



2013 Albemarle Board of Supervisors Candidate Interview

Candidate: Brad Sheffield (D)

On November 5, 2013, voters in the Rio Magisterial District go to the polls to elect their representative on the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. This recording is Brian Wheeler's September 23, 2013 interview with Brad Sheffield (D). Sheffield's opponent is incumbent Rodney Thomas (R).

The audio of this interview and complete election coverage is available on the Charlottesville Tomorrow website:

http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/topics/county_elections/

INTERVIEW

Mr. Sheffield, 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, The Daily Progress, and the League of Women Voters. 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, public education, and community design.

As you are aware, some of the questions you will be asked have been provided in advance, others have not. All Albemarle 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 the Albemarle Board of Supervisors.

I am an energetic family man who was raised here in Virginia and has pretty much made Albemarle County my home. I got my master's degree from the University of Virginia in Land Use and Transportation Planning; and I've spent the last 15 years working with planning commissions, elected officials, stakeholders, and the public on those types of issues. I believe the work I've done throughout the southeast will allow me to bring innovative ideas and solutions to the board of supervisors, as well as understand how the individual decisions being made become part of a larger vision.

2. What is your top priority for action by the board of supervisors if you are elected?

I think we have some serious challenges with the way the new growth in the last 10 years has impacted the existing parts of our community, especially in the Rio district. If elected I'd like to have the county assess the adverse impacts of that growth of the last ten years, and look at how its impacted our neighborhoods, and the community character, and then try to find ways of mitigating those impacts so that we don't keep repeating those mistakes as we move into the future. Three years ago I think we had a great opportunity to take advantage of low interest rates and low construction costs and make some of those changes that would've mitigated the impacts.

3. Do you support the construction of the Western Bypass of U.S. 29? Why or why not?

From going door to door, the need for transportation improvements has definitely been the top topic discussed. However as transportation professional I do believe the Western Bypass will not meet our expectations for relieving traffic on US 29. Further I would have never voted in such an unethical manner of which this was brought to the board to be voted on. But for now I think we need to start working and planning for how we are going to mitigate the negative impacts of the bypass and try to make sure that it is working and functional. And if the bypass is not built, we need to work equally as hard to provide residents with some tangible transportation solutions.

WHEELER: I want to ask one follow up. On the bypass question, you answered with a sentence at the end where you said "if it is not built." The sentence before that you were saying we need to plan for the mitigation and design, as if it was being built.

Well I think we have to consider that there are going to be two scenarios that come out of the decisions in the coming months. One is that it is going to be built, and we have to start working to plan for that accordingly. We have to

decide on what we are going to do mitigate the impacts, what we are going to transportation-wise to make it function correctly.

The other scenario is that it doesn't get built. And when we do the planning for scenario A we have to do the planning for scenario B as well. I say this because either way we've got to make our transportation system work period. And the bypass is not that solution, it's not the catch all, it's one solution that is hanging out there. And we almost have to proceed accordingly if it's getting build or if it's not getting built because the public wants something.

4. Name one specific area of the county budget that you are concerned about and why. Do you think it deserves more funding or less?

I'm not running because there is just one budget issue. I think we have many issues that need to be addressed simultaneously. My main budget concerns really deal with the county's obligations to provide residents with the services and infrastructure that correspond to the growth that we have been encouraging. Issues like education, public safety, transportation, even the stormwater issue that is coming up, are all issues that really need to be addressed. Just in the last three years, just in the Rio district we've had over 1,000 homes built, and there has really been no budget change that reflects that additional growth, so there are several areas that concern me.

5. Are the cash proffers paid by residential real estate developers too much, too little, or just about the right amount to contribute to the costs for community infrastructure?

The infrastructure related to new growth has to be paid for by someone. It is necessary, and it's an obligation of our government function to provide it. The question is really where do we place that burden and does it get placed on to existing tax payers. I do agree that the cash proffer system should be looked at, and as someone who has worked on almost a dozen projects I have examined different ways of impact fees, and development fees, and even payment lieu fees, I think I can bring that experience to the table and help make a pretty productive discussion.

6. If real estate tax revenues increase, should Albemarle lower its property tax rate? Why or why not?

I don't think so. I think a set property tax rate is the function of allowing for reductions and increases in revenues that come in. And I think this is an opportunity where we can take the additional revenues we might be seeing and invest in the capital infrastructure that we have ignored over the past five or so years. So this is an opportunity for us to be doing the work that we should have been doing in the past.

7. What is the best example to date of Albemarle County's neighborhood model form of development and why do you like it? What improvements could be made to our community's placemaking efforts?

I live in the Belvedere neighborhood, so this is actually a personal issue for me. I believe Belvedere was one of the first attempts for the neighborhood model in addition to the Old Trail in Crozet. It's a great way to encourage better growth in the County specifically in the growth area. It helps preserve open space while creating a tight knit community, and its working; I think we have a really great community. However as a resident I personally know how much my neighborhood has been under attack and criticism from different sources. And we have really had virtually no help from county staff, from V-Dot, and even from our supervisor. We have had a road development problem for over two years now and we still haven't seen a resolution. I really think that the county really needs to get behind these innovative ideas, and find ways of one; learning from our mistakes but also finding ways to make sure they are successful. If we are going to ask developers to invest and take a step out of their comfort zone to build these communities think the County and even our Supervisors have to be behind them 100% in making sure they are successful.

8. Business leaders and social service agencies have told the Albemarle Board of Supervisors that new investments are sorely needed in the area of early childhood education. Will you make pre-K education and quality childcare a priority and if so how?

I definitely support more money for the schools because they are the foundation for economic development and a strong workforce. And as a planner, I know that the quality of our schools is a prime indicator when we are attracting businesses. So being that strong foundation for the community and the economy, I think it is important that we invest in the early years. Giving our children that one step above where they are today, giving them that ability puts them one step closer to being better prepared for going into the work force, or going into college, or in my case going into both, the workforce and college.

9. How would you describe the challenges and opportunities facing Albemarle County's rural farms, fields, and forests?

I don't think anybody questions that our rural areas are our most valuable asset. It's the basis of why people move here and why businesses relocate. And it's clearly the foundation of our agricultural and tourism industries. I really feel strongly that in order to protect those rural areas and the challenges they are facing from the growth and even transportation demands is really to refocus our growth into the growth area, look at redevelopment ideas, incentives, and then finding ways to help businesses redevelop and

revitalize the storefronts that are already there. We see it happening in places along US 29, but I think the county can help with doing more especially on the infrastructure and surface side.

10. Describe a part of local government that would benefit from increased city and county cooperation and that you would make a priority.

As we are seeing growth continue to push up U.S. [Route] 29 and now we are seeing it go down south of the city, regional transit would be a priority of mine when it comes to city and county relations. I think the county needs to take a more aggressive and very active role in the planning and implementation of regional transit services. And I think that goes a step beyond just paying for the buses, we need to make sure we are providing the complete infrastructure to make the services successful. We need to be finding ways of reaching out to the public to find out what they need to be encouraged to ride something like a transit service from somewhere as far away as Forest Lakes into the UVa area or just finding ways of getting people from downtown out to jobs that may exist in the Hollymead or Forest Lakes area. So there is some discussion that still needs to go on with the public but I think regional transit is a top priority for me when it comes to city and county relations.