



## **2011 Charlottesville City Council Candidate Interview September 2011**

*Candidate: Andrew Williams (I)*

On November 8, 2011, voters in the City of Charlottesville go to the polls to elect their representatives to three seats on Charlottesville City Council. This recording is Brian Wheeler's September 27, 2011 interview with Andrew Williams (I). Other candidates in this race include: Scott Bandy (I), Brandon Collins (I), Bob Fenwick (I), Kathleen M. Galvin (D), Satyendra Huja (D), and Dede Smith (D).

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

[http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville\\_tomorrow\\_/2011/10/williams.html](http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville_tomorrow_/2011/10/williams.html)

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

## **INTERVIEW**

**Mr. Williams, thank you for participating in this interview with Charlottesville Tomorrow. The complete audio and written transcript for this interview will be available online.**

**Information from this interview will be used in the compilation of the non-partisan voter guide being co-produced by Charlottesville Tomorrow and The Daily Progress. 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 primarily related to land use, transportation and community design.**

**As you are aware, candidates been provided in advance only the general topics for these questions. All City Council candidates will be asked the same questions. We ask that you keep these questions confidential until all candidates have been interviewed.**

**Each candidate will be provided an opportunity to review the excerpts selected for the voter guide before its publication. Are you ready to start?**

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

I served on a strategic planning taskforce for the Virginia Community College system, and the primary focus was education and workforce development. It was statewide, and I was one of two students appointed by Chancellor Glenn DuBois, statewide, to serve at that capacity. I went to the general assembly and represented Piedmont Virginia Community College a number of different times. I also represented my employer to an extent, State Farm, at that capacity.

So I've always been an advocate for good initiatives or good ideas without being a lobbyist. I just want to represent, I don't want to be a politician. And also, it's my belief that just because you don't have a college degree, which I'm still working on, doesn't mean that you aren't educated. I know a lot of people that are very educated that are very able and willing to work and to work good.

What Charlottesville City Council needs at this point in time is a different perspective, and I think that have that. And I know how the system works, and while I am sincere and I am confident that my overall goals will serve the Charlottesville resident. I believe that partisan politics isn't necessary at the local level, and I believe that in this election, we can change that. While the federal government and the state government bicker back and forth, just like school board is elected – non-partisan – why can't City Council be elected non-partisan? I think that that would contribute to a little bit more purity that's needed in government in general, and it needs to start at the city level.

In my opinion, all of the, you know, the total structure of the government is important, but at the city level, it's much more personal, and people should be involved more so at the city level than the state and federal level, because it is an immediate impact. The people who you elect have an immediate impact on the local circumstances, because they are, you know, they are local residents. And that's, it's that idea, and me understanding that, even as a youth, qualifies me.

I'm committed to continual personal development which will enable me to serve my community better, and I have a sincere desire not to become Charlottesville's next politician, but the little guy who helped a large chunk of government, or put a large chunk of government back into the hands of the working class here in Charlottesville. I'm a worker, I'm a student, and I'm running for City Council. I serve the public, but I don't need to go out and highlighting it, or giving every little example of how I help people. That's what qualifies me. And that's more sincere.

**2. What is your transportation agenda for the city? Does it require more money? How will you fund AND implement it?**

Well, if we scrutinize our budget first off, and take monies away from maybe programs or initiatives that aren't working, which of course is somewhat controversial but it is what it is, if you look at it from a business standpoint, if a department wasn't producing as much as it should, in all reality, it would be either downsized or it would be contracted or what have you. I'm not saying that we need to do that for any department in particular, but we need to have that flexibility, or at least be willing and able to appropriate funds where the needs are.

Finding a good balance in government representation would also find a good balance in the structure of the government and then how we operate, and then of course that's going to trickle down to our departments. We need to be more efficient, we need to stop throwing money at the problem, we need to throw some intellect at some of these problems. But not solely book smarts, real world working-class experience, which Charlottesville could use a different perspective in my opinion.

Also, I think that it would serve the resident better, it would alleviate traffic stress in the long run if we did have a bigger public transit system. It's simple, but although it could be complicated to actually move forward with an initiative of that nature, while Paul Long is no longer in, he's a good friend of mine. If it was very important to him, I want to do everything that I can to make sure that that vision is manifested.

**3. How should the city, county and the University of Virginia work together to enhance our community's unique character and economic vitality?**

First off, we need to put our differences aside. I think that our region, but Charlottesville and Albemarle County, our small area needs to work together to be self-sustainable. I look down the future of our federal government and the state government and a lot of things, there's a lot of questions, a lot of concern, I think that we are capable and educated and smart enough to work together.

Maybe even bring back some manufacturing. You know, we need to figure out a way to bring back, or to bring new business, or and also figure out a way that people can start businesses and actually keep them for more than one or two years because it's so tough.

Being an independent, I have the benefit of looking at problems rationally, I can support raising taxes when necessary as I plan on looking into, depending on the circumstance upon a successful election, but I can also look into tax breaks, and my judgment isn't clouded by party lines. I think the city, county, and UVa could work together, and from a business standpoint, why would a customer stay in a company that isn't serving them well? Or why would a

shareholder in a corporation keep funding monies into a lost cause such as Enron or Lehman Brothers or other questionable companies.

I look at Charlottesville as essentially a company that wants to keep its customers. We want to keep our residents happy, we want to keep our residents here, we want to keep local monies here. So while they have the option to move out, I want Charlottesville to be such a place that people choose to stay in Charlottesville, and not get ran out because they can't afford it either. And it's that perspective that's going to help Charlottesville in the long run, in particular the underrepresented populace.

**4. What changes, if any, would you make to the city's Comprehensive Plan?**

First I would look into trimming the fat. It always goes back to trimming the budget, it always goes back to looking at operations, and ultimately making sure that everything is consistent with Charlottesville's vision and looking at it basically just itemizing the plan, and making sure that it's consistent with the vision. And if we need to revisit a few things on the comprehensive plan, then that's what we need to do. And Charlottesville along with our region needs to be self-sustainable, especially in hard economic times. I believe that we have the potential and the capacity to support ourselves and not be fully dependent on external circumstances. We're on the way to being a world-class city, but to have a comprehensive plan you need someone with a comprehensive approach. I think that's myself in this case.

**5. Last month the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce reported that Charlottesville lost 3,248 jobs during the years 2000 to 2010. What specifically should city council do to promote employment?**

We need to attract new employment, and encourage the support of existing businesses here. We need to move forward with vocational training and stop throwing money at the problem. I want Charlottesville to find a cure to this economic problem and not just something that people are able to just live with.

We need to find a cure for this economic issue and going back to an educated population, or an educated people, people will create jobs. I'm not undermining the potential of our Charlottesville residents as well. It's just that some appear to have less of an advantage or less of an opportunity. Even the mere idea that they have an opportunity sometimes escapes them.

I think that Charlottesville needs to invest a lot of time into the weak links in Charlottesville. That's the underrepresented communities. While we need to support public housing, we need to equally support vocational training, we need to improve the dropout rate by getting parents involved, and we need to practice what we preach and really try to move forward and try to help every citizen. Now to an extent, because it's families, and you can't take a student and say it is the teacher's responsibility or the school or they system's responsibility to raise that child, it starts at home. But we need to provide

homes with the opportunity to generate more income and I think that a lot of people would be a little happier if they had money in their pocket to buy groceries and to get gas. That's the standpoint that I have, that's my perspective.

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

First off, I don't like the idea that mayor is not elected at-large. I think that as far as checks and balances is concerned, Charlottesville's government has none. There's no separation between the legislative branch and the executive branch and I think that that that would improve a lot of the process as well.

Balancing the representation, also in discussion, there's been a lot of talk about a ward system and that was certainly my mind-set back in 2009 and something I'm still considering. The unfortunate truth is that if the council remains – I don't think that the Democratic Party would favor that. I think that that would be them admitting losing power or creating an environment that another party or Independents can maybe get the majority, and I think that that's where politics can maybe cloud judgment.

I'm in favor of a balanced Charlottesville. While they're trying to unite the Democratic Party, I'm trying to unite Charlottesville. I think that a ward system would be a good idea. And if not a ward system, maybe something that's similar, to where there's always representation in all the areas in Charlottesville. One may say, 'well, what if someone within a ward system, or what if in this particular ward system there's no one to get elected, or there's no one who wants to run?' Well that's fine, because we can also have at-large elections, and everything can be managed on a case-by-case basis. But all of the neighborhoods in Charlottesville should have some form of representation. When it's at-large, government can be as convoluted as it is here in Charlottesville.

**7. What would you improve with respect to the city's parks and recreational facilities?**

I would improve the number of visitors, I think. I would try to find initiatives that would encourage people outside of Charlottesville to visit our parks. Because if they come visit our parks and walk our trails, they're going to come purchase items in our stores and support our small business owners, maybe on the downtown mall. I think that we need to do what we can to preserve our parks because in the near future, while everyone has a concrete jungle Charlottesville can still have that green element, that homely earthy feel. I think that we need to do what we can to keep our parks alive, do what we can to make sure those parks are well-managed, but most importantly, bring in people from outside of Charlottesville, and encourage people in Charlottesville to use the parks and the trails.

I also believe that it promotes good health. It's fresh air. I think that that would help a lot of people's attitudes in Charlottesville. Because when people have to work 12-15 hours a day, they have every right to be upset at life and have a chip on their shoulder. But I think when people can come together as a community or a city and wind-down and share a park that we chose not to demolish, that we chose not to let another Walmart come in and take that land and build some other infrastructure or what have you, I think that that is definitely good. Not only do we need to manage our tangible resources, we need to do the best that we can to manage our intangible resources and that's directed with our human relations, and how people perceive our local government, and that perception is not good, because that perception is one-sided.

**8. 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?**

I am tired of talking about the water plan, I really am. Oh my God. The water plan was being talked about and discussed before I was born in 1986, so if I had the option as I said back in 2009, I would support dredging first. I don't think that we need to throw a lot of money at the problem. I think in some form there's a lot of special interest involved with actually building the new dam, perhaps Nestle Corporation has something to do with that, but whatever the case, I would support a reasonable initiative to dredge, because I believe that it will be consistent with the idea of long-term sustainability due to the fact that we only need so much water, and I don't understand why we need so much extra water, and I would question everyone who supports the water plan for what is their rationale for supporting the plan when we really don't need that volume.

**9. Would you support switching from at-large seats to ward-based representation for elections to Charlottesville City Council? Why or why not?**

Yes, but there are steps that need to be taken in order to do that. I wouldn't say that it would be an overnight thing. What we can do is maybe bring a few more councilors and keep the elections at-large, and then slowly but surely progress to a ward system. It's going to take a lot of time as far as the Registrar's Office is concerned, it's going to take a lot of time as far as the City is concerned, a lot of time as far as making sure that it's fair, making sure that it makes sense, making sure that the system works, making sure that there's a lot of risk-management tools in place, but I do think that it's possible, and why? Because we need to balance the representation here in Charlottesville.

But the first thing that we need to do prior to any of that is put some Independents on Council, and put some resident-focused people on Council. I think that we'll have a more balanced Charlottesville, with a ward system, but we can start by electing Andrew D. Williams.

**10. If the federal lawsuit opposing the construction of the grade-separated interchange for the Meadow Creek Parkway is unsuccessful, will you support completion of the parkway?**

The Parkway is something else I'm also tired of talking about. No. If given the option, I would look at everything independently. I will support moving forward, however, if I know that the reality is my one vote, out of five, is not going to change the Parkway. It's already on the ground, it's going to happen. I mean, if given the vote, for consistency, no, I wouldn't support the parkway, but in all reality, I know that the Parkway is probably something that's going to come.

With the lawsuit, everything has its contingencies, and I think that time would certainly need to reveal a number of different things. I've always said, however, if given the option, I didn't want to support the Parkway, because I believe there's different things we can do like supporting the public transit system a little bit more, we have more bike lanes, but people can't use that in the winter. It is what it is. I'm for moving forward, and while I want to see the park stay, the reality is, the Parkway is coming.

**11. Should city council support moving the Rivanna Sewer Pump Station from its current location in Woolen Mills even if it will cost city and county ratepayers an additional \$15 million to \$18 million to do so?**

That's something I'd certainly like to look into. It does appear somewhat reasonable given the nature and the magnitude of the project. We need to reduce the level of raw sewage reaching local rivers. We need to make sure that we have safe drinking water, we need to make sure that all of our systems work, but our system, our infrastructure, would crumble if we don't maintain it, and sometimes it does take an investment, sometimes it does take a large check being written. But what we need to do is look at the way that we're spending monies in general and making sure that we put monies where they are needed, such as the sewer infrastructure and not building a new dam, that's one example of how we make mistakes when it comes to appropriations and as far as a special interest concern, I don't see any potential for special interest oriented with the sewer infrastructure. I think it's a lot less risky than building a new dam. But we need to reduce the amount of wet water inflow as well. So that's certainly something that I would be more apt to supporting, but of course, everything is on a case-by-case basis, so I would have to address that circumstance at the time upon a successful election.

**Andrew Williams, thank you for participating in this interview with Charlottesville Tomorrow.**