



2013 Albemarle Board of Supervisors Candidate Interview

Candidate: Duane Snow (R)

On November 5, 2013, voters in the Samuel Miller Magisterial District go to the polls to elect their representative on the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. This recording is Brian Wheeler's September 26, 2013 interview with Duane Snow (R). Snow's opponent is Liz Palmer (D).

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. Snow, 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 was CEO of Snow's Garden Center for 35 years. I have been active in the church and various boards and commissions throughout the state and the county. One thing I have discovered is that no one organization, ideology, or people have a lock on good people or good ideas. I think that if we all understood that we would work together better in the community and be able work across party lines, across different ideologies and things such as that so we might be able to continue to be able to get more done. And I feel like I am especially qualified for that and I have shown that over the last four years with the things we have been able to accomplish in the county.

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

I've had numerous top priorities over the last four years. We've worked on them and have come quite a ways on schools and on economic development plan and some of the other things we had on our list. One of my top priorities right now, it's hard to narrow it down to one, is internet and cell coverage throughout the county. You don't really have to go that far out of the county to go into areas that have neither cell, internet, or cable, or fiber optics. They don't have anything. So when they get home from work or school they have no way to communicating with the outside world except through dial up telephone. And I think those citizens, whether they are trying to run a business, education their children, or just communicate with family and friends, or should emergencies arise, they would be without – I need to put that sentence together better than that. Having access to those features is paramount. That is one of the things I am going to be working on over the next four years to make sure we can get all of these services into all of our county.

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

Yes. When I was running four years ago, we had stated as one of our campaign promises that we would work to widen 29 from the river out to Hollymead, that we would work to get the second ramp for the 250 bypass, that we would connect with the Hillsdale Drive connector that runs up behind Whole Foods up to Rio Road, and that we would work on the Berkmar Extension. And those were my top four priorities as far as roads.

And with [the bypass] we had an opportunity to get all of those roads. [In the] second year in my term we got a call from Secretary [Sean] Connaughton asking to meet with us. And when we went into the meeting he said if we decided to build a bypass would you support that? And I said no, and I said

what we need is these four other items...that I've just previously mentioned.... He said well if we could get you those would you support a bypass? And at that point I said yes.

So I am excited about getting the other roads that I just mentioned to you. The way we left it with the Berkmar extension is that would not be built as a part of this group, but they would help formulate the plan for how it would fit into the plan later. But the reason I support the bypass is because I think we need it. And I'll give you an example. I lived on Evergreen Avenue when the 250 Bypass was put through in the 50s, a lot of people didn't like it. It was going past McIntire School, it was cutting through McIntire Park. And a lot of people felt like we didn't need it, and it was not a good idea. Well it was built. And I ask you if you had to go across town today how often would you take the road through Dairy Road, or Meadowbrook, Barracks Road, or go across through UVA and come across town? It would be almost impossible. We need to be planning not only for what we have right now but for what is coming in the future. And anything we build in the future is going to be more expensive than what it is costing right now. And it's just longer delays. And we already own 60 percent of the property [for the bypass right of way].

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 think in this economic environment that we found ourselves in we have actually done pretty good with balancing all of our budget needs. Except in one big area and that is in our capital improvements budget. Over the last four years we have been able to keep up the maintenance of a lot of our buildings and things such as that. But we haven't had the money to go out and build things that we actually need or are going to need, and start putting money aside for that. One is schools. We've got schools that are becoming overcrowded, a lot of our children are meeting in trailers. And that is not the best environment in the world. So were going to need to start putting money aside for schools and that takes a lot of money. Another thing we've got a new court system complex that needs to be built. Our courts are outdated, they are not as safe as they should be. And it is not conducive to the work that goes on there. So that is going to be another major item. So in my opinion we need to start putting excess money or money that we can come up with into our capital improvement budget.

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?

I strongly believe that those that are building in the community need to help pay for the infrastructure that is needed. Whether there is too much or too little I do not know I was not part of that discussion when the program was

implemented. I would like to see us go back, and we do have that scheduled to go back and revisit that issue and look at both side of that and see exactly where we are and see if we are still comfortable with the way we are doing it.

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

It is incumbent on us as members of the board of supervisors to spend the hard earned money of our citizens wisely. Over the past four years we've been able to eliminate 66 government positions through attrition; we didn't go out and fire 66 people. We've been able to reduce our budget by \$30 million dollars, so now that the economy is starting to change and more money is starting to come in, I think we work on the [capital improvement] part of our budget, and we continue to spend money wisely. We don't go on a hiring frenzy. We don't go on a spending frenzy, but we continue to have good sound financial management systems in place.

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 think it has to be Crozet Old Trail. You've got shopping, you've got restaurants, you've got schools, you've got parks, you've got libraries, you've got a golf course, you've got mountains. What more could a community have? They could just virtually live there in that area and never leave if they didn't want to. So I think that is a very good example. As far as creating more spaces for people to gather and to do things, it seems to me the private sector is doing a really good job of that. You've got a number of places that people gather for coffee, opportunities to just sit and talk and relax. You see that on the downtown mall, you see it in places like Old Trail. And I don't know that it needs to necessarily needs to be a government decision but something that is taken care of by the private sector.

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?

Well you asked me to mention my top priority a few minutes ago. And schools have always been my top priority. As we talked about the Pre-K programs like Bright Star, ESCS, and Head Start - Bright Stars I think is from ages four and up, and Head Start is 2-5. We funded Bright Stars last year and increased it. But after hearing later that there are still kids on the waiting list I would go back and add additional money into that area. I strongly feel like all kids that are eligible for that program should have it. And the reason for that is that if our children go into school on grade level, equal to kids that have advantage

of early education because of what their parents do and where they travel and do things as children, I think there will be less crime, there will be less welfare, and we will have more productive citizens. To me that is essential, to any community, is to make sure the future of their community, which is in their children, has a good start. If they ever get labeled, that they ignorant, dumb, stupid, whatever kids are called, at an early age, they come to believe that. And if they believe it, then so it is.

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

Well I think most people know that we've worked hard to maintain our urban and rural areas. We have 35 square miles; just think about it, which is roughly five percent of the county, which we have designated as our development area. And 53 percent of our population lives in that 35 square miles. We have another 690 square miles where 47 percent of our people live. And so I think down the road there might be more and more pressure to move, and gobble up more of that land, so that's why we support green easements, and forest agriculture, and forest districts. So that more land that we can have preserved and maintain that 95 percent, the better we are able to insure the beauty that this county is known for, which we all love and just feel is a privilege to live here.

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

We've met two years ago with the leaders of Charlottesville and the school board leaders of Albemarle County to sit down and have that conversation. And we identified seven or eight different areas that we could see opportunities for joint participation. And so we divided up into groups and we went out and worked with staff and came back and we all gave our reports.

And for the most part, the city and county agree that a lot of these things we are doing need to be maintained, because the city environment and the density is so much different from that 95 percent that is out in the county. So if you try to combine the police force, there is a lot more intensive policing right downtown whereas out in the county it is completely different. So we looked in, we looked at social services, we looked at fire and rescue, and we already have a lot of participation there.

In fact we've done a really good job with things such as joint undertakings with libraries, emergency call centers and jail and things such as that. One thing that we have identified that might be an opportunity is additional work together on parks and recreation and there are a couple of others that I just can't think of right now that would fall into that category, but we are constantly

looking for opportunities to share expenses so that we can increase opportunities for all of our citizens and maintain control of our costs.