



2015 Charlottesville City Council Candidate Interview

Candidate: Scott Bandy (Libertarian)

On November 3, 2015, voters in the City of Charlottesville go to the polls to elect their representatives to three seats on the Charlottesville City Council. This recording is Brian Wheeler's September 3, 2015 interview with Scott Bandy (Libertarian). Other candidates in this race include: Wes Bellamy (D); incumbent Kathy Galvin (D); Anson Parker (R); and Mike Signer (D).

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

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

INTERVIEW

Mr. Bandy, 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 City Council 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 Charlottesville City Council?

Brian, I would describe my past experience, to start with, the fortune to have been able to run in 2011 as a candidate. Depending on who you ask in 2011, I was independent. This time on the ballot I'll be listed as an independent, even though I have the nomination of the Libertarian party.

I will run like I did last time. I claim the banner of just an ordinary citizen. I do that because one thing that concerns me is that I know when the voters are out there, and they'll be out there on November 3rd for sure, most of them will be under this train of thought where they will automatically go for what they feel is a degreed or certified person that is interested in civic service.

Now, point of disclosure, no I do not have a college or university degree. If I really wanted to, I suppose I could trump up one from one of the colleges I have had the fortune in life to have been at because the place has closed down but that's not very honest and that's another concern of mine, is bringing better honesty to the City Council. Not that the present, don't get the wrong idea here, not that the present City Council isn't. I see it as simply semantics. We've got to get beyond this semantics quagmire where words can be used to mean anything that someone damned well pleases them to be used for.

And, well I'll wrap this up by saying that yes, integrity is also a qualification that I would like to add. No that's not a degree but when it comes to degrees I would rather stay true and consistent to my own principles then pass myself off under a degree that perhaps doesn't truly represent the character that I am.

2. PRIORITIES: What is your top priority for action by the City Council if you are elected?

There are so many. I would say stability but I realize that's a generic cover there. There are so many good people in Charlottesville and education is probably an industry even though some people get queasy when they hear that word industry. Education is a foundation of this city and it would be just disingenuous if I didn't pay heed to that.

Other things, an issue from 2011 that's close to my heart and I wouldn't place this as number one, two or three as far as priorities. I would say this is a backburner one. But since that time I last ran for Council, up to the present, I've been to a lot of Council meetings. Now I haven't physically been to each and everyone but the ones that I have been to, especially the ones that come around this time of year, October, November and December. There's always that legislative list, that wish list, that the Council likes to dash off to Richmond. And on it, I would like to see a request to entertain the idea of a charter change so that a ward system for elections to Council might be enacted and followed through.

I feel that a ward system would better represent our neighborhoods and our citizens, I think it would encourage their participation, not just only at the standard public comments before City Council but in their very own neighborhood associations.

3. BUDGET / BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION FOR SCHOOL FUNDING: What steps should Council and the School Board take to help build a more sustainable school budget?

Sustainable. That word has been the headache and bane of elected councilors and citizens who have wanted far better for Charlottesville. Sustainable. The Libertarian in me says “sustainable” could be used to mean anything. I realize that the search by those that have been elected has been for a permanent means of revenue that can close that gap and... it’s an in perpetuity mindset.

Sustainable is... it’s so many things but what it isn’t is keeping the school system sufficiently operating. Sufficiently seeing that the teachers are, well, remunerated for their service in educating our young people, tomorrow’s citizens.

I had a chance to read... before I came in here today, I glanced over at... I’m sure that there’s a more current update of it, but the 2013 Blue Ribbon Commission recommendations is out there somewhere. And, again with the semantics. They didn’t make recommendations but they said “we would offer these as alternatives.”

There was like a bemoaning of well, “go with these alternatives” and it’s like a litmus test for leadership. No it’s not, it’s just simply not being able to come out and say no matter how painful it is, the course of action that needs to be taken. As a Libertarian I am frosted that anything could raise assessments and taxes further then they have been.

Oh, sure, now there are some people out there, you know, primarily progressives, too, that insist “well you know, it’s our civic duty,” you know, well, there are people out there suffering. That’s why there’s an entirely different debate going on about jobs in the area. There are people struggling to just have the income for themselves to not just keep up with their taxes, but mortgages, bills such as the gas and electricity and water and of course the stormwater fee which is really a tax in disguise, but for the sake of trying to get along and the fact that it takes more than one Councilor to get anything done with a vote on any proposal through City Council. I just see it that way.

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?

It would be a disservice to parents who have children in the school system not to, but as I alluded to before, I’m leery of where the spending goes. Something that I would have to educate myself up on more, and no I wasn’t making a play on words there.

When we're talking about making pre-K education and quality childcare a priority, we've got keep in mind these are the most impressionable children at an age when... My sister, she got a degree in teaching but, as life goes for some folks, it was something that didn't gel as a career for her even though she had the qualifications for it.

Now I'm not going to dare claim that I have qualifications to be an educator or teacher in our public schools and we won't, I won't even further mention what's available privately or home-schooling. But, children, the youngest of children, this is pre-K education. They're impressionable. It's getting them ready to catch up with the technological advances that have so, I mean, even since 2011, technological advances have just (*whistles*) zoomed. I'm astounded that even children who are pre-school age, you know, someone with their, someone with their parent toddlers, in a place, say, like Best Buy, going up to some of the displays. They know more than their parents!

So, something I would definitely hold a critical and constant eye on. It's important. We don't want to steer our most impressionable future citizens in the wrong direction. We want them to be able to, there's that word again, sustain themselves.

- 5. CITIZEN INPUT: Each growth area in Albemarle County has a community advisory committee appointed by the board of supervisors which provides input on program and policy decisions including the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. In what ways would you like to see city government engage neighborhoods to ensure a diversity of voices is involved in the implementation of the city's small area plans?**

I thought they already did that with that town hall meeting. Oh, excuse me, I'm sorry. (*laughs*).

No, seriously, citizen input. Well, that's suggestive of citizen engagement. I know that was part of Lena Seville's platform running out there earlier in the primary for one of the opposing parties. Engagement is good. I prefer to call that engagement also participation. Without the citizens, the government can't run.

I'm collecting myself here.

The Comprehensive Plan. It's not an etched-in-stone blueprint as some make it out to be. The humble beginnings of our city's Comprehensive Plan, our Comprehensive Plan has gone through a rebirth you might say. I know it's been updated. A lot of things have been updated, especially with zoning.

Again it is recommendations. In 2011, I think I was even asked something similar.

We have to ensure that diversity of voices. It's one of the means of connectivity. One of the key words in our fond City Council 2025 vision.

I would approach it... nothing has changed as far as... I'm looking for thorough simplicity not... not the same complications and the confoundment that citizens have run up against before.

A specific neighborhood is the Strategic Investment Area. Maybe that's another way to look at it. How do you get people involved?

It boils down to the neighborhoods again. I could also, you know, say it ties in with an issue close to my heart such as trying to get the ward system for Council elections reestablished here in Charlottesville. You are going to have citizens that are fervently engaged and then you will have those citizens that... That want their privacy and they want their privacy respected.

I think that's what the question meant by alluding to diversity in there. You're not going to have one hundred percent agreement on whatever plan to go forward. Compromise may be a disgusting and ugly word to some folks, but again, one person such as myself, if elected, I'm going to have to work with the other two under an at-large voter, the other two Councilors that are elected.

Home starts where the heart is and... we could stand to not just listen but actually hear and not try to dice up their words into further semantics. Citizens of neighborhoods. Charlottesville is a tremendously wonderful place to live. Its citizens are what have made it that way. An example. The bike community. And there's another word that plays semantics there, community, but the bikes itself. West Main Street. I'm kind of inclined towards a direction that our outgoing mayor has stood so far with. In fact, I'd rather see the Belmont Bridge completed before anything is gone other than just repavement of the asphalt on West Main Street. I want to say something else like... I think there's a better plan.

I think that... I was talking to another citizen, Nancy Carpenter, about how there's got to be a better way that a long time ago, they would hold bond referendums for schools. You don't see too much of that anymore. Every once in a while, and this is not just with cities but counties as well. The same thing could be done for parks or certain public, and again, and I'm not saying that I would go for such a thing because the Libertarian in me is like "I don't want to spend if I don't have to."

But you realize that instead of putting those bike lanes on West Main that they could probably arrange it to have one heck of a wonderful parkway, park-style way type trail from Commerce, where Commerce Street is, along that back northern side of West Main. One heck of a bike-trail and you know, I almost want to tell, and this isn't meant to be mean, it's just trying to be practical and pragmatic, I'd like to tell the bicycle community, especially the participants who are so dedicated to their efforts on the bike-ped advisory committee in this city, run for office yourself. I mean, if you want, this is like a referendum. You know. You could do much better than bike lanes on West Main. I'm getting a little excited here, I don't want to do that, because I don't want to be accused of, you know, not being able to keep a civic pleasant demeanor so if we could move on.

6. 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.

That is one hell of a good question. The first word I would say is collaboration. There are some citizens in this town that are vehemently opposed to anything that suggests collaboration, especially the more progressive inclined of our city.

I look at it this way. As far as I know, the University is not going to become an incorporated city of itself anytime soon. On my circulation around Charlottesville and some of the people that I manage to ask about consolidation, if I said collaboration before, I meant consolidation.

Deadly pause here. *(laughs)*

They want an independent Charlottesville. Well, reflecting back on the budget and Blue Ribbon Commission for school funding question that was asked earlier, yeah, consolidation is a good way of pooling resources to try to keep costs down and in check. Yet, there's a faction of people out there that simultaneously, you know, its independent city-status. We're separate from the county. Hey, you know we all call it Charlottesville whether it's the county portion or the city portion, Charlottesville.

Let's look this question over again.

Of course, consolidation. Alone I can't make that a priority and in fact... part of me wants to be with those folks that want to keep Charlottesville that independent, that fierce independent status of a city. But on the other hands it's like, I would think it would behoove us not to explore the potential and possibility to investigate what is all means consolidated. I mean, look at other localities such as Virginia Beach and Princess Anne County, or Roanoke County and Roanoke city. What are benefits and realized savings, what, you know, let's study that.

Now, I don't see it going that way anytime soon. But we, you know, semantics, we start with a word, and in this case I use the word consolidation.

7. PLACEMAKING: What role should City Council play in decisions about good urban design and placemaking?

Very little. *(laughs)*

I mean, sheesh, West Main already! The Belmont Bridge! Oh, what other examples can we put out there? William Taylor Plaza! *(laughs)*

I know I've been berated for putting parodies out there on WINA, but I mean, this is the stuff, you can't make this stuff up folks. People talk. Placemaking, I think the best thing we can do at this time, for goodness sakes, whoever is elected. Take your time. Be thorough. The population isn't going to go disappearing or be alien

abducted anytime soon. For the sake of the citizens, for historical integrity, take your time. Be thorough.

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

There are a lot of transportation projects and priorities out there. Three of the biggest ones. U.S. 29. West Main Street. The Belmont Bridge. And, I know this is a fourth one, but lest I forget the Hillsdale Connector and the sides of U.S. 29.

Transportation has been a victim of semantics. I mean, look how long it took us to work out something that the people could use as far as getting the buses around town. I'm happy that we have a new fare system just eager and waiting to be used by the citizens.

My top priority? Well, I alluded to it earlier. Seeing the Belmont Bridge done before anything starts with West Main. I doubt that will be the case though because I know that there are a lot of the other candidates, I'm sorry, the other candidates out there, a lot of the other field candidates have a match, been given a match, a hotfoot to put that through.

[U.S. Route] 29. That golden triangle. I'm making a prediction right now that Best Buy ramp will be insufficient in a year's time after it's done. It pains me to see how... If it weren't so serious, it would almost be like a Greek opera. It reminds me of the water controversy back in 2011. Damming or dredging. There's no question we're not going to have the bypass. And the element that has fervently worked to assure that also has assured that what property was slated and set aside for a potential route has either been returned back or sold. I think... just a personal opinion.

I know there will be folks out there who disagree. I know there will be environmentalists that disagree with me, but that was the worst mistake that could have been made. At least I think there should have been a time to wait before the selling of those properties back, but I suppose that that interest, that special interest, wanted to assure that the bypass was dead and killed. Well, for every action there's an opposite and equal reaction and in a way it kind of concerns me because right now we're going through the pains of, Albemarle especially, is going through the pains of seeing Rio and 29 raised up and totally changed. Well, is the city going to follow through with Hydraulic Road afterwards, or do the electeds think this can be pushed and pushed further under the label of UNJAM 2035.

I have my own thought on that. Because I think it would be an insult to our neighbor and an insult as far as in-faith cooperation and collaboration with the county for not just our electeds but the special interests who saw to it that the bypass was killed to come out again and delay, delay, delay that interchange at Hydraulic Road and 29. Be consistent. A lot of us whether we agree or not, we demand of our electeds consistency. And that, by god, that's a transportation and infrastructure priority and again with the semantics. What really denotes true transportation and infrastructure? Some of it it's like the same domino falling all over the place.

Oh, under the banner of transportation, I know that there was a lot of lauds for rail recently and Meredith Richards efforts. I'm not demeaning that. More power to her. I couldn't be more happy for her. But still, these are fiscally constrained times. We are eager for jobs. Well, that's, jobs are another question so I think we better move along.

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

All. *(laughs)*

Seriously.

Our Comprehensive Plan has under gone a lot of updating and I'm going to... Out of consideration to the citizenry I'm going to defer because I feel that that's something that needs to be studied further. Not as in committee study or as a full Council study but for my position on it. I would have to take a further look at it. I'm vulnerable here, that's an admission. I'm sure that our Councilor and only incumbent, Ms. Galvin, probably has a better take on it because she's in there, she's up on that dais. The other two legacy party candidates, Mr. Bellamy and Mr. Signer, kudos to Mr. Signer as far as concerns for raising employment. I would be, I would hope that they would take a cautious and careful approach because as I said to start this question, the Comprehensive Plan has undergone changes. It's not like the 2007 Comprehensive Plan. Some things have been left still languishing.

10. JOBS: What specifically should city council do to promote employment and what type of jobs will be your priority?

Employment should be encouraged overall. Employment, the full term. Not just interest or certain segments. I'm talking... this goes beyond. Well. I have difficulty with the term "career ladder jobs" because some, you know. Let's allude back to what I was asked about for qualifications. Not everyone is a degreed person. The blue collar community has been ravaged in this city for quite some time. So when I hear the term "career ladder jobs," you know, as a whole, Council needs to be on the same page. I commend outgoing Councilor Dede Smith. I thought that was a brilliant stroke of hers and I suspect Mr. Fenwick was in on it, too. But, especially Councilor Dede for seeing to it that our citizens had a chance, you know, "well, why don't you consider driving a bus for the city?" [The GO Driver program] Brilliant.

I'd like to invest in going in that direction. As far as employment, we're only a city, tongue-twister, of only ten square miles. That's where cooperation becomes important with the county and the University because they are our main employer. Number one. City government is the number two employer in the town. But those stats could change.

I've seen the stats but I'm not going to quote any numbers because I can't think of them off of the top of my head. But I would like to see more from the private sector, more from private entrepreneurship and investments. It's not just a city thing. The

county, UVa. We've got to expand the employment base. We've got to have a way for our citizens to provide income for themselves.

11. PUBLIC HOUSING: Do you support the redevelopment of Charlottesville's public housing sites to create vibrant mixed income and mixed use neighborhoods without displacement of existing residents?

With an eye towards being frugal, I would be doing a disservice to certain citizens if I did not. There's a lot of individual stories out there centered around displacement. Maybe someday, hopefully soon, that will be changed.

I wish these were more economically stable times. Our investment in this area stands to be a priority. Not just needs. Stands to be a priority.