



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

*Candidate: Lawrence Gaughan (I)*

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 25, 2015 interview with Lawrence Gaughan (I). The other candidates in this race are Norman Dill (D) 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. Gaughan, 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 am the only candidate to run for Rivanna District in 50 years who was born and raised in Albemarle County. I am also a product of the Albemarle County school system. One of my opponents, Mr. Dill, says he has lived here for 30 years, another opponent, Mr. Lloyd, says he is a native though he was not raised here and he has not lived here more than a couple of years.<sup>1</sup> While being born and raised here is not necessarily a qualification as far as outsiders may be concerned, it does give me the unique perspective of having seen the before, the during and the after of 40 years of bad planning by both Democrats and Republicans on the board who tend to be in bed with big developers and who have been committed to turning our county into northern Virginia or the greater Richmond area.

I am also an independent in the truest sense of the word meaning I will answer to the people of the Rivanna District not to these small political committees who don't even live in the Rivanna District.

When I knock on doors in my district, most voters respond favorably to these key things when I introduce myself -- that I was born and raised here and I am an independent. They know that there is nobody with a deeper more personal interest in protecting our way of life.

However, in addition to being born and raised here and being an independent, I also have years of political experience and I have the relevant educational background that my opponents lack.

While my opponents are focused on organizing in one-fifth of one county, I successfully organized in 20 counties last year to win the nomination to run under a party for Congress.

I have an advanced degree in Social Change from one of the leading graduate schools of education in the country, and education is our primary concern since 70 percent of our county budget goes toward funding education. Furthermore, I am a business owner. I am the founder of a nonpartisan, nonprofit voter engagement organization and as a professional actor I am a communicator who is able to articulate my message of participation, community involvement and the importance of active participation by our citizens on the local level. So as I fight to protect our heritage and promote the concept of being involved in local government I am also encouraged that most voters understand that I am interested in running our county more effectively and efficiently.

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<sup>1</sup> At the conclusion of the prepared questions, Brian Wheeler asked for some clarification as to how long Mr. Gaughan thought Richard Lloyd had lived in the community since Lloyd's interview had not yet occurred. Mr. Gaughan said that Lloyd had returned to the County to retire "very recently." In Mr. Lloyd's interview, he said he moved back to Albemarle in 2006. This follow-up question is included on the podcast but not transcribed below.

Having said all of that, really the number one qualification I have is that I am willing to listen to the people and serve with empathy, compassion and dedication to their best interests.

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

My number one top priority is to make sure that we fund our schools in a manner that rewards our teachers for their hard work, their dedication that they have given to getting educated and providing their service to our county and doing it without continually raising taxes.

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

Well I am concerned particularly about the capital investment budget because we have out of control spending. We have taxes that are continually going up. And if we able to make cuts in the capital investment budget, even if it means curtailing some of the building of needless fire stations, for example, I am all for that. I am all for streamlining our budget in a way that reduces the tax burden on citizens and saves money. And I think one way to do that is with the capital investment budget.

You look at the fire station that was proposed on Pantops and we had a big victory there. They were talking about putting in a full fire station that would have cost an extra \$6 million and that has been curtailed now down to just an ambulance station for the time being. Thank goodness because it would have put undue burden on the county when we already have dedicated volunteers.

People who are running for this seat have talked about wanting to serve the community. Well if you want to serve the community, I don't know if running for the county board is the best way to do it. You look at somebody like Mike Reid, the chief of the Stony Point Volunteer Fire [Company], he dedicates full-time hours as a volunteer for free to protect and save lives. That's service to the community.

**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 again it comes down to making necessary cuts in our bloated budget so that we find the funding. I think the money is there without having to increase taxes. I am absolutely for early childhood development, a 100 percent. The money should never be an issue when it comes to early childhood development or early childhood education. We need pre-K to be available through our school system and the funding is there if we so the hard work and look at the budget item by item and make cuts in administration, make cuts maybe to the courts, even to some limited social service cuts, but we have got to have the money there for our schools because this ensures that our future will be vibrant.

It helps hard-working families when you fund pre-K because they are able to go to their jobs. They are able to come home and feel that their children are taken care of and that they are getting a head start on education. The bottom line is pre-K, early childhood development, early childhood education, means that we have fewer people incarcerated and more people educated. We save money in the long run and it is just the right thing to do morally and fiscally, and it is just the right thing to do.

**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 answer to that question is absolutely no. I would not support a stormwater utility fee. I think it is considered by most voters to be a tax and I hear that just about every time I knock on a door.

Now having said that, cleaning up our [South Fork] Rivanna Reservoir, dredging the reservoir, cleaning up our streams and rivers, is of utmost importance [among] our environmental issues. We have to protect our most precious and vital natural resource which is the Rivanna watershed and it is a tributary to the Chesapeake watershed. To do that, again, this should not be an issue of more taxes or fees. We can find the money in our bloated budget by making strategic cuts. And I will continue to fight for those cuts and if I am elected I will do the hard work to go through the budget line item by line item and go to the other supervisors with my proposals of where we can make strategic cuts so that we can put that money into dredging our [South Fork] Rivanna Reservoir.

**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?**

No. Again a definitive answer to that question, an absolute no, we should not make any boundary adjustments from what's already put forward in the Comprehensive Plan. We have to find ways to make our county more sustainable and growth is not sustainable. Number one, it doesn't pay for itself. Number two, it's an environmental issue. I think that there are some real areas that we can look into, maybe developing differently the areas that are currently designated. We tend to pack a lot of development into these current designated areas. If we are going to do that, maybe we should consider going upward instead of packing a bunch of flat townhouses into an area [which] doesn't really look very good. We need to sue data-driven research. We need the best and brightest to come forward -- not necessarily at the extraordinary fees that we pay them for research into these areas. But planning tends to be an urban model so, we'll touch on this perhaps a little bit more

when we talk about placemaking, but if we bring somebody over from Virginia Tech for instance who can give us advice on how to do something innovative and creative that would work in a rural designated area, then we need to really look at that. We need to take a hard look at that. We can't look to Charlottesville for the answers to these problems because it is apples and oranges.

**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.**

The number one [priority] that comes to mind would be healthcare and medical services for the aging. We have our shifting demographics that are occurring in the county where we have a lot more retirees, a lot of folks who have maybe moved away from the county and are coming back to live here and retire, including one of my opponents, Mr. Lloyd, who hasn't spent most of his life in the county but he has come back to retire and try to take a seat on the board.

Nothing would be more important than to find ways for the city to bear more of the burden when it comes to ambulance services. If the lady in Ashcroft, or up on Pantops, or Key West falls down we don't need to send a big fire engine there we just need an ambulance to get there as quickly as possible and get her to the nearest medical facility. It may not be UVA, it may be Martha Jefferson [Hospital] in that case, but UVA can also bear more of the burden because they are the leading medical facility in some areas, particularly cancer, while Martha Jefferson is really focused on other issues – mental health is one that comes to mind, UVA is very strong on that. So I would say we might consider having a dialogue with the university health services to see if maybe they could be another satellite facility, an emergency care facility, similar to the one Martha Jefferson put out on [U.S. Route] 29 across Proffit Rd. I don't think it would hurt to have UVA step up their game and have the city provide more of these resources in the county as well.

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

Well again this gets back to the issue of urban planning versus growth in rural areas. Placemaking means that Albemarle County is where we are born, it's where we are raised, it's where we grow, it's where we learn, where we work and where many of us retire.

I come from a background of a career in community engagement with a degree that's based upon studying data-driven research in demographics so I am uniquely qualified to deal with this particular area, unlike my opponents.

It begins with education. I am a product of the Albemarle school systems which Newsweek has just done a rating and found that Albemarle High School is rated third in the state and 490<sup>th</sup> out of 16,000 schools in the country. So we are doing a lot of things right. We need to continue with education. We need to have innovative,

creative rural planning models that come forward out of Virginia Tech, out of other schools around the area.

And I am more attached to Albemarle County than my opponents, by virtue of being born and raised here, so I don't think anybody has a deeper more personal interest in providing solutions for placemaking, for planning, and for protecting our way of life for the future. It's the way of life I have known for over 40 years.

And I think this is a very important issue for me and what really distinguishes me in this race is that again, being born and raised here, being a product of the Albemarle school system, doesn't qualify me any more than Mr. Dill's 30 years of living here, or the fact that Mr. Lloyd was born here and has moved back here, but it does give me the unique insight of the before, the during and the after of 40 years of bad planning by both Democrats and Republicans. We need something different.

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

Well this is an area that's particularly close to my heart because my grandfather came here in the 1920s and was in the timber business. We need to find ways to make our agricultural and timber industries more sustainable. What we've seen over the years is that many of the small family farms have given way and have been overhauled by corporate factor farming and limited special interests that are taking over, and these are supported by both Democrats and Republicans, it's the one reason that I am running as an independent. Because I believe I can go to family farms, I can go to farmers and timber people, and present my case as an independent and that I will protect and preserve the farming and timber heritage that my grandfather knew and that I have known and that my family has known for three generations. We can support family farms and small farmers in many ways, and I can touch on some of those basically in terms of marketplace solutions, and in terms of planning and agricultural initiatives. It's one of the issues that is most prevalent on my website and I would refer people to <http://gaughan-for-supervisor.com> to really get a more in depth idea of where I stand on this issue.

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

Well this is a question that I have a very specific answer to that I don't think my opponents, either of them, have really looked into this or come up with a solution. I have a solution to [U.S. Route] 29 and [U.S. Route] 250 that would involve some public and private investment, some bond measures, combined with greater involvement on the federal and state level. Route 29 should have grade-separated interchanges at Rio and also Hydraulic, but before those go in we need to immediately revive talks about the Western Bypass.

Having traveled throughout the Fifth District last year running for Congress, I know better than anybody who's running for board in any of the districts how important it is to have a bypass around Charlottesville that we are sorely lacking. Now when the

bypass [proposal] was put in as a solution many, many years ago, it was a good solution, but it just lacked a lot of future thought and planning. To help secure state and federal funding for the projects, and let the state and federal government bear more of the burden, I would be uniquely qualified to reach out to our Governor, to reach out to our congressman, who I ran against last year and developed a good relationship with. By the way, if things go as they might, one of my very good friends, [Lieutenant Governor Ralph] Northam may very well be the next governor. And we are not going to be dealing with this issue probably in the next two years. It will probably have to be addressed in the next 3-4 years. I'll do that foot work to help secure more state and federal funding but I think that the answer is a two-fold answer, we need to revive the Western Bypass, get the funding for it, break ground on it, get it done, and in the meantime we can start talking about the best solution for grade-separated interchanges on 29 to alleviate some of the local traffic. A bypass is so important. Every other community...Danville, has an excellent bypass, you don't even see the town of Danville, and Danville's a city just about as large as Charlottesville, and you don't even see it when you go around the bypass headed north and south. Same with Lynchburg, you don't even see the city, Culpeper has a bypass. So it's all throughout our area and we have got to have a solution here in Charlottesville that wouldn't be environmentally destructive, I am very conscientious of negotiating this to be done in a way that doesn't rub the Piedmont Environmental Council or the [Southern Environmental Law Center] in the wrong way.

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

Yes, again I have a very thorough write up on the Comprehensive Plan on the website <http://gaughan-for-supervisor.com> but I offer the following major value propositions when it comes to the comprehensive plans. One, is I will work to make it more comprehensive. The Comprehensive Plan started around the time I was born. It was implemented in 1972 when I was about three or four years old, and since then it has just become almost incomprehensible so it just needs to be streamlined and made more comprehensive.

I will also protect our rural farms, our natural areas, our water and air, and I will make sure that we have better coordination with the city in all of these matters. Bottom line, we just have to stop out of control growth, it doesn't pay for itself. If we had growth that paid for itself our tax burden would be zero at this point. When I was born one of the first shopping centers went in and since then all of the shopping centers that have been developed up and down [U.S. Route] 29 and 250 have really put a blight on our community I think. They haven't been done in the right way, most of them haven't. You don't even know the names of them. You have Albemarle Court, and then there is Albemarle Square, and then there is Albemarle Court Square and there is Albemarle Square Court and it has just gotten ridiculous.

One of the interesting things about the Rivanna District is that it runs along [U.S. Route] 250 and 29 so you have, right down the middle of those roads, on the side that's the Rivanna side, you have that development as a major, major issue. And I talk to people all the time who say they don't want to even leave their house and

drive on 29 anymore because it has just gotten too out of control, and then they turn around and say taxes are too high. So if growth paid for itself, we wouldn't see this. So we need to look at the Comprehensive Plan, and given that the Comprehensive Plan has just had a major review by the current board, and it has been a complete failure, we are going to have to revive it again and we are going to have to do it in a way that streamlines the plan itself and then takes a look at where we can make growth more sustainable and smarter.