



2011 Charlottesville City Council Candidate Interview September 2011

Candidate: Scott Bandy (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 26, 2011 interview with Scott Bandy (I). Other candidates in this race include: Brandon Collins (I), Bob Fenwick (I), Kathy Galvin (D), Satyendra Huja (D), Dede Smith (D), and Andrew Williams (I).

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

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

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

INTERVIEW

Mr. Bandy, 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 started out on a platform of not being experienced, so I'm not going to claim any titles or accolades or any experience as far as that goes. It's up to the voters, you know, from what they find out whether I'm qualified or not. I'm just running as a plain citizen. That's how I want to be perceived and if honesty accounts for anything that would be a consideration for the voters to mull over.

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

What item on the agenda doesn't require money?

Well, how do we fund anything on the agenda for that matter? Generally most of it is through revenues, taxes, grants, subsidies, depending on the program.

We're talking about transportation here. I think the challenge for the upcoming council is going to be just maintaining, maintaining things as they are. And that definitely would include transportation.

My impression as far things go was that the council struggled just to maintain a budget without having to raise further taxes. Certainly no one wants higher taxes. The current transportation in place, well, transportation, you break that up into different items. The [Charlottesville Area Transit], roads which I'm of the opinion that some people have never seen a road here that they didn't like.

It's difficult to pin down where this is going to be headed. The challenge will be to fund it within the constraints that we are limited to and to keep services as they are at a sufficient rate. You know, to satisfy, getting the buses running on time.

It's a wide topic and I won't go any further.

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

That's been a bone of contention with some folks. County and city relations, I chalk that up to the fact that the city in a way conducts itself as if though were the county, and the county conducts itself as though it were the city. Look at the urban ring there. Commercial development. People moving out to the county. The city has lost a lot of residents, people that have moved from the city into the county. You go where the jobs are. The jobs happen to be mostly in the county. Not that we don't have them in the city, certainly we do.

And of course, the University of Virginia. Let's drag that into this. Certainly there is room for improvement. We could talk to each more. Not that we don't already. But as Bob Fenwick said, as a city, we have a problem of talking things to death. The people want action. Whether that's in the next few minutes or over a period of time. Certainly I am willing to extend the hand of cordialness and consideration to the university, to the county, to work on things together.

One of the things that is close to me that also involves the county is the Sunset-Fontaine Connector. The improvements are going to be in the county, but that improvement is going to dramatically affect the city. The residents along Old Lynchburg Road, that segment of Jefferson Park Avenue. They will be impacted when that connector is ever completed and done. Perhaps once it is done, and certainly that's one of the things I would be most interested in the county with, and of course, the university, because we have the Fontaine Avenue Research Park over there, of accomplishing. That impact would be that Jefferson Park Avenue, [Old] Lynchburg Road, could return to the status of a slower paced neighborhood street, not the cut-through as it is and has been currently used as. Let's move on.

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

I've done some studying on that now. To be honest I can't say whether, you know, my knowledge whether the current council has updated that or if there has been an update, but certainly I would not want to make any grandstanding or dramatic changes. Any changes would have to be gradual, subtle, acceptable of course.

One thing that I know for sure would affect it, they talk about improving the sewer infrastructure in that. The residents of the Fry's Spring Neighborhood Association are interested in a rezoning of that area of town south of the railroad tracks from the current residential zoning status to an R1, I believe they said R1, status. That would impact the sewer collection basin. That would hopefully reduce the overwhelming runoff from the storm drainage

going into the basin. Hopefully it will add to lowering costs and trying to improve not just storm drainage but also add an emphasis for getting the sewer lines improved, replaced. There's a lot of mess and there's a lot of things to do.

Some priorities, the water plan, phew. What a mess. That is one thing that has been on the city and the county's plate for a long time. It needs to be addressed. You can't keep sweeping things under the carpet. Bring it out into the light of the day. Address it. Reach some sort of, not just compromise, but some sort of tenable active plan and go with it because there are just too many issues and they are piling up and we need these issues addressed.

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?

The regulations in this city, and I'm going to borrow from another candidate, I think I've borrowed from him already in this interview, Mr. Fenwick, and I'll mention him by name here. He said at his initial announcement that this isn't a business-friendly city. It's not. With regulations in place and ordinances as they are, they are not conducive to businesses, and I mean both commercial and industrial, in the City of Charlottesville. That has got to be amended, that has got to be addressed, and it's got to be changed. It has to be acceptably changed. We are pinched for jobs. People are out there economically hurting like no time before in the history not just of this city, but of this country.

We must do what we can, not just to only encourage entrepreneurs and small businesses, but to be a welcoming place where we can attract those businesses that will complement, not go against the grain of what this city is. We are a very environmentally conscious city, we are a very knowledgeable city. You can't ask for a better place to live but we are struggling. People like I said before are moving not just into nearby counties, but into counties in the region, into counties outside the region, because we are not providing our citizens with sources of income to supplement their families. We are not providing that economic highway to prosperity and self-sufficiency. We must take it head on. We must grab this bull by the horns.

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

Which one are you referring to? (laughs) No, I'm only kidding.

Reaching some sort of place where environmental consciousness does not conflict with common sense. We have a very zealous pedestrian and bike community but at the same time, look at our city streets and thoroughfares. They are dangerous and have become unsafe while we have made tremendous and most impressive strides in trails and bike lanes, why have

our streets become unsafe? I don't have to mention the fact that one of the county, was it the county or the city sheriff's department, one of the deputies ran into the person, I believe it was over there on West Main.

We've got to come to a place that we understand, that you know, we will compromise and we will balance things out so that everyone wins. Where everyone can walk away satisfied. No, you're not going to get everything that you want. Nobody ever does in this life. But if we don't, if there are some groups and some interests that are bound and determined it's their way or the highway, things are still going to get progressively worse in the city and that's unfortunate because to have the high standard as we do living in this city, it would be a shame to lose that and to people to further suffer than they already are.

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

I'm sure there are some voters and some interests out there that are worried I would do just the opposite. I actually, going back to something I alluded to earlier, that the big thing is going to be trying to maintain the high service, the desirable, quality of things as they are now. No, not everything is perfect, but I mean, gosh, all these accolades that the city has gotten for being so livable. It would be a shame to fly in the face of convention, to back pedal, to do something that would harm our cities and parks. I know there are people against the Meadow Creek Parkway. It's been charged time and time and time again that that parkway, and I use that hesitantly, quote-unquote parkway, is going to be a detriment to the park. Well, how would we know if we don't have that throughway?

I think it will improve access to the park. And what about these meetings that have been held, say at the Martin Luther King Junior Center for the getting access into the east, the part of the park divided by the railway coming through there.

No, I don't want to do anything that harms our parks and recreation facilities. The city council has struggled for quite some time. Not that we're out of the mess, but they've struggled trying to bring things up. Dede Smith made her announcement from Forest Hills. They have improved that. You can see the... She announced close to where the children's water features are now. That was an improvement that was brought about. Yes, improvements are still needed but we are in a time of budget constraint. We have to be frugal and we have to be very cautious and most discerning how we apply what limited funds we have. We have to be sure we're getting the most bang for the buck that we can.

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?

Gee, Mr. Wheeler. This is going to get me into real hot water here because, no, I would not seek a new vote by the council if elected but I'm going to stipulate this, though. That does not mean that I am against dredging. The Citizens for a Sustainable Water Plan have used that straw argument to further their agenda. I don't understand why.

In June, the RSWA, no, not that. Pardon my dyslexia there. The RWSA, Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority, funding to the tune of \$3.25 million the avenue towards dredging. That's a certainty in my mind right now. We're not going to veer in any direction away from it. It's going to happen. It's been put in place. We're moving towards that. What this has become now is a campaign against the dam. I'm not necessarily for the dam. I'm certainly not for a 45-foot, 50-foot raise in the dam.

But what about water supply? I haven't heard the Citizens for a Sustainable Water Plan saying that they will commit to supplying water. What if Mr. Fenwick and Ms. Smith are elected to the council? Well, it's going to be there turn to see where the funds go. Are most of those funds that are going to be available, are they going to be put toward dredging? Certainly, I understand their interest. There is no doubt what their interest is. My position on this from the beginning has been that whether it was the recall of the RWSA, or whether it was a referendum on dredging, or a referendum on the damming. Well, two legs of that three-legged stool have been removed from being addressed. Not that they haven't been addressed, but they have been addressed. This is that issue that Mr. Fenwick claims, that the city is famous for talking to death.

We're moving in the direction of dredging. The RWSA is bending over backwards, supposedly now, to try to comply with DEQ standards. They're moving in that direction. The leg on the stool left is the dam. They're fighting it. And I admire that some of the members of the CSPA... did I get that.. Citizens for a Sustainable Water Plan? CSWP. I admire their tenacity and some of those members they're there because one of their other interests, one of their other modus operandi, is the... the Ragged Mountain Natural Area. Yes. That should not be harmed but on the other hand why won't the CSWP commit to supply? Their interest, you know, sustain the plan.

We need to move beyond the plan. You know. If we're going to try to encourage more business to come to the city, as Mr. Fenwick said, if we're going to be a business-friendly, enticing and welcoming city, aren't we going to encourage perhaps industry and commerce that doesn't necessarily conflict with the way we would like to see things done? If they need water,

don't we want to supply that so that we can entice them? Have them establish and put roots here for the jobs that it can provide the residential base of this town.

I'm astounded that in this town for so long, since the very moment I moved to the place I live at, on Cherry Avenue, in 1993, from that moment it has been flat out, you know, residents, residents, residents, you know built-up residents. The zoning, it seems like the zoning has been weighted heavy in favor of zoning for residential, no business as far as commerce or industry. A difference must be made. A change must be effected. Let's reach a compromise. Let's agree on something that is common sense. Let's stop talking about this. But on the other hand, again, chalk it up, let's cut to the chase, and I know I have prattled on here.

The crux is this. Most of your dammers, they are too gung-ho on spending. That's their fault because, you know, rightfully so, those for dredging have brought up the fact, but not just those for dredging, but other residents no matter what side of the dredge-dam argument they are on, have brought up the fact that this, no matter what way we go, you know, it leads to a potential of raised rates. It's like hiking taxes up. Nobody wants it.

I allude to my opponent and fellow candidate Bob Fenwick again. By god, if council is going to raise taxes at least forthwith with it and say you're going to do it. Don't try to package it and put it to the people in some way that's going to be a disingenuous euphemism.

I see spending coming down from the side of the dammers and the dredgers won't commit to supply. There's got to be some way to move beyond this impasse. That's why I think from the very start this should have been a referendum, an election.

This has been one of my peeves with Mr. Fenwick and with the Citizens for a Sustainable Water Plan. By God, they've been to city council so many times it's not funny. They've complained that council won't listen to them. Well now they're on the brink of taking up potentially to at least two seats on council. If that doesn't do it for it for them, by God put it as a referendum on the ballot.

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

Boy, you know how to ask them, I'll give you this.

It's past high time that we switched from an at-large system to a ward-based system. I'm of the opinion, I don't care what kind of configuration, as long as part of it is ward-based. Do a half and half, some sort of configuration of some at-large, and some ward-based, or do it completely ward-based but we need to move in the direction of representation from wards. This is how citizens' interests are best represented.

My own area that I come from, Fry's Spring, for a long time, one of the, it's sort of like running, something akin to a running competition and a running joke between the difference between Belmont and Fry's Spring. Well, for the first time in ages, this election has had three candidates and one of them whose background has been questioned and I won't allude on that, three candidates that declared from Fry's Spring to run at large. That's ridiculous!

Why can't we get a representative from... divvy up the city in an acceptable way, whether it's a representative from Fry's Spring, whether it's a representative from Belmont, whether it's a representative from Venable, or Woolen Mills. Find a way to divvy the city into an acceptable ward-system so that the citizens are better and honestly represented.

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?

This has been a no-win topic on either side, whether you are for or against the parkway. I come down on the side that I support completion of the parkway and that's going to earn the bane of a lot of people that don't want that parkway going through Mr. McIntire's legacy.

Let me pose this. There are so many ways to look at this. Yes. McIntire Park is one hell of a legacy. I don't see the parkway detracting from Mr. McIntire's legacy. If we want to talk about a most notable figure in this city's history, how he viewed things and what he would like to be remembered for and his legacy, I mean, it could be hinted that well, why not bring the World's Fair to the City of Charlottesville? It all goes to that turn of the century mentality of city beautification. What is in the eye of the beholder?

If the grade-separated interchange for Meadow Creek Parkway is unsuccessful, well, what do we want to do? Do we want to run it through there and put up a stop light like we've done with so many interchanges along that

beautiful main street U.S 29 road from Hydraulic on out to Hollymead? Come on, common sense people, common sense.

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?

Short answer, yes. I came before City Council and I spoke in favor of what I believe is Plan D. And this was some time ago and I know things have changed and there's talk now of a hybrid plan. This whole thing evolved because development over there was zoned that I don't think, and this is my opinion, and there may be opinions out there that disagree with me, but zoning that never should have been zoned for over in that segment of town.

The people over there have complained about stench. It's not just the pumping station. It's the infrastructure of that sewage system all together. It's not just the water lines. The water-sewer stormwater drainage infrastructure in this town, again, councils have struggled with the funding to bring this up to date for improvements. This past winter, my god, how many times did we hear about pipes breaking all over the place? There is no, there is no justification ever for spending even one cent of taxpayers money, but if you got to do it, do it for something sensible, for something the people are behind. The people, whether before that area that was zoned over there, I'm at a loss for words as you can tell... The zoning created adding to that problem, not just the fact that the pumping station has run down and has reached capacity, something's got to be done about it. Whether you call it neglect, or just passing the buck over to the next council about addressing the problem... it's... hindsight is 20/20.

The right thing should have been done from the get-go but it wasn't. Well, before another dime or another cost increase to moving that thing across the river occurs, by God let's do the right thing. Move the thing over there! Find some way to cooperate, to get on line and in line with Albemarle County where they will be receptive to receiving this overall on their side. Citizens particularly in Woolen Mills do not want that over there any longer than the day is. Let's do the right thing. It pains me that such a thing could lead to an increase in taxes or costs for, you know, paying water bill or your sewage bill but we could have done the right thing from the get-go, and we failed to. Don't compound and complicate a problem even further by allowing it to go on. Let's address this. Let's do the right thing, whether it's a hybrid of whatever plans, or plan D. Let's address these people. Let's do something that they can live with. That the rest of the city can live with. Let's move forward.

Scott Bandy, thank you for participating in this interview with Charlottesville Tomorrow.