



2007 Albemarle County Board of Supervisors Candidate Interview August 2007

Candidate: Marcia Joseph (D)

On November 6, 2007, voters in the Rivanna Magisterial District go to the polls to elect their representative on the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. This recording is Sean Tubbs' August 31, 2007 interview with Marcia Joseph, Democratic candidate campaigning for the seat. Ms. Joseph's opponent is Republican Ken Boyd.

The audio of this interview is available online on the Charlottesville Tomorrow Weblog

http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville_tomorrow_/2007/09/joseph.html

Complete election coverage is available on the Charlottesville Tomorrow website

<http://action.cvilletomorrow.org/cvilleaction/elections.html>

INTERVIEW

Ms. Joseph, thank you for participating in this interview with Charlottesville Tomorrow. The complete audio and written transcript for this interview will be available on the Internet. Information from this interview will be used in the compilation of Charlottesville Tomorrow's non-partisan voter guide. Charlottesville Tomorrow does not endorse any candidates and our goal is to provide information to the public so they can make an informed vote on issues related to land use, transportation and community design.

As you are aware, some of the questions you will be asked have been provided in advance, others have not. All Supervisor candidates will be asked the same questions.

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

I have been doing public service for Albemarle County for at least 12 years, maybe more. My first stint was on the Ag Forest District Committee. I've been on the ACE Committee which is the Acquisition for Conservation Easements. I've been on the Architectural Review Board and served as

Chair and I am the current Chair of the Albemarle County Planning Commission.

- 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?**

I do support the plan and I do for a lot of reasons. The first one is that it's a way that we can still control our water supply, our drinking water supply and it's the best way that we can because all of the drainage that goes into our water supply we in Albemarle County control. That's no. 1.

No. 2 is the— I want to make sure that the people who are here now— I mean, this 50-year supply is great, but I want to make sure that people here now are not dealing with drought conditions or conditions where they don't have water because I think that that's the fear now is that we've got folks here and yet we keep planning for the future but I want to make sure that we've got enough for everybody that needs it right now.

And the third one is that if you recall, it was about a year ago or maybe even two years ago that the concept was that maybe we would pull water from the James and that was very disturbing to me for a lot of reasons. One is that the environmental degradation of just coming up that far from the James by putting a pipe in and the other was the fact that there are many localities that are upstream from us that we don't know what discharges into the James and when the water is low like it is now, it would be concentrated and I think it would be difficult and expensive to clean that and I guess everybody knows the solution to pollution is dilution and when it's down that low, it's pretty concentrated, so, yes, I do endorse that.

- 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?**

Well, I have heard, not officially, but I've heard that it's been buzzing around and I think that we all know that there was a press conference the other day talking about that the rates may double and the rates may go up and I think that we're being prepared for the fact that rates will be going up. I think that we've been going along for an awfully long time now on this particular water and sewer system that we really haven't done a very good job of actually knowing what we have and we're in the process now. We have a couple of

people who have just joined the Rivanna and Albemarle Service Authority and what they're looking at now is what do we have. They're hiring consultants to find out what the flow is, what the conditions of some of these pipes are, and we know— We know now that some of them are not in good condition, so I think that rates will go up.

We can depend somewhat on development fees. There're a couple of developers who have agreed to help out in some localities. I know the Hollymead one is nearing capacity and we know that the Biscuit Run is getting up there, too, so we do know that there are some developers that are offering up, but they are not paying for everything so I think that the rate payers will have to pay plus the fact that we know that there have been federal regulations that have changed how we clean the water. That has to be upgraded, too, and someone has to pay.

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

I was on the Planning Commission when that particular part of the Comprehensive Plan was approved and sat through many meetings with a lot of public input on that, so I do support the phasing concept. Why do I support it? Because I think it's a way that allows people to maintain their development rights but just to slow down the development in the rural areas. The whole concept behind development rights and those small two-acre lots was to allow people to keep their family farm, to allow them to, if times were not so good, if there was drought going on or some sort of weather condition or some sort of disease going through that made them lose money during that time, we didn't want them to lose the family farm, so the idea was to be able to take off a small portion of that farm and make some money and keep the farm going, so that's why.

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

I think that one strategy that we can use— I definitely think we need to keep land use taxation but I think it has to be an honest land use taxation. I think that there has to be some sort of evidence that actual agriculture or forestry is going on in that area or you are under conservation easement or you're in an ag forest district, that you're making a commitment to the County also that you're not going to subdivide, you're not going to develop this property because we do— I mean, I think we all understand that it's a wonderful thing that people are keeping their land intact for the clean air, for the clean water,

and we're giving them back something in return by giving them land use taxation and we also know that agriculture is a difficult occupation these days and doesn't make a whole lot of money, so I think that those sorts of things— I think that's one strategy to protect them and I guess that would help in the subdivision process.

I also think that it wouldn't be such a bad thing to make sure that we have a little bit more money for the ACE Program so that people— because from what I understand is that we have an awful lot of applicants and I'd love to be able to get that land under easement.

And the other question you asked me about was what greatest concerns about new development and I think that's water. It's because we don't know what's going on with the water in our community. It doesn't act like normal aquifers do with sand and it sucks it out. It's in fissures and what I've heard from at least one person I know and several others, and actually, as I was coming over here today, I looked over at one of the farms and I saw the well driller out there today and I know one person that lives out in the Ivy area and has lived there a long time and he has sunk four wells, each deeper and deeper because development was going on around him and so I think that's a huge concern of mine.

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

I think that we haven't filled up our growth areas as yet. I think there are still available land out there, not only green land that hasn't been used, but land that could be redeveloped. I don't think we need to expand them at this point. TDRs are a very interesting concept. Before I would ever commit to anything like that, I'd like to see what other localities are doing, what have they done, what have they been successful in doing. I know Montgomery County in Maryland has done it for several years and I'd really like to see if that's been— If they feel that that's been successful, but the receiving area of these transferred development rights is extremely critical because you realize that there's no rezoning going on, that that increased density just goes on in there so we'd have to make very very sure that all of this infrastructure that we've been talking about is adequate and could support that increased density.

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

Oh, gosh. That's sort of in the eye of the beholder, I think, but I think that all the polls that people have done have really talked about the fact that they like looking at the rural areas, they like walking through nature paths, they like the fact that we have this sort of conglomeration of city/county/rural/university. I

think that that quality growth is something that takes into account all of those entities and makes sure that nothing is sacrificed for anything else. I think that one of the things that we need to make sure that when we approve new development is that it improves. It improves the community and at least doesn't do any degradation, so quality means making sure that we have schools that are adequate and that with development I guess what I'm equating this with is proffering so when development occurs and rezonings occur, is that we make sure that we have all of those issues that don't cause any harm for the people already here, but maybe actually possibly improve their lives. I don't know if I answered that, but there it is.

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

I think that the transportation priorities on Route 29— I think we always focus on automobile/vehicular and one of the things that I see coming out of the Places29 are these pathways that are adjacent to/parallel to Route 29 that can accommodate bicycles and walkers and I think those are the kinds of things we need to look at. We need to look at transit. We need to look at transportation a little bit differently, so I do see a huge benefit. There are roads that they have that are parallel to 29 and they're pretty much on the western side and I think that that can be a benefit. I mean we all— I don't know if we all do this, but I do this, and sometimes when you want to not be on Route 29 as it is now, you'll go through K-Mart to go to different places or sometimes at Berkmar. Berkmar Extended is one of those roads that if you want to avoid some of 29, you can go the so-called back way to get to certain places and those are the kinds of things we need to look at.

Now, as far funding these initiatives—that's a really— That's an interesting concept because we never have done anything other than put aside pennies, you know, put aside money funding for the Meadowcreek Parkway. We've gotten funding in the past from VDOT. That's drying up. I think at this point the community has to decide what kinds of things would benefit the entire community so it's almost as if you do a referendum on a referendum. I mean, is this the way we want to go? Is this what this community thinks is important but I don't think it's up to any one individual or even the six that sit on there to make a decision that's as huge as that and that would be changing the way we've done business, so I think that there are means but right now, it's certainly not the state government and it's certainly we're not getting the funding from each and every development to carry out some of these enormous projects.

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

I think that this is extremely important. I mean, this is where we could come—The visions of the community could be one that's close to Boulder, Colorado, that we can have people walking and biking and taking transit. I have two sons—one who wants to move to Boston—he's got a job interview, I hope that works out, and then the other that lives in Richmond, Virginia and the one in Richmond, his wife when she was working downtown would ride transit and loved it. She could read. It was just a normal thing. The one in Boston is looking forward to that because he thinks he can ride transit instead of going through traffic every day and I don't know why we can't be that kind of community. How we get there—I think it's going to take a lot of urging and it's going to take facilities that people feel safe, facilities that are efficient, facilities that are on time. It's going to take bike paths that people do feel comfortable. It's all of that and making things safe and the more we get people on the roads on bikes and on these and how we do that I think is that safety issue of making people feel safe.

Follow up: what about working specifically with the City and the University to jointly operate a regional transit system?

Well, I think that's extremely important. I think everything we do here is connected. Just sort of an aside is that I am on the Planning Commission and we have set up several meetings, joint meetings, with the City Commission and the County Commission so that we're talking about all kinds of issues. We're not telling each other what to do and we're not reviewing specific projects, but we're getting educated on what does their comp plan look, what does our comp plan look like, what is their transportation, what are they doing in transportation, what are we doing in transportation, and I think this sort of thing is the kind of thing that will lead us into working with them and I know that we are working currently with them in transit and I think that this just sort of solidifies the fact that we all kind of need each other to be the kind of great community that we are.

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

Okay. The first part is how do we ensure that the infrastructure is in place. That's been a really big question/problem/concern for a long time now and one of the things that you see going on in the two master plans that we've just

been working on or have done is the Pantops and the Places29, is there's a section in there that talks about the priorities—what needs to be done. It talks about timing and what makes sense to have whatever piece of property zoned at any given time and I think that what you see happening is an awareness that we don't sometimes have that. It is not there. How does it happen and that's when you see the need for proffers come in and if you were at the last Planning Commission meeting at Albemarle, we talked about in Places29 how extremely important that was to be throughout the document because that document is so long-term, we don't want to mislead people and think that we're ready right now for all of those reds and blues and purples on that map because we're not, and so that's where the section on priorities come in and talks about what exactly needs to happen at what given time, so that's part of what we can do is put that stuff in the Comprehensive Plan.

Do the new cash proffer expectations adequately address the community's needs? I don't think it's going to address all of the needs. I think it's a really good step in the right direction. I just got an email from someone this morning that said, hey, what we're doing here is good, but look at what they're doing in Prince William County is that it's up to \$30,000 now a lot, so we're not as expensive as other localities and other localities may have more expenses than we do. I don't know. It's still— It's another one of those things, but we're not alone in doing this and in trying to solve the problems. Again, for folks who are here, because they're the ones that are kind of bearing the brunt of the burden of the development.

And then what else? A bond referendum? And I think we talked about that a little bit before, but it's one of those things that we really need to look at that and prioritize and make sure that we get as much public input as we possibly can to see whether or not people actually want to go that route. We do have a AAA bond rating here. The interest rates are low right now. It may be the time but it's not the time if the people say it's not the time.

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

I think part of the change that I'd like to see in the budget process is one of the things that I'd like to do as a Supervisor is have town hall meetings. I think it's really important to get people on board and find out what their priorities are, what they're thinking about, what concerns they have. Now, I heard an awful lot of stories about people— Older people who've been around forever who, you know, fear losing their homes. You shouldn't get to

be 70 or 80 years and worried about losing your home because you can't pay the taxes on it, so there's that aspect of it.

I think that what I'd like to— Again, I'd like to hear from people what their needs are. Then I'd talk to school principals. I think it's important to be connected with the schools. The biggest portion of the budget is going to the schools. I'm real excited that Ron Price is running for School Board in the Rivanna District. He is running unopposed so I can go ahead and say that, but he's very very concerned about the kids and I think that when elected I would form a relationship with Ron. I mean, I've already talked to him at least once. We sat down for a couple of hours and had a nice conversation and I think it's really important to know what the School Board is thinking, know what's going on in the schools. That part I think is extremely important so that part of the budget process I think is something that is very important to me.

Allocation of tax dollars—that's always something that people say is where's the money going. And that's something that I think is extremely important—where is the money going and I think that that's another aspect that sitting down with staff and making sure it's on a regular basis and just actually cranking through and finding out who's doing what, why is it going there and where are all these funds going and I guess that in conjunction with working with the School Board, you find out what's going on and whether it is appropriate where they're allocated.

Funding of new strategic initiatives—that may go back to your referendum question again. I think it probably does. I don't know [where] funding of strategic initiatives may be coming from we may find out what happens with this proffer money. I mean, there is that kind of money coming in. I've always— I mean, people have talked about gasoline taxes. They have talked about some sort of tax on very expensive homes so that if you have sort of an extra-added little tax if you're buying something that's over a million dollars or over \$750,000 or something, to help provide for that. That isn't very popular in some areas and it's popular in others, but the point is that I think there are people out there who do have some ideas that might work. Okay.

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

I think that one of the things that— There are two things that I'd like to do. One is to get a real assessment of our infrastructure needs and that's going to come from other agencies. That's going to come from the Service Authority, etc., so that we really need to take a good hard look at and the other is slowing down development in the rural areas. We've had constantly since 1992, 250, 300, 350 houses built in the rural areas since '92. I mean, every year it's 250, 300, whatever, and we really haven't been able to effectively at least slow that down a little bit. I really am at the point that we can make

agriculture work. I think we see it in the CSAs going on and other stuff that's a little bit different in agriculture, so anyways, we need that land intact.

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

Well, the first time Biscuit Run came through— Well, not the first time— When we actually had the public hearing and voted on it the first time, the Planning Commission voted to deny it unanimously. They worked very hard, the developers did, and talked to people, talked to the residents, talked to Planning Commission members, talked to staff, to try to find out what it was that was going on and what it was that could make this a quality development, something that maybe gave back to the community, and the quality growth in Biscuit Run is making a connector road, providing a school site, prepared school site that has infrastructure, donating a 400-acre park. It's protecting all those environmentally sensitive areas around Biscuit Run. It is creating walking paths, it's connections in our green infrastructure to other parts of the community. It's off-site improvements. It's transit-related stuff that they have given so I think that they have listened.

It's phasing, whoo, phasing is hugely important. That— I mean, we don't really want to see something that happened at Hollymead. That was not a good thing, so I think that those sorts of things— The only thing missing that I understand is not legal is what I would love to have seen them commit to is hiring at least for a portion of this local people because I think some of the things that people worry about are someone like Toll Brothers or some big company coming in and just, boom, all of a sudden there's something and when we have the local folks come in, we can have a sustainable economy as that money keeps going around in the community itself, so that's what I'd like to see, but, yes, it could be.

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

I think that the state is probably— Well, as we're seeing right now with just the communication that's come out from the governor's office is that everybody needs to cut back. Everybody needs to cut back so that doesn't mean we're going to get any more money and then the kind of interesting legislation that they passed on traffic infractions I don't think is very— Is going to stay around much longer either, so we're not going to get money from the state. I guess that's my point. So it is not adequately funded. I don't know where we're going to squeeze that money from the state. I just don't

know that it's going to happen. However, the state has talked about gasoline taxes. The state has talked about things like that and that may be a possibility, I don't know. That'd be something that Creigh Deeds and Dave Toscano could probably better address of whether or not that's a possibility.

What I was trying to find out recently is this: there's a couple of roads that have been built, to my knowledge, here, that really have been helpful and one that connects Avon to 5th Street and that goes by Monticello High School, etc. The County built that and I don't have the background yet on where the funds came from and they built Berkmar Extended, so, I mean, those kinds of things I think need to happen and how we get the funding. I'd like to look back and see where that money came from and this, again, may be that we look to the people and say what do you guys want to do. I mean, is this something that's extremely important to everybody? Is this where we want to spend our money? Is this where we look to all of this proffer money that comes in and we're going to just to push it all in transportation projects, I mean, so that's part of it and then that terrible "R" word that no one wants to hear is that is it a referendum, is it something that comes before but, again, that's something that only the people can make that decision.

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

As I was talking before, I really— I plan to do the town hall meetings. I think that's really important to get people involved in things. One of the things that the Planning Commission does is all of our work sessions we take in public comments so that the public feels as if they've gotten input prior to any final decisions being made in the public hearing process, so I think that that sort of thing really helps, that people— Now, there is the A-mail is fabulous. It gets out to everybody. Everybody knows what's going on. The A-mail is on the website with the County— By the way, if you have email, you get signed up for A-mail and you get— You know what's going on, so that's a fabulous thing, too, but I really— I think that— I want to go out there because I'm hearing a lot now which is really interesting and people have great ideas.

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

The lessons that we learned from the Crozet Master Plan are be mindful of build-out numbers. I think everybody was just kind of surprised to find out that the build-out numbers were double what we all thought they were and I think it's also be mindful of your existing infrastructure. I think that's extremely important and I think that's what we're finding that we've done in Pantops and Places29 is that we've learned those lessons and we want to

make sure that everybody is aware of what the build-out is, what our expectations are and what are our infrastructure needs so I think that we have learned from that and in those challenges. I guess what we're doing is the challenges are, honestly, is to read your Comp Plan and make sure that you follow it. That's a huge challenge, so I think that's something that I will do because I think that the community puts a lot of stock in that. They spent a lot of time working on it.

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

I think it's listening to the public and I think it's putting the needs of the community, the community in general, before everybody and just making sure that whatever happens is good for the entire community and also, I just want to add in also, I think the other thing is I think it's extremely important for all of the decisions made by the Board to be out and open in the public and in a public setting. Okay?

That's great. Thank you very much for participating.