workforce is adequately prepared. And that's something that Council can do. Again, I feel, I feel this one very strongly actually because I think aspirations and people's horizon's lines and people's ideas of what is possible is tremendously important and you cannot succeed if you don't have that, that sort of goal in mind. And that is why a robust job climate in Charlottesville is so important and it's meaningless to talk about anything else if the jobs are not there.

Moderator Question 7: What do you see as the best opportunity to develop career ladder jobs that city residents can pursue?

Brevy Cannon:

I believe we have a model project in town for that purpose which is the planned biotechnology park that's going to go in the old Coca-Cola building. Taking our old infrastructure, investing in it with 5 to 10 million dollars, making it a brand new campus where there's going to be room for the existing business to expand and room for new businesses to be incubated there and I think that an investment in the community like

that is exactly the type of investment that we need to give a tax break to, like our TIF, incremental tax break and reward businesses who are willing to invest in this community rather than just go pick up the keys at a brand new office park somewhere else.

James Halfaday:

That's a great question and I would strongly say you know we need to invest in our own. We need to invest in our own employees here in the city of Charlottesville to promote them first. For too often we are appointing people from outside the area. We need to grow our own here in this community first, whether it be, whether we hire the first black fire chief or police chief we need to grow our own, we need to promote from within the departments. So to bring jobs in this area we need to take care of our city residents first, our natural born residents of Charlottesville first here, thank you.

Kathy Galvin:

Yes thank you. I do agree with some of the comments about the bio tech industry, I think it's very important that we look at that closely because it has the possibility to be both horizontally and vertically integrated, meaning you can get tools built that you need to use in the lab, so that does provide a lot of opportunity. Secondarily I think we are missing opportunities by not developing and redeveloping our growth corridors. They have been lying fallow now for the last 30 years at least since I've been here. That will promote a lot of local industry, a lot of opportunities to employ local people to build, and also then to increase opportunities, particularly for the African-American community that to my knowledge does not have even an African-American business association. So again we've got some fundamental things that we need to capitalize on. Our own infrastructure is languishing and we have this growing industry called biotech that we must, absolutely must integrate with all of our economic planning as well as our neighborhood and development services planning. Finally I do think that UVA is an untapped resource—

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you.

Kathy Galvin:

OK I'll leave it at that.

Brian Wheeler:

Now we get to the audience questions and appreciate all of you who have stayed. And I'll get from Mr. McCance. Ok I have one question for each candidate, we're going to begin with Ms. Blount and work our way down. I may have trouble reading some of your handwriting here so you'll have to bear with me here. Ms. Blount there we go, ok are you ready? With almost a quarter of the city living at or below poverty level, and Section 8 closed, and a waiting list of over 700 on the public housing list, and project based voucher programs with 300 on the waiting list, how do you plan to address the need of real affordable housing? And you have one minute.

Colette Blount:

Well again I had spoken earlier about population growth in the city, that until we can fix the issues of addressing the housing needs of our own citizens instead of having them move to our neighboring counties, it's kind of difficult to work on those other development type issues. I would be in favor of there being for example something like cottage industry. An endeavor that starts in our city, keeping things local, has the added benefit as well of developing respect for one's product. Something like would also serve to reduce our waste, that if we utilize and support local endeavors, that can be a way of getting folks out of poverty or more so how to walk forward with goals—.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you.

Colette Blount:

.... and optimism, thank you.

Brian Wheeler:

The next question is for Dede Smith, the next audience question. Your last post as a public servant was as chair of the School Board during the short tenure of Scotty Griffin, the former Superintendent of Charlottesville City Schools. This cost the community, according to this questioner, about 290,000 to buy out her contract yet you have been publically silent about your role in that episode. Would you please explain to voters your view of your own leadership at that time and do you still believe Scotty Griffin was good for the school system? You have one minute Ms. Smith.

Dede Smith:

Ok. I served two terms on the Charlottesville School Board, that was my chairmanship, it was not my last year; and I'm proud of much of what we accomplished in that time. As I mentioned before, when I began in the year 2000 we had a staggering failure rate for our African-American children and much of our attention was to close that because the state and federal government were imposing significant sanctions on us. It is true that that year was very contentious and I truly am sorry that we couldn't have been more civil as a community and I wish both sides had been more agreeable, but I do not regret giving voice to everybody in this community, and we had a lot of it. That said, I finished up my tenure on the School Board with two things I'm proud of, the strategic plan and hiring of Rosa Atkins who has since been named Superintendent of the Year. Thank you.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. The third audience question goes to Mr. Huja. Why would you want to build the Meadow Creek Parkway through our central park when it is projected to increase traffic within the City of Charlottesville? Mr. Huja.

Satyendra Huja:

Meadow Creek Parkway is an important entrance point to our community. It will bring traffic to the downtown area, which we need. If you want a healthy economy in downtown, you'll need to be able to get there in a meaningful way. And just for your information, the Meadow Creek Parkway will not take no more than 5 acres of land out of 75 acres of park; and plus we'll be adding another 49 acres. And I think it will provide a very good entrance to downtown. Plus it will also reduce some traffic from Park Street to the residential neighborhood and I think both are important objectives.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. The next audience question will go to Mr. Beyer. Charlottesville often has an agenda of... wait excuse me, Charlottesville an end of the year surplus. If one emerges, what would you do with such a surplus? Would lowering tax rates be an option? Mr. Beyer.

Paul Beyer:

I'm interested in strategic investment in the city, particularly our public spaces, our green belts, our parks. I think we need to look at city assets as assets, and that improve the lives of everybody. Things that I find particularly interesting is the question why doesn't the Downtown Mall connect to the river in terms of a green belt? Why doesn't

the green belt that goes around our city, what does it take to truly implement that in the most meaningful ways. And that takes investment by the city, so that would actually be my first priority because I think, I think, the investments pay back. And if we can invest in our core infrastructure the dividends will pay back and our economic vitality will be multiples.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. The 5th audience question goes to Mr. Cannon. Do you support construction of the YMCA in McIntire Park? Yes or no and please explain. Mr. Cannon.

Brevy Cannon:

Well if it was coming before me today, I would certainly prefer for the YMCA to be located in a more, in the city, in a more urban location, with easy access from some of our less affluent neighborhoods, easy pedestrian and biking access for our young people and not giving up some of our public land in order to have the YMCA. That said, the plan seems to be pretty far along and building one

YMCA in the park doesn't preclude the YMCA from building another one in a more ideal location.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. The 6th audience question goes to Mr. Halfaday. How would you feel about serving on Council, while a sitting mayor, who has publically endorsed other candidates for the job, who is working on their campaigns; do you believe that this is ethical behavior? If so, why or why not? Mr. Halfaday.

James Halfaday:

That's a very, very good question. I personally, in my personal, past Council experience, I would have not endorsed a candidate running for any Council or elected position if I was on a, currently sitting on a governing board. I would not, and I believe that, I personally think that's a big mistake because that shows favoritism here in the community to the residents and I just don't think that is fair. You're supposed to be for people, for the residents, not selecting your candidates. Thank you.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. The last audience question goes to Ms. Galvin and it reads: you championed a school configuration plan that was designed to save our school system money. Estimated cost savings from the plan, according to this questioner, are 500,000 dollars a year but the plan will cost well over 40 million. How is that saving money and what does that tell us about the kinds of fiscal decisions that you will make as a City Councilor? Ms. Galvin.

Kathy Galvin:

I look at schools and investment in schools as part of our infrastructure and investing in that infrastructure is critically important for the future. Buford, like Walker, was already slated for major improvements; they were going to be in the millions of dollars. We had an opportunity to begin to rethink our pedagogy, to rethink our whole configuration, be more in conformance with the entire state of Virginia, and it gave us an opportunity to capitalize on what is a budding civic center. I'm calling it civic center self with the Aquatic Center and the Boys and Girls Club. Think about it, it's also an opportunity to perhaps even inspire some revitalization along Cherry Avenue because we will now have an incredible civic center, very much in keeping with what Mr. Beyer is saying. Think about it, a civic center self tied to the central market in downtown area tied to then a civic center north with YMCA, the high school, and K-Tech with a botanical garden. We have an incredible opportunity to have a wonderful, connected network of civic space—

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you.

Kathy Galvin:

I have no regrets about that decision.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. Alright, now we've reached the time in the evening where the candidates get to ask themselves question. And we're going to start with Ms. Galvin and work our way this direction. As a reminder no candidate can be asked more than two questions. Thus, some of you asking the questions may have to direct a question to someone other than the person you intended. Candidates will have one and a half minutes to respond to

these questions from their fellow candidates. So Ms. Galvin you get to go first and ask your question of any of the candidates.

Kathy Galvin:

Thank you, this is a question for Ms. Smith. In this morning's newspaper, you were quoted as saying that the stream flow requirements in our water supply plan should be rewritten. But those requirements were determined by scientists throughout Virginia examining the needs of aquatic wildlife and the state DEQ has to consider those environmental needs along with human needs when issuing or denying permits. Aren't you just claiming that the facts about environmental needs should be ignored just because those facts show that a dredging only water plan won't work?

Dede Smith:

I look forward to answering that. In fact the stream flow requirements for a entirely different plan, which would be dredging, would have to be rewritten. You cannot, in fact the letter quoted in that article from the Department of Environmental Equality said as much. One of the reasons they said that we couldn't use their numbers was because you cannot impose stream requirements for one plan on top of another plan. I was also quoted as saying I feel that the restoration, or the improved stream flows at the Mormons River, should be addressed separately from the water plan. They're a very large part of the water plan and I do not feel that it is necessary to tie them to the water plan but when they are, that means that city rate payers, urban rate payers, are basically paying for a river restoration project. I absolutely support restoring and improving stream flows in the Mormons River, just not under the scenario that they have it now.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. Alright Mr. Halfaday, you will now get an opportunity to ask a question of any of the candidates.

James Halfaday:

My question will be for Mr. Beyer. Mr. Beyer, I have sent you a couple emails regarding the Huntley Pocket Park that is over in the JPA area. I've been fielded numerous questions about that park, the questions that I have sent to you, you have not answered in any way shape or form and this has been for quite some time. Now the residents in

Frye Springs want to know about this park and my question to you is how come you have not responded to those questions that I have submitted to you.

Paul Beyer:

Well I think first I did email you a couple times [laughs] so and I actually requested the opportunity to meet with you when I submitted the plans. It's actually a great question because it's a great project. The idea that I've been thinking about a lot, in terms of just, I'm a developer and it's a hot button issue in Charlottesville to be a developer. But I'm also a young person; I think a lot about community, I think about green space, I think about what it means for our city to be livable, and what we all envision when we think of Charlottesville. So the pocket park idea in one of the developments was to take an acre of land that's unusable, that was just going to be open space that was not integrated into the surrounding neighborhood and to take it and create a community garden, to do a stream restoration project. It's kind of a out of the box, revolutionary idea for how development can occur in Charlottesville and it's something I'm very proud about. The plans right now are at NDS and it's something that I think is actually really exciting for our city is what would it look like if we had more pocket parks, more places where our communities could come together and have a community life we want.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. Mr. Cannon you now have an opportunity to ask a question of one of your fellow candidates.

Brevy Cannon:

Sure, I have a question for Ms. Smith. I wondered what you'd like to say for your concluding remarks.

Dede Smith:

Oh thank you, thank you. I am so excited about all of the really interesting projects and issues that are coming forward here in Charlottesville. The exciting ones are the city market as well as the ongoing green technology; there was just a wonderful presentation at City Council about all of the really innovative conservation technology projects that are going on in the city. I'm very excited about that and being a leader and playing on that to really improve our 21st century vision for Charlottesville. We have a lot of 20th century problems here in terms of our old pipes, our old aging infrastructure,

and I am excited about bringing 21st century ideas into this community to solve some of those problems. Thank you, Mr. Cannon.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. Mr. Beyer you now have an opportunity to ask a question and Ms. Smith has already had two so you cannot ask her.

Paul Beyer:

This is a question for Colette. Affordable housing that you mentioned is something that's near and dear to my heart. I've spent 6 years on many different commissions and committees both in the County and the City trying to deal with what we do with our workforce and how we stop commuters going out into the hinterlands and keeping them in our city and near our services. Now affordability though is very much market tied, its supply and demand. And a lot of what you said tonight has been very much preventing growth and preventing any more building of units so I think it's actually contrary to what some of your expressed goals as far as affordable housing goes as far as what will actually solve the problem.

Colette Blount:

Thank you for that question. I disagree as far as where the growth source lies. The growth source is not outside of our community, the growth source is inside of our community. And so that which is going to propel Charlottesville forward on an economic level is already here. And so we need to acknowledge the people that live here and make Charlottesville its home and seek them out as well for providing viable solutions. And one of those things is having a decent place to call home. Having a place where childhood dreams and things are created and having a community, the larger community outside of some of our small housing planned communities, that larger community that supports and integrates with everybody in the city. So I am all for growth and looking at our local sources, our people, our environment and getting creative, thinking outside of the box. And I am very thrilled with seeing a lot of garden projects that are coming up around town; the community gardens, getting people back in touch with nature, having our children have early exposure to that. I've seen that as a teacher, the projects I've done with my students and I think about the things that my students remember and one of those was a Swedish, ivory plant that I had my students root in my class back in 4th grade in 1995, actually 1994, and speaking with that student's mother and he still has that plant and he took it to college back and forth so that just warms my heart—

Brian Wheeler:

Mr. Huja you now have an opportunity to ask a question of one of your fellow candidates.

Satyendra Huja:

I'd like to ask Mr. Cannon. This is concerning the dredging only plan, which I could call the 'Dede Smith plan.' It will provide only 15 days of water, it will cost \$10 million dollars more than the Council adopted plan, even then it will not provide enough water for the environment or the population in the community, it's a temporary solution, and it will be ongoing and really expensive with \$1.6 million dollars to maintain that dredging. So how do you justify supporting such a plan or do you have another plan?

Brevy Cannon:

Thank you. Well I've never said that I only support dredging I just want us to get to the bottom of dredging before we start building a new dam. And I know that we've heard a lot of mistaken things about dredging from the start of this debate. The cost estimates started at 250 million dollars, then 150 million dollars, then 100 million dollars, then 50 million dollars, now we know it's—well now we're now we're down to 35 million dollars and I don't think we've gotten to the real cost of dredging yet. And as far as maintenance dredging, maintenance dredging is like repaving a road. The day you build a highway, you know you're going to have to repave it or you're just going to let it fall into repair and no longer be an asset. So maintenance dredging is a part of every dam we're going to need to do that, we're long overdue on doing it in the South Fork and that's where I think we need to start our efforts.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. Ms. Smith you now get an opportunity to ask anyone but yourself a question.

Dede Smith:

I would love to hear Colette Blount's closing remarks for her vision.

Colette Blount:

Thank you. In seeking this position of Council I consider it an honor actually to represent the people of this community. And part of how Charlottesville moves forward on its vision that it be a place for all of its citizens, a wonderful place for all of its citizens, is that we get greater input on just what that explicit nature of that vision is. That we have

a variety of opinions on that matter and so do we have agreement on what our vision of our natural environment is because when we do, then we're able to make sound decisions around that. If we agree has a community that we want horizontal, vertical growth then we plan our city around that, we be proactive and not make it be something after the fact. So I think being proactive with being concrete in what that vision is so we can move forward on a variety of issues. And I would say that that would be a wonderful way of addressing a lot of the city's issues and pushing us forward bravely, thank you.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. Now Ms. Blount you get to ask a question of one of your fellow candidates.

Ms. Blount:

Oh... do I get to pass right now? No? [laughs]

Brian Wheeler:

No, it's your turn. You're the last to go—

Ms. Blount:

Oh I thought so...

Brian Wheeler:

You cannot ask Ms. Smith.

Ms. Blount:

Ok, let's see.... Ok I would say..... Mr. Cannon, what has your experience at UVA shown you as far as ways in which the partnership between UVA and the City Council, the greater City of Charlottesville, and also Albemarle County can come to some kind of provisions or what do you see with that?

Brevy Cannon:

Thank you, that's a great question. I actually have worked for the last 6 years now in the University of Virginia's news office, kind of the nerve center of the University, giving me broad exposure to all that's going on at the University, which is hard to keep track of even when you work in the news office and I think that UVA has tremendous resources that the community is not fully utilizing and there's a lot of room to better use UVA as a resource to deal with city and county problems that we're facing. And I think that's one

of the great strengths that I would bring to the Council if I was elected is being right in the middle of UVA and knowing who to turn to to help with various things.

Brian Wheeler:

Thank you. Well that concludes the questions we have for these candidates tonight, let me just close with a few remarks. I think we must have gone through a time warp because we finished on schedule even though we lost a lot of time with the power outage. So I appreciate the candidates for being brief and—I'm sorry Ms. Galvin?

Kathy Galvin:

No one asked me a question.

Brian Wheeler:

Right.

Kathy Galvin:

And that was ok?

Brian Wheeler:

That's part of that part of the format that some people might not get asked a question, yes.

Kathy Galvin:

I must have been intimidating...

Brian Wheeler:

On behalf of *The Daily Progress* and Charlottesville Tomorrow thank you for coming out tonight for participating in this candidate forum. Again, one month, August 20th, at this building, will be the Democratic Primary from 9am to 7pm where 3 of these candidates will be nominated. Charlottesville Tomorrow and The Daily Progress will have another candidate forum and we'd like your feedback about how we can improve these. So if you like this format we'd like that feedback. If you think we can make changes we'll take that feedback under consideration as well. We will do that probably in September or October to get ready for the general election campaign. I also want to thank each of these candidates for putting themselves out there and running for office which is something I've done and I know what they're getting involved with so I appreciate them

being willing to serve the community and to answer these questions in front of you and I think we learned a lot tonight so let's give them a round of applause.

[Applause]

Brian Wheeler:

That's it. Thank you very much.