

Henrico County Board of Supervisors Candidate Forum

Sponsored by Sierra Club Falls of the James Group (FOJG),
Partnership for Smarter Growth and Henrico Conservation Network.

Wednesday, September 13th from 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Lipman Auditorium in the Massey Library Technology Center of the
J Sargeant Reynolds Community College Parham Rd campus

1651 E. Parham Rd., Richmond, VA 23228

Answers to Questions

Candidate: Delta R. Bowers, Fairfield District BOS Candidate

To Whom It May Concern:

Please be advised that I will be unable to attend the Candidate Forum on September 13th. While I certainly would have liked to attend, I believe it was in my best interest not to attend due to my employment with Reynolds Community College. I am hopeful that you will consider me for future events. I have attached the answers to the questions. Please share questions as you deem necessary.

Thank you so much for the invitation.

Warm regards,

Delta R. Bowers, DM
Fairfield District Board of Supervisor
Candidate

ENVIRONMENT:

- **With the recent heat waves and forest fires, it seems like the world is on fire as climate change worsens. Would you support and advocate for a county Climate Action Plan with specific actions outlined for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and a timeline for those emission reductions leading to net zero emissions by 2050?**
 - * In answering, please address:
 - Henrico County doesn't have a plan to address climate change.
 - What actions would you propose to reduce Henrico County's carbon footprint? **Drive less, walk more or ride a bicycle, reduce speed limits, service vehicles regularly and keep tires properly inflated, carpool, consider purchasing a hybrid or electric vehicle, install LED lighting in all Henrico County government buildings, use reusable utensils and plates, properly recycle.**
 - Can you commit to developing a plan that addresses climate change? **I will commit to developing a common-sense approach to address climate change.**
 - Would you commit to making the CAP part of the new comprehensive plan this year? **Yes.**
- **Henrico County is becoming a major internet hub with new data centers planned. Data centers are a major economic development focus for Henrico. Dominion Energy is proposing to build out the electricity grid to serve companies like Facebook, QTS, and others. Do you feel like Henrico County has done enough to educate residents and affected communities about all aspects of their economic development plans? **No, I do not.****
 - * In answering, please address:
 - Who should pay for Dominion Energy's expansion of transmission lines to supply data centers? **Dominion Energy. They will reap the financial rewards.**
 - Are you aware of the environmental impacts of data centers on our air quality, our climate goals, water resources and health? **To some degree.**
 - How would you mitigate these environmental and community impacts? **Work with the owners of the data centers to implement common sense approaches to combat the environmental impact to the community.**
 - Would you support a required analysis of the expected cost of infrastructure expansion necessary to service data center demand for energy, water, transmission lines, sewer, new roads, energy substations to be conducted as part of the approval process? **Absolutely.**
- **State law allows local jurisdictions to adopt a plastic bag fee to encourage the use of reusable bags and to cut down on plastic bags in our waste stream. Would you support this local option legislation for Henrico County? **Yes.****

- **The 30 by 30 campaign is a conservation initiative intended to protect 30% of land for nature by the year 2030. The report states that 30% of the Earth's surface is the minimum that humans must protect in order to effectively fight climate change and prevent irreversible declines in biodiversity. As of 2021, Virginia had only achieved 16%. Henrico County has only achieved 6%.**
 - Follow up questions:
 - Would you support setting a 30% by 2030 land conservation goal for Henrico County and put in place the mechanisms to achieve that goal? **Yes.**
 - Are you familiar with conservation programs in the county? **I am familiar with the Henricopolis Soil and Water Conservation District and Land Use Program.**
 - Can you list in what ways have you helped conservation efforts and what will you do to advance the goal of 30% by 2030? **In my own community, we have preserved the acres of land to for natural habitat. I will advocate for more open green space and fewer structures.**

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

THE EPA environmental justice community report shows great disparities in the most vulnerable populations in the county. See EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool at [EJScreen \(epa.gov\)](https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen) and a sample copy attached.

- Follow up:
 - What steps will you take to ensure that disadvantaged communities and communities of color are not disproportionately impacted by decisions to locate industrial and other uses that emit pollution or significantly increase traffic or noise? **I would strongly oppose any impact to disadvantaged communities. I would create a task force to study the worst-case scenarios in the community and work with the task force which would comprise of environmentalist from the local, state and federal governments and private sector experts to determine the best-case scenarios for the residents of Henrico County.**

LAND USE:

- **Northern Virginia's sprawling suburban pattern of development has resulted in significant traffic and loss of farms and forests, causing many people to move to the Richmond region. How will your land use plans ensure we don't repeat the mistakes of NOVA?**
 - * In answering, please address:
 - Will you support comprehensive plans and zoning to protect forests, farmland, and natural and historic resources? **Yes.**
 - Will you support development patterns including mixed-use transit-oriented communities (TOD) projects that are also

pedestrian and bicycle-oriented, that save land and reduce the amount that people have to drive? **Absolutely.**

- **Development pressures in the eastern portion of Henrico County that would significantly change the character of that community have prompted some residents to post signs saying “Don’t Short Pump Varina”. What is your position on development of the East End and the sentiments expressed by this sign?** I understand the concerns relative to development and the impact that it has on the community and the environment. However, the growth in Short Pump and relative Three Chopt and Tuckahoe Districts have yielded great rewards relative to schools, living and home experience. The Eastern districts continue to struggle relative to all of the above. The Western districts’ schools are thriving and have been recognized nationally. The Western districts are highly desired to live in. No, I do not want to see over development in the Eastern districts. However, I do want the Eastern districts to be on par with the Western districts. We are one Henrico County.

- **Virginia law requires localities to develop long range comprehensive plans to address population growth and land use. Henrico County is currently in the process of formulating its 2045 plan during a period of accelerating growth and land conversion, particularly in the traditionally rural Varina district. The 2045 Plan, when finalized, will guide important zoning decisions and changes on the landscape for many years to come.**
 - * In answering this question, please address:
 - What are some of the dangers and opportunities presented by the comprehensive planning process as it plays out in Henrico? **Dangers include overgrowth and potentially more environmental issues as a result. Opportunities include more employment opportunities, better schools and more diverse communities.**
 - If elected, what actions would you take to ensure that Henrico’s 2045 plan —and its use- embody the highest principles of good government and smart growth? **I would consult other County’s around the country who have proven approaches to good governance and smart growth of similar size. I would collaborate with all relevant stakeholder groups to gather their input, particularly the residents, collaborate with the other Board of Supervisors and develop a plan that is in the best interest of all residents. We are one Henrico County.**

TRANSPORTATION:

- **Northern Virginia has built and widened dozens of roads and still has significant traffic. Henrico County plans and Central Virginia Transportation Authority priorities also include significant road expansion. What will be your project priorities for transportation to provide alternatives to driving and reduce emissions?**
 - In answering this question, please address:
 - What actions will you take to increase access to bus transit in your county? **Conduct a study to determine where it is logical for public transportation to travel and work with the surrounding areas and GRTC to implement common sense bus access.**
 - Our roads are increasingly unsafe for all users, but especially people walking and biking, and trying to use transit. What will you do to make our roads safer? **I have requested sidewalks over the years for my community to no avail. I would advocate for sidewalks, lower speed limits as I did in Northern Henrico County and the creation of safe bicycle routes.**
 - Transportation is now the #1 source of greenhouse gas emissions. What steps will you take to help your residents reduce these emissions? **Urge them to carpool, walk or bike more when feasible. And, buy fuel efficient vehicles.**
- **Will you work to expand GRTC in the county? Including working with our school board to create more routes near our high schools to help students with after school programming, after school jobs, and independent living skills. I would consider where it is feasible to do so.**

HOUSING:

- **Henrico County, like other communities, faces challenges in providing affordable housing. What specific policies, funding, and tenant rights measures do you propose to increase the availability of affordable housing options, especially for lower income families?**
 - In answering this question, please address:
 - Would you be willing to identify affordable housing unit goals and targets? **I would for all districts. The Fairfield districts has more affordable housing than any other districts. Each district should have the same percentage of affordable housing units.**
 - Would you create a housing trust fund and how would you leverage federal funds? (this question is only for Henrico) **I would have to conduct a study to determine the need and to address this question.**
 - Would you create legal defense support for tenants who are facing eviction? **I would have to review the reasons for eviction.**

Perhaps create pathways for the tenants to work and pay their rent.

- How would you address issues of discrimination, and would you use public land available in conjunction with fire houses, government offices complexes, community centers to provide affordable housing? I would only consider this approach if all districts were required to have the same amount of affordable housing as is the case in other states and cities around the country.

PUBLIC PROCESS AND TRANSPARENCY:

- **How do you plan to increase transparency and the involvement of all residents, representing the full diversity of the community, in the decision-making process?** I would host Town Hall meetings to discuss all of the resources available and discuss opportunities and pitfalls. I would be completely transparent about the innerworkings of the Board and Supervisors and Planning Commission and the impact on the community. Far too long, the Fairfield District was marginalized. Residents were not aware their property assessments were much less than other districts. Highest crime rates, low average median income per household and most schools that are unaccredited. Moreover, Fairfield has more subsidized housing complexes than any other district. The residents are unaware. Under my watch, they will be completely educated as I have done for the last 15 years as President of Northern Henrico Civic Association.

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○ In answering this question, please address:

- What additional approaches would you use for outreach to reach renters and lower income residents?
- Do you think the county website provides adequate information, and if not, how would you improve it? The website is informational, but many residents do not understand how to navigate the site. I would host Town Hall meetings to discuss all of the resources available to the residents and educate them on the website.

EDUCATION EQUITY:

- With the new proposed changes to our education system regarding the marginalization of Black history being taught in our public schools and policies related to LGBTQ students, what are your thoughts on this change? Do you support or oppose Gov. Glen Youngkin's proposed changes? Black History is American History. All history should be taught in the schools. It should not be politicized. The policies regarding LGBTQ students

should not be a political issue. We must address this matter using approaches as we would any other matter to ensure a holistic experience for the students impacted.

- **Reducing food insecurity is essential for promoting educational equity because it addresses both immediate barriers to learning, such as hunger and health issues, as well as the long-term structural inequalities that affect educational outcomes. What is your plan to help reduce food insecurities in Henrico County?** Create a plan to address poverty in the County to ensure residents who live in poverty are trained in livable wage jobs and placed accordingly in corporations. This approach would create the ability for parents to buy food, buy their homes and pay for health insurance for their families that will lead to a better educational experience and relative outcome.
- **How do you plan to collaborate with the Henrico County School Board to address education equity issues within the county?** I will recommend that the Board of Supervisors establish an Educational Advisory Committee to address education equity issues in the County. This committee would be charged with working with the School Board to research best practices around the country and adopting those that would fit Henrico County to ensure an equitable learning experience for all students within the County.