



**2011 Albemarle County Board of Supervisors Candidate Interview
September 2011**

Candidate: James C. Norwood (R)

On November 8, 2011, voters in the Scottsville Magisterial District go to the polls to elect their representative on the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. This recording is Brian Wheeler's September 22, 2011 interview with Jim Norwood (R). Norwood's opponent is Chris Dumler (D).

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

http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville_tomorrow_/2011/10/norwood.html

Complete election coverage is available on the Charlottesville Tomorrow website

<http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/elections>

INTERVIEW

Mr. Norwood, 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 Supervisor 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 Albemarle Board of Supervisors.?

Okay, first let me thank Charlottesville Tomorrow for this opportunity this morning; I appreciate it. I bring a lifelong experience, a 43 year marriage to my wife Joanne, we have five children and seven grandchildren. I've been in the business world for 47 years and have owned and operated businesses in the Albemarle County over the last 13 years. Out of my 47 year business career, more than half of that has been in private business. I have hired many hundreds of Virginians over the course of that time, paid fair wages, and provided a good environment for all our employees. That, I think is critical to my – what I bring to the board is the fact that also I have acted as a director of economic development in Scottsville, I work for the Chamber of Commerce, my major project was to stimulate the economy in Scottsville, I worked with Lieutenant Governor Bolling and also with the economic development partnership here in Charlottesville to try to develop a reuse for the factory that was vacated. We lost 120 jobs when Hyosung closed, but since then, through private business expansion in Scottsville, more than half of those jobs have been replaced and I feel good about that. I think I helped stimulate that.

So, I also happen to be the parent of a handicapped child, spent all our lives – my wife and I – in raising John and been kept our ear very close to public education. Joanne's a retired teacher – or I'm sorry, she's not retired, she's just a teacher who doesn't work right now. She spent most of her life mainstreaming John, so we have kept very close to the education – public education process. And also, I'm pleased that I'm currently a trustee of the University of New England, a 6,000 student private education college in the state of Maine and I'm chairman of the Student Affairs Committee. So I feel like I have a good background to share relevant to education as well.

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

Well recently I came out with a press release regarding what I think is important and that is to be sure that the mobility of our residents in this county is addressed to be sure that we can give people in the outlying regions access to the city, the hospitals and doctors.

I met with the director of [Charlottesville Area Transit] (CAT) and also the director of JAUNT. We talked about the transportation agenda over the next five years. I'd like to see an expansion of service, especially to the Mill Creek area and at some point in time to Scottsville. I understand the costs that are involved. I think that when it comes to funding I think I'd really have to sit down and look at the budget and see the overall budget and how we can approach adding any additional service or trading service.

I also feel that once the bypass is built, I think that we're going to be able to make it a lot easier for transportation issues. I'd love to see a bus lane on Route 29, which would make a little more expeditious to travel around and shop. But I do think that at certain areas of the county, like Scottsville, definitely need to enhance the mobility of the citizens, so I would look to expand that down there.

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

Well I think this question is very difficult insomuch as we have three different entities that have three different objectives and ideally it'd be great to get all three on the same page. You have to – we have to look at the University is the number one economic driver in the county or in the whole region and we really need to work with the University to be sure that we provide the infrastructure for the University as well as its employees and students. And I think that's where the county and city play an important role in doing that.

The economic vitality is very important. Right now the University spends about a billion dollars in commerce in this area. We have a total expenditures of commerce of about \$8.8 billion in this region a year. The University is 1 billion of that. So they are, you know, without question the major economic driver here. We need to find synergies and ways that we can work together to benefit both the city and the county. I've got some ideas that relative to economic stimulus that I think is important. I don't think we pay enough attention to economic development and I think the county and the city need to address it in a more focused way than it is being done today.

4. Should the board consider boundary adjustments for Albemarle County's designated growth areas to create new locations for business on land currently zoned as rural areas? Does it matter if the land is in the watershed of the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir?

As I understand it right now, there is a master plan relative to expansion. I would be very very careful to expand and rezone rural areas. There might be a need but I think that when that need arises, that a very careful attention would have to be paid to rezoning. I'm not for that at all but I am for growth and I think we have to think in terms of how we manage our rural area. And we want to maintain it, but we also have to entertain growth. So does it matter? Yeah, it does matter if it's in the watershed. I think that that would be a concern to me.

5. What role should local government play to stimulate economic vitality? Do you support Albemarle's economic vitality plan and are there areas you recommend for improvement?

Yes, I think one of the issues that I am very strongly in favor of and of course economic vitality and economic development are basically where I come from and that's what I can bring to the board.

I see our county lacking the ability right now to reach out to attract businesses to our county. We don't have the infrastructure set up at this point in time. For example, we have a growing vineyard/winery business that's growing in our county which is becoming more and more important to our economic stimulus. We need to have someone as a part of the city and county – maybe a shared person – who will go out and reach out to attract more people to come to Albemarle County, to invest in vineyards. And also to help the ones that are here further if need be export their products, enhance their business.

We need an economic development person to look into IT expansion, work with the University, reach out for these small incubator businesses that can be brought to our county, which will stimulate jobs. So, you know, in other counties we have, for example to our north, they have in some cases three or four economic development officers that are assigned to different aspects of economic development. Here we have – we don't have enough at this point in time. We need to address that. That would be something that I would look to do.

[Brian Wheeler] And I just want to make sure that on the economic vitality plan itself, is that something - that was something the board developed – is that something you support?

I do, I do. I think that it needs to be – it's a work in progress so to speak and I think it needs to be addressed and updated as we move along.

6. What is the top priority in your personal strategic plan for action by the board of supervisors if you are elected?

I think the – to address the need for jobs and economic stimulus in the county. I think even though the percentage numbers of unemployed do not reflect a problem for Albemarle County, the southern part of the county, as in Scottsville, the unemployment rate is a lot higher than it is in the northern part of the county. We are not growing, we're static and we need to find a way to expand the economic development, including jobs. And that would be a focus of my tenure on the board. And I think that it can be done with a strong focus on the needs of our citizens – what they need here – and also look at the education base to be sure we're providing jobs for people that have that education. So I think economic stimulus right now is very important. The

other – one of the other issues I think has to be addressed is how we find a way to stimulate the real estate business. Again, we're in a static situation of – real estate values are decreasing and real estate is a big driver for the economy. And right now we really need to find ways to help stimulate that.

7. Do you believe the Western Bypass project is consistent with the character of our community and the public's vision for transportation in Albemarle County?

The Western Bypass, I think, is a needed project. I am not happy with the fact that we're using a 20 year old plan. I think that we could do better – much better – to avoid infringing on private property rights. And I'm not quite sure if that's reversible, if what's come before us right now is a take-it-or-leave-it, which I have a feeling it is. But do I believe it's in the character of the community? I would rather see the bypass rerouted from the airport right to 64 personally. Do I think we need a bypass? Yes. I used to own a business on 29 and Rio Road and customers were very concerned about the safety on the highway, battling with the trucks and heavy equipment, so I definitely believe we need a parallel road and I think the bypass, once we get bypassed, this angst on behalf of our citizens I think will provide our citizens a good opportunity to get around the congested area of 29. The other thing that I have to say is a part of my endorsement of the bypass is the University of Virginia, which will benefit tremendously. And again, as the University is our major economic stimulator in the area, I think that this will be a tremendous benefit to them and therefore will – it's a prudent decision.

8. In recent budgets, the board of supervisors has chosen not to raise taxes to provide additional funds for capital budget needs such that the current capital budget primarily supports only maintenance projects. How will you address capital funding needs as part of the next county budget?

Well I think that I've studied the CIP plan and the projected plan over the next five years and without question, you know, with the economic conditions today and the fact that the revenue stream is a challenge to us, we're going to have more and more stress on being able to fund the CIP. I guess that we're basically going to have to go to a maintenance project at this point in time and see how we do. I fear that in the next couple years, our revenue stream is not going to be – certainly not going to be positive. And so we're going to have to figure out a way to address our maintenance needs.

Now, regarding taxes, I think that right now is not a good time to be raising taxes. We might have to wait until we can until we can get a little more economic stimulus in the area here. I do feel that if we can expand the local businesses that are in place right now, and help stimulate and support them, increase food tax, BPOL taxes, commercial taxes, commercial property taxes,

will help us address the shortfalls of our revenue stream. So I think it's going to be a challenge without question and we're going to have to be very prudent and diligent in how we allocate our revenues towards the capital improvements.

9. How will you support preserving the rich agrarian tradition and texture of our rural areas?

Well I think that one of the most interesting figures that I've recently been advised of is that we have 550 producing farms in this county. Agriculture's, second to education, is a major, if not the major economic driver. And we need to pay more attention to the small farmer and overall farming in general, especially in southern Albemarle where we have a predominance of large farms. How do we help them I think we have to provide education to them, I think we need to be in a position to work with the farmers, to help them improve their productivity. And I strongly believe that the vineyards and wineries are a part of that agricultural expansion and I think that we need to also support them in a major way.

10. Will you consider raising the real estate property tax rate in the next county budget to invest in capital funding priorities? Why or why not?

Right now I think I answered before, I don't see us unless its – I can't say never, but the last thing we need to do right now is to raise our property tax. In my district, Scottsville District, the average age of property owners is 58. If you look at more than half of the property owners, many of – they're all on fixed incomes and really I think we're all suffering from this economic downturn. Redistribution right now is not something I would endorse. I think that we have to deal with what we have, we need to be very prudent on how we spend our revenues.

I think it's important for us to again stimulate local business, support local business, to generate more revenues to our county, but I would not raise taxes right now. And the capital funding priorities would be maintenance at this point in time. We do have options, however, in the county, there's an option to – there are monies that could be made available through refinancing and what have you and I think at some point in time we'll have to decide what we do there.

11. Should the board of supervisors 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?

Well I know that at this point in time our system, our sewer pump system, will not support our 50 year growth and I think that we have to do what we have to do. And if that's going to be the issue of moving the sewer pump station out to the Rivanna or out away from Woolen Mills then that's something that has to be addressed. I don't like the fact that the ratepayers are going to be billed an additional fifteen, eighteen million. I'm sure it's going to be over a long period of time but, you know, that's my feeling at this point.

Jim Norwood, thank you for participating in this interview with Charlottesville Tomorrow.