



2015 Albemarle Board of Supervisors Candidate Interview

Candidate: Rick Randolph (D)

On November 3, 2015, 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 August 17, 2015 interview with Rick Randolph (D). Randolph's opponent is Earl Smith (R).

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

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

INTERVIEW

Mr. Randolph, thank you for participating in this interview with Charlottesville Tomorrow. The complete audio recording 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, the first two questions you will be asked have been provided in advance, for the others you have been provided only the topic in advance. 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. QUALIFICATIONS: Please describe your past experience that qualifies you to be on the Albemarle Board of Supervisors.

I have worked with local government essentially since I graduated from the University of Virginia in 1969 with a B.A. in American government. My involvement first focused on representation and substance abuse issues in Philadelphia and then on water quality, public health, solid waste, public access to water resources, social services, industrial emissions, and transportation issues in Connecticut and New York State for over twenty years.

Before joining the Albemarle Planning Commission in 2012, I was already appointed by the Board as a member of the Village of Rivanna Citizen Advisory Committee. As a commissioner I have continued to serve for nearly four years as a liaison with this committee and with the County's Historic Preservation Committee, the Capital Improvement Program Committee and the Solid Waste Long-Term Solutions Committee. I have also been a citizen representative on the Rivanna River Basin Commission for over three years.

I am a former student of UVA's Ralph Eisenberg in state and local government, a former teacher of American history at the secondary level and American government and American public policy at the university level, a past doctoral student in American public policy at UConn and a coordinator with community groups and organizations for nearly a half-century. I well recognize the imperative of persuasive and considerate civic engagement in the political process, of committed transparency in decision-making and of attentive listening to all sides on any issue, no matter how heated the topic.

Additionally, twenty-one years in education prepare me for the opportunities and challenges of fitting the school board's annual fiscal requests into a comparative and strategic framework to ensure learning opportunities are optimized while educational services are delivered in the most cost-effective manner.

The owner of my own business for the last five years, I also recognize that government must be constantly cognizant of how rules, requirements and regulations actually operate on and effect the public and local businesses and revise these as needed and as is appropriate, as I have supported for the wireless industry.

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

I have four top priorities and I am going to focus in the answer by just running through them: revising the county's fiscal platform; preparing students for the 2050 economy; responding effectively to the community needs and concerns; and identifying long term solutions to water and air quality and solid waste challenges.

But in answering this question, I am going to focus on the third one which is responding effectively to the community needs and concerns.

I am committed to continuing the highly successful track record that [Supervisor] Jane Dittmar established of working closely with community residents and adjoining neighbors at all stages of project development, from the initial application through the build process as well as on all of their concerns and issues. Whether pushing for VDOT's agreement to open a construction entrance in Rivanna Village along Route 250 or getting run-off modifications implemented on Arden Drive in Avon Park or in supporting the efforts of Cale residents to have a corridor study done to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety along Avon Street Extended, I have sought to support and tirelessly advocate for the reasonable goals and objectives of residents to see their communities become safer and healthier.

3. BUDGET: Name one specific area of the county budget that you are concerned about and tell us why.

In my platform I have called for revising the county's fiscal platform. This means ensuring that our annual budget is fiscally sustainable, which annual jumps in property taxes the last two years are not, and that the rationale for the final rates is made clear to the public. I am well aware that people on fixed and those with lower incomes at or just above the minimum wage are challenged to live in the county because of the property tax. I am watching attentively the current deliberations of the Citizen Resource Advisory Committee to see what recommendations they have for decreasing the county's reliance on property taxes to fund the full range of departmental and capital requirements.

While this committee is thoroughly examining all options, I suspect it will recommend, as I have proposed, that increased bonding and the creation of special districts be utilized to capitalize different categories of county projects.

An increased repertoire of capital funding methods to address critical capital needs will enable the county to begin to address the expectations of Scottsville district residents residing in planned residential communities that critical neighborhood and area master plans and corridor studies are undertaken. These studies and plans can lead to safer and more livable communities. Finally, I am also advocating for the county's use of increased metrics to comparatively assess county services and programs.

Now despite the perpetual old saw that Albemarle is overtaxing its residents, a comparative analysis of Albemarle with five peer counties demonstrates that Albemarle's current rate of \$.819 per hundred dollars of personal real estate property is lower than Stafford's, Roanoke's, Spotsylvania's and James City's. Only Hanover's rate is lower, but Hanover's poverty rate is half of what Albemarle County's is. Albemarle's school system and many departments meantime serve today as benchmarks for the rest of the Commonwealth's counties.

4. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: Business leaders and social service agencies have told local government 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?

Access to nearby affordable and DSS-approved childcare is the essential first-step to enable mothers and also fathers to return to the work force following the birth of a child. These childcare facilities provide invaluable support and guidance in the early education of children by encouraging parents to read daily to their children, ensuring proper nutrition and modeling appropriate social behavior. I am delighted that the Planning Commission just recently unanimously approved the launching of a new multi-church daycare program at Christ Church, Glendower that will serve the Town of Scottsville and the surrounding area.

I am pleased that Cale Elementary will add a Bright Stars program this year. I support Head Start and Bright Stars which both assist students whose family circumstances and functional capabilities place them at risk for developmental and educational problems. I support Early Childhood Special Education to serve 2-5 year olds who have an identified disability.

My late first-wife Judy, who struggled with and did not discover she had a reading disability until she was in a Penn graduate elementary education program, was a passionate advocate for children with learning differences. She found professionally that early identification by professionals of a student's learning difference and then the development of compensatory teaching strategies to optimize learning strengths enabled these kids to develop positive self-esteem without being stigmatized as "different." I intend to bring Judy's and my passion for the welfare of all children, no matter what their innate abilities and differences, to my role as supervisor.

5. STORMWATER: How should Albemarle County fund water resource programs to clean up local streams and comply with state mandates for protection of the Chesapeake Bay watershed? [And a follow up] Would you support creation of a stormwater utility fee, similar to the one enacted by the City of Charlottesville, which is based on the amount of impervious surface on a property?

The County will institute in all probability in fiscal year 2016 a stormwater management program. This will come about not because of a cartel of the Obama administration and tree-huggers conspiring to impose new stormwater management expectations on Virginians. It comes about because the McDonnell administration, seeking for Virginia to do its share to contribute to the cleanup of Chesapeake Bay, in 2012 passed a law requiring all localities (including counties) to have a local stormwater management program. Two years later, in 2014, the McDonnell administration passed an updated law that permits localities to either run their own program or have the Department of Environmental Quality conduct the program. Albemarle has elected to run its own program. The state has provided localities with no funding to implement these stormwater management programs.

A year-ago the Board created a Water Resources Funding Advisory Committee to develop recommendations for how to fund Albemarle's program. While to some just adding this additional cost into the property taxes seems to be the most sensible course of action, I feel that an approach that furnishes incentives to property owners

to reduce their stormwater runoff is the best approach. This can be accomplished most successfully with a separate utility fee for which the property owner's changed practices can produce a lowering of the fee. I look forward to seeing what the committee's recommendations are to the Board. I believe that we all need to do our part to help clean up the Chesapeake Bay, a jewel of a multi-dimensional resource for the Commonwealth and the entire mid-Atlantic region.

6. DESIGNATED GROWTH AREAS: In the remainder of 2015, or during your first term if you are elected, should the board make boundary adjustments for Albemarle County's designated growth areas to create new locations for business on land that today is in the rural area? Why or why not?

Controversy is swirling currently in the county about the highly unusual proposal of the board of supervisors currently to seek a Comprehensive Plan Amendment to permit light industry in the rural-designated Sweet Spot property located on the southwestern quadrant of the Interstate 64 – [Route] 29 South intersection. Comprehensive Plans are required by state law to be revised every five years and the planning commission completed doing so two summers ago after conducting some 60 plus meetings. My professional training as a state-certified planning commissioner convinces me that a CPA to move rural property into the designated growth area should only be approved under exceptional circumstances and for compelling public and county benefits and when the following requirements are met: A) the additional development acreage is essential to maintain the continued operation of an established in Albemarle County, as with Colonial Auto Group's [approved] CPA or to attract a new large employee-based business that conforms with the county's four target industries; B) county staff conducts a deliberative public process of transparent consultation with neighborhoods adjacent and contiguous to the proposed property providing the public with as much vital information as needed for them to be informed while withholding only information that is absolutely required to maintain confidentiality for the interested relocating business and or for state officials; C) preliminary infrastructure costs and a timetable for implementation of any such improvements are available for the consideration of both key decision makers and the public; and finally D) the planning commission conducts public discussions not about business-specific and location-specific spot rezoning but about making thorough well-documented revisions in the comprehensive plan to identify the most appropriate potential rural locations for inclusion in the designated growth area to meet the requirements of a interested business. The commission then should hold public meetings to gauge public reaction to each one of these potential locations.

7. CITY-COUNTY-UVA RELATIONS: Describe a part of local government that would benefit from increased cooperation by the city, county and / or the University of Virginia and that you would make a priority.

Well one of the first areas where we can see a dramatic increase in cooperation between the city and the county is in the area of multi-modal transportation. The city currently is committed to extending the range and the safety of multi-modal bike paths and pedestrian pathways, for example, on West Main Street. And one of the challenges for us as we look at what will come online in a year's time at Fifth Street

Station is that we will have a new road, Bent Creek Road that will tie into Avon Street Extended. The planning commission actively supported to ensure that that road would be both walkable and bikeable. However, where it will terminate now at Avon Street Extended, there is no pedestrian walkway or bike pathway that's available for access. So one of the things that the county needs to do working with the city is to try to develop an integrated multi-modal transportation plan that will effectively permit University of Virginia students to be able to travel out safely by bike to county facilities and for county residents to be able to bicycle into the city both for work and for recreation. All of this is a plus for all three entities because it reduces our car dependency, cuts down on CO2 emissions and we also thereby can also have a healthier population in our community.

8. PLACEMAKING: What improvements could be made to our community's placemaking efforts?

If, as the Project for Public Spaces indicates, placemaking centers on reinventing "public spaces as the heart of every community through a process of challenging people to re-imagine their community," then the county's creation of Stonefield is a prime example of placemaking in action, flaws and all.

Stonefield's building and pedestrian friendly design have both generated praise. Vehicular access into Stonefield and the entry ways have demonstrated planning miscues. One tool that I have advocated for some time, especially now that the county again has a transportation planner, is computer software that will enable the county to produce its own traffic impact analysis reports and not be completely reliant on VDOT's analysis, which frequently raises more questions than it generates in answers. Had the county had such internal analysis, perhaps the county could have received more reliable predictability in actual traffic outcomes, thereby optimizing traffic safety in and out of Stonefield.

Now one placemaking proposal that the county can ill-afford is the relocation of the county's courts out of its historic home in Courth Square. While historical justice suggests that the only appropriate relocation of the courts is to the Town of Scottsville, from whence they were moved to Charlottesville in 1761, the reality is that the county lacks the resources to construct a whole new courthouse complex in Scottsville or elsewhere and that the maxed-out McIntire office building lacks the space to accommodate such a facility.

Placemaking criteria suggest that the ideal location for the expanded courthouse is in the area of its current location. However, remodeling of the current building at the expense of its historic character, architecture and dimensions should be approached through a process of extensive consultation with all stakeholders including city neighbors, the legal community and the Historic Preservation Committee.

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

The preservation of the rural areas and the Comprehensive Plan's goal of seeking to minimize development in the rural area are fundamental values in Albemarle County. The planning commission has permitted least seven new residential [communities] in the nearly four years I have been a member (Estes Park, Riverside Village, Avon Park II, Out-of-Bounds, Avinity II, Spring Hill Village and Rivanna Village), ensuring that, along with a continued build-out of Old Trail in Crozet, there will be a continued sufficiency of single-family housing stock in the county until at least 2030.

Despite these development expansions in areas of the county both identified in the Comprehensive Plan for growth and zoned for same, some would still like to see more rural acreage added to the designated growth areas. The argument now floating for doing so is that since Biscuit Run was given to the Commonwealth as a park, the 3.4 percent of the total growth area acreage that Biscuit Run represented should be replaced by compensatory new growth area property. This argument only has merit if in fact there is a current or foreseeable shortage of single-family housing stock on the horizon. However, the single-family housing stock numbers currently do not warrant such new residential growth designations.

There are two changes in the rural areas that need more discussion than just within the planning commission. The first is the negative externalities produced by state legislation-favored wineries, breweries, distilleries and cider operations. Most of these businesses operate with deference and consideration to both their neighbors and the public. Several bad apples in the past have forced adjoining property owners to pull up stakes and leave their rural homes for the greater tranquility of planned residential communities. Still, the county is powerless to regulate these establishments when their hillside topography amplifies noise towards neighboring properties or when the permitted levels of 200 visitors per day poses a traffic nightmare on often meandering county roads that were designed originally for horses and wagons.

The second change is the current county code that permits rural historic homes to be converted into bed and [breakfasts]. The problem, as I noted in a public hearing when I voted against this proposal, is not with the historic structure itself, but with the code's permission for an applicant to use any other structures on the property and convert them also into livable spaces for guests. We have seen one B&B operator legally convert a county home, a swimming pool building and an old log cabin into bookable rooms. I will advocate for future code language specifying that the historic home alone is eligible for conversion into a B&B. Where there is more than one historic home on the property, I would support a Special Use Permit being required so that the planning commission and the board can solicit a wide variety of input on the impacts of the extra guests on traffic and water use. Grandfathering the existing enlarged B&B's is right and fair.

Finally, the rural Monticello precinct area of the Scottsville district would benefit from having a master plan done to determine how the existing vineyards, traffic flows and

natural resources are all interacting. Recommendations for improvements and changes could be made and perhaps a group of citizens would volunteer to be appointed by the board to meet and discuss ongoing issues in the Monticello precinct as a citizen's advisory committee.

10. TRANSPORTATION: What is your top transportation priority and how will it be funded?

Well my top transportation priority will be to work on developing that multi-modal transportation grid of interaction between the university and also the city and the county. There are many transportation challenges that need to be talked about however beyond just a multi-modal future.

Construction of the Route 29, Hillsdale Drive and Berkmar Drive components of the Places29 master plan should at completion successfully address removal of the major obstacles to expedited traffic through the 29 north. The County must be vigilant in not substituting a new zone of potential traffic lights on 29 south which will add to through traffic times between I-66 to the north and Lynchburg and Danville to the south.

Route 20 as it intersects with Mill Creek Road and Route 53 remains a bottleneck in the mornings for north-bound traffic and at night for those driving towards Scottsville. Had Biscuit Run been developed as originally planned, this congestion would have already intensified exponentially. I am committed to finding ways to improve this traffic flow, but the scarcity of VDOT funds for a widening of Route 20 along this stretch is going to make this a major challenge.

A similar scenario where a road widening would be beneficial applies for Route 250 east from Shadwell out to the Glenmore Way and the entrance to both Glenmore and coming Rivanna Village. Additional designated growth in the Village of Rivanna beyond what is currently permitted will necessitate that VDOT widen this stretch of 250. However, the complete rebuilding of the 250 bridge over the Buckingham Branch Railroad at Shadwell two years ago with only two lanes indicates that VDOT is not planning to widen 250 for many years to come.

11. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: What areas of the current Comprehensive Plan will you concentrate on for implementation, improvement and/ or monitoring?

One of the first things that I plan to see strengthened is the Comprehensive Plan Amendment [process]. We need as a planning commission and I would hope as a board of supervisors to develop criteria so that we ensure for the public's reassurance that Comprehensive Plan Amendments are approached as an unusual exercise where there is a compelling need and it is appropriate based on the criteria that I have outlined already.

The second thing that I would note about the Comprehensive Plan is that Albemarle County has not demonstrated a great degree of success in selecting locations, in the recent past, for both a police firing range in southern Albemarle and a new [trash]

transfer station in southern Albemarle and one on Mill Creek because of an inadequacy of prior consultation with neighbors, and in the case of the transfer station, with the planning commission itself. Lessons learned from these experiences are that there is no such thing as over-consultation with the public in the formation of a new and controversial project and that the assumption of a “we know best” attitude almost ensures project rejection.

It is troubling to me that these two phenomenon appear to again be at play in the Comprehensive Plan Amendment proposal for I-64 and 29 South.