



2007 Albemarle County Board of Supervisors Candidate Interview September 2007

Candidate: Kevin Fletcher (I)

On November 6, 2007, voters in the Scottsville Magisterial District go to the polls to elect their representative on the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. This recording is Sean Tubbs' September 4, 2007 interview with Kevin Fletcher, Independent candidate campaigning for the seat. Mr. Fletcher has two opponents: Independent Denny King and Democrat Lindsay Dorrier.

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

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

INTERVIEW

Mr. Fletcher, 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.**

Well, as far as past political experiences, I've only been involved in the Forestry Committee with the County. As far as qualifications, I live in the County. I live in the rural area. I work in the rural area and also in the growth area. I'm quite a bit involved with the public and I think I have a good

understand and a feeling of what the public wants from their Supervisor. That's it.

- 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?**

Yes, I do support this plan. I think it was the most effective plan that was proposed. Also, it provides us I guess with the cleanest water option and that because there'll be little silt or anything, that type of run-off that would go particularly into the Ragged Mountain Reservoir due to development which is the main reason why we're in the situation as far as the South Fork Rivanna, I think that many of the— Much of the silt from the development in the western side of the County has filled up the reservoir and that is why we're in this situation so I think that it is probably our best option and it also is the first option if we do have to later on the future, you know, go to a second option of either dredging or putting a bladder on the South Fork Reservoir to try to raise its level.

- 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?**

Right now, I think the only plan that the County has is to raise water rates which they did in May and, you know, I feel that as time passes, that it will continue to raise water rates to create the funding for the new dam and for, I guess, the new Moore's Creek facility and any other sewage infrastructure that needs to be added, as far as the new trunk line that'll have to go out for Biscuit Run, and things of that nature and I— Let's see. I do not— I think that that burden should not fall completely on the people in the growth areas. Just because they do live in the growth area doesn't necessarily meant that it's their responsibility to pay for all growth.

- 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?**

Yes, I would support a phasing program. It does not limit the number of development rights a person has. It only just slows down the timeframe of

which they can use those development rights and there's also a provision is added in that a family's division rights can be released. You can get the family division rights earlier and I think there has to be a lot more education to the people in the rural areas as far as that it is not quite as constraining as they might to think it is. I think a timeframe really never has been set. I think 10 years has been bounced around and I think that might be a little excessive. I would be more in favor of something like a five-year between each development right could be released. I think that would be enough [of] a prohibitive.

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 one of the things we need to do is work harder to support local agriculture. I think that if we can— People can not necessarily— it's awfully hard to really to make a living in farming in Albemarle County because of the cost of living, but certainly you can supplement your life through agriculture and I think that the— One of the things that is in dire need for this area is a slaughter facility which, of course, I don't think that would happen in Albemarle County, but I think Buckingham County is certainly willing to take that on and I think that Albemarle County should take the lead in trying to get everyone to work together as far surrounding counties to get that done. I think that would be a great service to the people who raise, you know, cattle, chickens, hogs, anything of that nature.

I would also support to continued funding of the ACE Program. I am a fan of the land use tax although I think we need to police that better. I think that the County loses quite a bit of I guess tax revenue from people who get the tax break but are not exactly farming their land and I think one thing also is I think we need to educate people a little better on about easements and how they work and I think there's a misunderstanding and a lot of times when I speak with people about easements, there was a misunderstanding about how prohibitive they are. Certainly I understand that they can be prohibitive in many ways. I've managed a farm that was under easement but I think it is not as limiting as people believe it to be.

Follow up: What are your greatest concerns about new developments in the rural countryside?

You know, one of my greatest concerns I guess is that we are— We're not managing the growth area as well as we should. I think that we are using up all of that area and I think that once that is gone, then, you know, people will begin to look more out into the rural areas for development and that's why I think that we need to do a better job of managing our growth area to get more bang for our dollar, I guess.

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 am not in favor of expanding our growth area I think just because we have squandered I think a lot of our opportunities in the growth area, but I think that the proposed plan benefits most everyone except I guess the small landowner in Albemarle County, the people who are developers or land speculators, you know, they get what they want. They get more area to develop. The large land owners, they can then also cash in their development rights and they can make money, but the proposed plan would, as I believe as Mr. Slutzky has proposed, puts a great deal of burden of this plan on the small landowners and I'm not in favor of that in any way. And I also I don't think it's even allowed currently by the state really to do that. I don't think there's been any new legislation to allow the transferring of development rights and, let's see, there was another part of that question I think. No, I think that's it.

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

You know, I think the neighborhood model is a very good plan. We have yet to really ever, you know, institute that although it has been in existence for I guess about eight years and we continue to rezone the neighborhood model but we have yet to really create the actual neighborhood model in which people can live and work in the same vicinity. We don't have any type of office complexes or any type of real business other than a commercial business located within the neighborhood model in order to try to keep the traffic down so I think if we can try to create what is actually— what the neighborhood model is defined to be, I think that is good growth.

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 we need to try to figure out a way to take the— I guess the University traffic and the Downtown traffic off of [Route] 29, if that is through the side streets. I guess the only true funding, big funding for that is that you'd have to create possibly another bridge. Whether that is something that adjoins the Meadowcreek Parkway or a bridge that would probably come through where I guess where Sam's is right now to try to take traffic in that direction, but I think that is— I think a loop around the City I think would be pretty much impractical and I think it would meet with quite a bit of opposition and it would take many many many years to get that done and it's something that we need to try to take care as soon as possible.

As far as funding, I think that we need to go back to our budget and I think that we can certainly try to find extra money in our budget. If taxes need to be raised, then that's what, you know, needs to be done or also we can try lobby for more money from the state to get this taken care of, but it is a necessity.

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'm certainly in favor of the City and the University and the County all working together. I think, you know, teamwork certainly makes the job easy when you're trying to get something done. As far as an initiative to try to make that happen, I think there's a great bit— a little bit of difficulty as far as public transportation in the sense that a lot of our populous and our growth is located in the Crozet area and on [Route] 29 North and those are large areas that are kind of taken out of the loop of transit and I think that we have to focus more on I guess the area closer into the City and I think if we can try to find some funding— I think if there was free bus riding, free bus travel, I think that would probably be the quickest way to get people to use the transit system.

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?

I guess as far as trying to ensure that the community infrastructure is in place, I think that, you know, it's just through planning. We try to make sure that we have the I guess the necessary funding to get these things done and put into place, either through cash proffers which I do not believe our current proposed cash proffer of \$17,500 is enough to adequately fund our roads or sewage, schools and the libraries, anything that is necessarily needed. I think that's that certainly needs to be more and, yes, I would support a bond referendum to pay for capital budget priorities. I think we have a very high credit rating as far as— I think that would be probably be a good idea or something certainly worth looking at.

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 as far— Over the past eight years, our budget has grown by \$140 million which also means our revenue has increased by that much and I think that we need to possibly go back and see where that \$140 million has been spent and see if we are getting what we're paying for out of that and I think by going through that process, we can free up money that can be used in the County to fund many of the projects that we need as far extra police force and security, teachers, fires, and any of the other— A lot of our fire stations all are volunteer. I think that's the main thing. I think we need to actually almost do a like an audit of where the money is being spent.

Follow up: Is there anything that you would change to the process itself?

You know, I think I've sat in on the process, you know, some and I think that the whole idea that we set a budget and then we start to, you know, whittle away from that what we're going to take away to get to this point. It makes it very contentious, very argumentative and I think that we need to maybe change that and I'm really not sure exactly how to go about that.

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

I think that we need to do a better job of planning. I think, you know, I guess there are four questions that we need to try to look at in the sense of— You know, they're very simple and basic type things of where are we, where are we going and how are we going to get there and how are we going to pay for it and that is all involved in planning and I think a great deal of our growth takes place before we actually have an opportunity to plan for the future and I think that we need to— My priority would be that we need to try to finish our master plans I guess before we move on.

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?

No, I do not believe that it would be quality growth because there is not a plan for southern Albemarle County. There's not— Right now, the water proposal for the Ragged Mountain Reservoir has yet to be approved I guess by the Army Corps of Engineers. I think that's who is in charge of approving that and even at that point, once it is approved, they're still five to six years out of that being finished. We're still waiting for a report from Rivanna Water & Sewage as to what needs to be done to upgrade the infrastructure for that.

There's still the question to be answered when they talk about the paying for the lines and the sewage out in that area. They say once they reach 80% of their [capacity]. I still have yet to really find out what that might be. If they

have 5% of that development trunk line, then a question will come up of how we're going to pay for this rather quickly. You know, if there's 20%, then it'll be further down the line.

Also, I'm not that excited about myself about the 400-acre park in the sense that if you read about— read over the County's talking about that, the County would be an [accessory] as far as paying for the trunk line that would have to be added on which I'm not really— I don't understand how that could be since the park would be in the rural areas, but, to me, there's too many questions that need to be answered and we have plenty of houses in the pipeline waiting to be built, plenty of commercial space. There really is no demand for this development and I think that we can certainly plan and create a better development.

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?

No, I think there's been quite a bit of cut in funding in the state. I think that with the growth in northern Virginia and the growth in this area that they have pretty much been caught off guard in a lot of ways and they're not just creating enough money to help with our transportation costs. I think that's why they have now given the ability for the cash proffer to try to get money actually from the developers to pay for that, but I think the one thing that I could do is try to lobby with our state representatives. I think that's who you have to work through and I think that's the only thing that I could really work with.

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?

I think there should probably be more of the I guess public hearings as far as the County for the people to actually get up and speak up for what they want to hear and I think that more online participation as far as polls and I think they need to make— I think some of the information about developments more readily available. Generally, they are not available to the public until just, you know, just before the date that they are supposed to go before the Board. I think if we can get things out more in advance and give people actually an opportunity to read over what is being proposed before they come to speak at a public hearing, I think that you would get a lot more informed questions and concerns from the public.

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?

I think once again it's just— The Crozet Master Plan is a good example of we are developing or I guess rezoning land faster than what the plan was actually proposed or even before it was even voted on and approved. We already had moved past that plan and I can see that happening already on Pantops and Places29. By the time that either one of these growth master plans are approved, we will already have moved beyond what they are planning on and I think that we need just try to slow it down a little bit and we need to try to get ahead in our planning so that we can have an idea as to where we are going and how we're going to get there and right now, basically, the people who are developing Albemarle County are the ones who are actually planning the growth.

Follow up: Anything in particular about the Crozet Master Plan?

Not particularly. Just as far as I think that there was a lot of growth was set in place without the infrastructure being in place to handle it is the main thing.

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

I think you're supposed to represent the people of your District. I think that you are to try to be conduit of their concerns to the Board. I think that there should not be when these big proposals come up for these developments or these big commercial spaces that, you know, a lot of people in the County, they feel like that they're underdogs in the fight. And the purpose of the Board of Supervisors, the representative, is to be the person who represents them in the fight and often I do not feel that that is how it is, that they feel that they do not have a representative on the Board who represents their thoughts and their feelings.

Thank you, Mr. Fletcher, for participating in our interview.