



## **2015 Albemarle Board of Supervisors Candidate Interview**

*Candidate: Norman Dill (D)*

On November 3, 2015, voters in the Rivanna Magisterial District go to the polls to elect their representative on the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors. This recording is Brian Wheeler's August 20, 2015 interview with Norman Dill (D). The other candidates in this race are Lawrence Gaughan (I) and Richard Lloyd (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/](http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/topics/county_elections/)

### **INTERVIEW**

**Mr. Dill, 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 lived in the Charlottesville-Albemarle area for over 30 years. All five of my children went through Albemarle County schools. I am very interested in sustainability and helped get recycling started in 1989 as President of the Charlottesville-Albemarle Recycling Together nonprofit. I've had several businesses in town. Probably best known are Rebecca's Natural Food, named after my daughter, in the Barracks Road Shopping Center. I've had that for 28 years and for almost 10 years I was half owner of Harlowe-Powell Auctions, one of the leading auction houses in Virginia. I've also started or bought several other small businesses over the years, and helped other people with their businesses. I've also studied finance and strategic planning at Harvard Business School where I got my MBA several years ago.

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

My top priority is necessarily broad, but just to maintain the special quality of life that we have here in Albemarle County. I think it is a theme that I come back to often, I think it is a combination of three key areas: having a fantastic educational system; having a wonderful rural environment and natural resources that are protected; and then also having the college and the urban downtown, that whole dynamism of having a downtown area but also having close by rural areas.

So working on all three of those things, the rural environment, the general environmental quality of life, the schools and the business environment – having innovative, entrepreneurial type businesses in this area – I think that's what makes it special and that's what I want to work on.

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

In general I am a very frugal guy and I have run my businesses with a tight budget and I am always looking for opportunities to save money, but we have to be clear that there are several state and even federal mandates in quite a few different areas that affect us a lot. But the most important one, if I had to pick one, is the school system. We have neglected maintenance on many of the schools over the years. We will eventually need to build a new school or two in the future, and the funding has gone down from the state by about \$600 over the last few years per pupil. That's a tremendous amount of money that we need to come up with just to stay even. Teacher salaries have been pretty stagnant over the last few years. If we are going to have the fantastic Albemarle County school system that we have, in all of its manifestations – not only in our 26 schools, but in [the Charlottesville Albemarle Technical Education center] and [at Piedmont Virginia Community College] and early childhood education, adult learning and prison education – if we are going to maintain all that we need to find a way to fund that in the budget.

**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?**

Well I agree that it's extremely important. Everybody agrees, everybody knows that early childhood education has a lifetime of influence on our children so it is very important. I think that we need to realize that it's not just a matter of just starting it or doing it is best if the early childhood education is in the schools that the kids will then be going to rather than separated in a childcare type situation so they get to know bus drivers, and librarians, and administrators, and janitors and everybody in the school and feel comfortable there.

So finding just the physical space to do it within our schools is a challenge as well as having trained teachers that are appropriate for that, it's not simply childcare, it has to be very educational age-appropriate education. All of those things require some strong planning and a lot of cooperation and I think there are a lot of people in the community that are very interested in working on that and they could be incorporated to help support the system.

Funding it? Again that's the big issue with the school system, where to come up with the funding. I think it is extremely important and would probably sacrifice in some other areas before I'd give up the idea of having early childhood education for those kids who need it, it's not going to be universal.

**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?**

So the first part of the question, clearly this is an important issue. There's over 1,500 miles of streams that are considered impaired out of about 2,500 that we have in the County. They are considered impaired by the Department of Environmental Quality. So clearly something needs to be done. Again this is a mandate that is unfunded that we have to handle using our own resources.

We have a pretty good system though in Albemarle County, along with the city. We have the Rivanna Solid Waste Authority which is one of the top waste authorities in the state. We have the Albemarle County Service Authority which provides water to us at a reasonable price and is very stable and well-financed.

Stormwater can't just be looked at in isolation. It's part of our entire water system. The rains come, they go into the sewer system, or they go onto the land, or they go onto crops or whatever, but it's important to see it as part of the whole system and I think we do a good job with it.

As far as the funding aspect of it, I am skeptical of the city's system. I think it may work in the city where there's only 10 square miles of land. In the county where there's 725 or so square miles I just think it would be a bureaucratic mess to try to figure out who is responsible for what. There are easements on driveways that are shared, there is the aspect of [being out] in the country where most of the water goes into the ground. So if you have a house with a big roof, most of that water will just go into the land around it, it's not going to go into the stormwater drains or anything. So I think some sort of just general tax is better. I understand using market forces to try to encourage people to save water and send it to the right place but I think the bureaucracy around trying to do that is probably too burdensome.

**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?**

Well of course someday we are going to have to adjust the growth areas, but I don't know when that day will come. I feel strongly we should keep the growth areas the way they are now for now and I don't think we should make exceptions on a case by case basis because some company wants to move to town.

We lost several hundred acres when the Biscuit Run property was changed from residential to a state park, just because of those complicated financial negotiations, so there seems to be a case that we do need to add some to offset that land that was lost, but again I don't think we need to do that immediately, it wouldn't be my first priority.

I'd like to promote local businesses expanding, and I don't think the growth areas are quite as important for the local businesses and entrepreneurs to expand.

**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 of course we already do in water and some transportation things with all three areas. I think probably the single biggest area that we could do more with is transportation. UVA has its own transportation system. Many college towns combine the college system with the local system. I think there's quite a bit of overlap and redundancy and just missed opportunities to combine some of our transportation systems. Not just the busses, but walking paths, bike paths, parking, and probably in some other areas that haven't even been thought of yet. I know one person is promoting a bike path all the way from Forest Lakes down to downtown Charlottesville, which is very possible going along the Rivanna River. There are just a few homeowners that are still negotiating [access] with the city and county. So there's lots of opportunities to share resources and cut overhead.

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

I love the idea of looking at placemaking, and the social attachments, the community events, all the different ways we become attached to a community. For me, when I lived out in the county in Ivy it was great when we could go down to the local creek with my kids and walk around and we could get to the mountains easily, be out in nature, we could pick peaches out in Crozet. So I think those kinds of connections are really important.

I think one of the overlooked connections though is to find meaningful work. One of the reasons why so many people like Charlottesville is we have such a dynamic nonprofit community. The Center for Nonprofit Excellence started here and is now a nationally recognized nonprofit itself. And so many people feel like they are doing important work here -- Our school system, again, is excellent, people working for the university, people working in tourism and sharing our special place with outsiders -- so many of us have meaningful work and I think that's what we need to recognize and expand upon as we look into placemaking.

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

I'll talk about one thing I am specifically interested in. I think keeping the rural areas sustainable both financially and environmentally is a key part of why I am running. There are so many, especially young people, today that are looking for opportunities to farm, to grow specialty crops, artisanal type foods. We just opened a big goat and sheep cheese manufacturing area down on Bellair farm, which itself is a protected area. We have a lot of small farmers now that people often don't even know about. In my district there is a mushroom grower who grows 25 different kinds of edible mushrooms and makes a pretty good living on an acre or two of land on very expensive real estate.

There's lots of examples of people who can grow artisanal foods. I am on the board of Virginia Food Works which helps local farmers grow crops and then preserve them. So for example, instead of just being able to sell strawberries for three to four weeks at the local farmers market, they can turn them into strawberry jam. There's a lot of opportunities for the rural areas to be protected by having these farmers that are using the land. They are going to be the protectors of the land and keep it from being developed in the negative way that most of us don't want.

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

Well my top one in the short term, and it certainly affects my district a lot, is [U.S. Route] 29 North. We are spending \$250 million on the various aspects of that. So it is not only the grade-separated interchanges that we all talk about so much, but it is also Hillsdale Drive, and the widening up near Forest Lakes, and flattening so it is not so hilly, 29 North up there is pretty dangerous. So making those improvements,

having them done on time and properly and protecting the retailers along the way that are in the way, that's certainly a top priority.

Next is Pantops which has some of the same problems of a lot of intense growth, hundreds and hundreds of new homes over the last few years, but which also has the problem of having a bridge there that is a bottleneck. There's work being done to do the high-tech light changing technology that they are using on 29 North, that's just beginning, but that's going to need some attention to see just how that's going to be handled.

In the long run, again bike paths, walkability, having retail spots near homes so that you don't need to do as much driving, having walking and bike access near Forest Lakes, Hollymead and the Hollymead Town Center. You can't get across the street there or at Pantops to get from the new developments to the Pantops Shopping Center. So just some basic things like that, having pedestrian crossings, would be really helpful.

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

Well first of all the Comprehensive Plan is about three inches thick in the hard copy so it's hard to answer in any kind of complete way. But I would say to recognize that the Comprehensive Plan is trying to look at the three key factors that make this a wonderful community: the educational system and all its aspects; environmental protection and having the rural area close to the city and county urban areas -- That's what makes it special, there's lots of rural areas in Virginia, but having them 50 miles away doesn't change our quality of life, so protecting those rural areas so they are close by and we can get out to them when we want to; and then having a positive business environment where people can open new businesses, expand businesses and have meaningful work for people I think is extremely important,

And I think as far as the Comprehensive Plan goes there's not enough to encourage that kind of business growth. We need a lot of the regulations, and the architectural review and the Planning Commission, all of those things are important, but every person that I have talked to that has been in business, and I've had the same experience myself, that it is difficult sometimes to just understand what needs to be done. I don't know how many times I have heard from someone, "I am glad to follow the rules, but I just need to know what they are and not have them change after I have already started building or done the architectural plans completely." So trying to fine tune that I think is very possible and will improve the economic environment of the county.