

Sierra Club Henrico County Board of Supervisors Candidate Forum Questionnaire 2023

Tyrone Nelson- Varina District

Environment:

The County does and is implementing plans to address the impacts of climate change in our community. Being local government, we have virtually no authority or enforcement ability with environmental regulations. Our efforts are focused around what we can control, such as public land, governmental operations, and partnerships with the private sector on sustainability programs. Some programs and projects to address the effects of climate change are:

- o Reforestation
- o Flood mitigation (stream restorations, floodplain voluntary buyout program, private BMP maintenance)
- o Renewable energy sources (solar and methane gas reuse)
- o Creating EV charging stations around the County
- o Establishment of C-PACE (low-interest finance program for commercial and industrial development that include sustainability components)
- o Transit expansion

Henrico County is participating in the development of a regional Climate Action Plan with Plan RVA, our regional planning organization. Recently PlanRVA was awarded a \$1M EPA grant to complete this regional plan. Key outcomes of this work will be a Primary Climate Action Plan developed within one year; a Comprehensive Action Plan developed within two years of grant funding; and a Status Report at the conclusion of the fourth year. The initial plan will focus on short-term, ready-to-implement projects and policies from all regional partners. The Comprehensive Action Plan developed by year 2 will expand this work to consider a longer time frame and it will include more ambitious project goals. PlanRVA will lead our region in developing ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets for the region. We will work with PlanRVA to involve the public and major stakeholders in setting these targets and selecting the reduction measures in the initial and comprehensive plan, especially our citizens from Low-Income and Disadvantaged Communities.

Data Centers- The County allows for public engagement during Zoning cases for all development types to include Data centers.

Four questions:

1. The entities involved should pay and those that benefit
2. yes
3. have entity use best practices
4. Not sure what this involves. If it is legal, would consider it if needed.

Plastic bags

The county is dedicated to reducing the use of single use plastics bags. In fact, we have partnered with many businesses including major grocery stores like Kroger and Tom Leonard's to encourage shoppers to use reusable bags. Any fee or tax needs to be studied before implementation, because as we know, there would be financial implications to both the business and the shopper. Businesses would have administrative burdens to capture the cost, and most businesses pass down tax and fees to their customers. I support this.

Conservation

The county owns 9,600 acres that are available for reforestation, about 6 percent of our land mass. We also assist and support (while also balancing future needed infrastructure) private conservation easements. In Valina alone, between the county and private conservation easements, more than 9,600 acres are preserved.

I support conservation and preservation where and when appropriate

I am familiar with our programs

I have encouraged private conservation and voted on thousands of public acres in conservation.

Environmental Justice

We have always thought of ways to support and protect our most vulnerable residents. Some examples include:

- As part of our ARPA utility projects (\$64M), we are waiving the extension and connection fee costs. Saving our residents anywhere from \$10K to \$20K if they choose to connect.
- Free well water testing
- The creation of the residential inspection zone and implementation of innovative community supports for residents of Glenwood Farms (Fairfield District).

Land Use

- NOVA – Henrico Comparison

The county is always implementing long-range plans and policies that balance all the components of growth. Mixed-use transit-oriented communities are concepts we are considering, but part of NOVA's problem is the lack of regional coordination on development efforts. The county has worked hard with our regional partners to focus on transportation funding and projects as we grow.

- Creation of CVTA
- Henrico finally serving on GRTC Board of Directors (I am the board chairperson)

Further, when we, the Board of Supervisors, approved the recent Zoning Ordinance revision, we included an entire section on environmental requirements and environmentally-friendly incentives. Some include

- Recycling containers for new multifamily developments
 - Minimum 30% native plantings as part of landscaping plan
 - Tree planting replacements
 - Parking reductions and density bonuses for implementation of multimodal transportation
- Comprehensive Plan- Back in December of 2022, the Board of Supervisors directed the County Manager and staff to revamp the Natural Resources Chapter in the current comp plan. The new chapter will focus on all aspects of sustainability and protection of our natural resources and consider the results of the regional Climate Action Plan.

I have served as Board of Supervisors representative for 12 years now, and we have been very smart about residential development. I have never considered or acted like "Short Pump" is a desire. We have purchased large parcels of land that were supposed to be residential developments to preserve that land. For every development we have considered we have turned 20 away. I have balanced the desires of some of the community members with trying to create a community where residents can live, work, and play.

Implying that Varina is now accelerating in growth is sad. I will continue to look at the comp plan and each case and gauge it on its merit.

Transportation

The county had one of the largest expansions of transit ever in Central Virginia when we extended transit to Short Pump and the airport. We are the largest contributor to GRTC and are already looking forward to expansion along the Route 1 corridor, Pulse Bus Rapid Transit expansion west to the county line and south into Chesterfield. We presently have transit routes that are near several high schools including Tucker, Highland Springs and Freeman.

The county owns and maintains over 1,600 miles of roadway.

For the past 15 years we have been spending substantial county funds to add bicycle, pedestrian and mixed-use trails to our roads. Our initial inventory of sidewalks showed about 250 miles were in place when this effort started.

In the three years we have completed 36 projects adding an additional 12 miles of sidewalk, bike lane or mixed-use trail. At a cost of \$36 Million.

Our present project list includes an additional 100 projects with a total of 45 more miles of sidewalk mixed use trail and pedestrian facilities.

Many of our most significant challenges are on VDOT Roads, these roads include Williamsburg Road, Nine Mile Road, Staples Mill, Broad Street and Patterson Avenue. We are working with VDOT to provide better pedestrian and bike facilities on their roads.

I am the board chair for GRTC, and so I am very much determined to expand the network within the county especially in eastern Henrico.

Housing

We have been active in this space before the current housing crisis.

- Our staff serve on Board for Partnership for Housing Affordability and participate in Richmond Regional Housing Framework work that outlines the housing needs of the region and goals we need to achieve – and locally, we take this report into consideration with development decisions.
 - Deficit of 30,000 to 40,000 affordable units for homeowners and renters, according to most recent report. I would be committed to identifying a target goal
- One Example is Arcadia development in Varina. Though I faced a lot of opposition...the County partnered with the developer and Maggie Walker Land Trust to have a minimum of 20 single-family detached homes in perpetual affordability under the land trust model; I negotiated the deal, and the county will donate \$500,000 to Maggie Walker for the acquisition of the lots. These lots and home will be sold for \$200k or less.

Funding

- Appropriated/budgeted \$5.6M for affordable and workforce housing opportunities used for acquisition, development costs, non-profit donations; flexible and nimble funding source
- Have leveraged local dollars to have a total development cost of affordable and workforce housing of \$29.3M; this includes partnerships with MWCLT, project:homes, Virginia Supportive Housing, Habitat and others to create a development pipeline of 49 affordable homes and 86 permanent supportive housing units at Cool Lane Commons
- Appropriated \$2M and partnered with non-profit to administer a mortgage assistance program to help frontline employees close on homes in Henrico.

Renters

- Since 2018, we have required multifamily development owners looking for new federal financing/loans of subsidized housing units to enter into MOUs with the county to: maximize the quality of the renovation the owner is looking to make on the property; improve and add community amenities; and require owners and management provide life skill programming, such as financial literacy, healthy cooking, and wellness.
- Have 4 MOUs representing 17% of the county's subsidized housing portfolio

I would support affordable housing trust fund.

Public Process and Transparency

- In many areas involving housing and environmental regulations, the county has virtually no authority or enforcement ability, so what we do is intervene as much as possible to influence our stakeholders in the best interest of our community and educate our community.
 - PFAS response in late 2021 to today...spent close to \$1M in training, testing, and filters in area public utility systems have no responsibility or role – but we did it because we could and it is the right thing to do for the health and safety of our community.
 - We used social media, press releases, coordinated with the DEQ to hold in-person meeting with us, notifications in utility bills, and we even had a door-hanger campaign where we had county employees knocking on doors and leaving paper doorhangers with information on how to secure a free well water test.
 - Dominion transmission SCC meetings
 - EPA & DEQ meeting
- The county and Board of Supervisors are constantly trying to find new ways to engage all of our residents and businesses. If there more opportunities to connect with residents digitally or in-person, we want to know and will implement such communication channels.

Education Equity

Education is the highest priority for the Board of Supervisors as they receive 56 to 57 cents of every tax dollar collected, meaning schools received more than half of our funds.

I personally advocated and succeeded in getting HSHS a total new rebuild when only budgeted for renovation based on the principle of equity.

I oppose Youngkin changes.

I support maximizing funding to eliminate food insecurities.