

League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, Virginia Blacksburg Town Council Candidate Forum

26 October 2009

Questions Asked During Candidate Forum

1. Redevelopment of the Middle School property will transform the center of Blacksburg. a) Describe your vision for this property; and b) What will you do to pursue this vision?
2. What place does a big box store have in Blacksburg?
3. There are a variety of revenue streams funding the Town budget. Is there need to change any of these or their rates?
4. What do you see as the top two to three issues for the Town and Gown Committee to work on this coming year?
5. In what kind of activities would you like to see more cooperation between VA Tech and the Town?
6. To be a conscientious council member will take much time, perhaps 20 hours/week. Will you be able to do that?
7. The Toms Creek Basin has unique zoning & development rules. What do you think the Toms Creek Basin should look like in 2020?
8. Every new house built in Blacksburg causes the County to lose money because additional costs including schools are more than the tax revenue from the new house. Would you consider requiring a builder to pay impact fees through proffers to be shared between the town and county? This could be part of a deal in acquiring the old middle school property.

Questions Not Asked During Candidate Forum

Farmers Market

1. How do you see the new Farmer's Market being best utilized?

South Main/ First & Main / Big Box Development / Mixed Use Zoning

1. Mixed use development is being successfully constructed by conscientious real estate developers all over the country. The rezoning application for the First & Main project proposed mixed use--retail, offices, and homes. That plan was approved by Town Council. Do you support mixed use at First and Main? Should the Town Council accept less than mixed use on that site?
2. The Virginia Supreme Court recently unanimously ruled that Blacksburg was misled by developers of First and Main. Do you agree with that decision?
3. What do you think of the VA Supreme Court ruling against the First and Main developers? Most people do not understand what the case was about. Do you?
4. The VA Supreme Court recently unanimously ruled that Blacksburg was misled by the developer of First & Main. Do you agree with that decision, as did many cities and counties throughout the state that filed friendly briefs for the case?
5. What is your opinion of the mixed use zoning adopted by council. Should it be changed?
6. Do you feel 1450 was good for the town? I so why--if not, why not?

7. Would you ignore [existing] neighborhoods sentiment and approve a special use permit for a large format store next to a grade school?
8. How is protecting neighborhoods in line with a superstore next to a school?
9. Several of you want a big-box retail store in the vacant lot on Country Club Drive. Specifically, which store do you want and how do you propose dealing with the traffic at Country Club and South Main St.
10. There seems to be a lot of confusion about the actual economic impact of a large retailer coming to town. Can you explain what you think the economic impact will be?
11. Do you feel there is a difference between Kohl's, Target, or a Walmart if any of the three had a desire to come to Blacksburg?
12. What is your vision for the development or redevelopment of South Main from Country Club to the bypass, and how can the Town guide that vision?
13. Ordinance 1450 requires a conditional use permit and public input for any proposed retail use over 50,000 sq. ft. Two questions: a) Did you support or oppose Ordinance 1450 at the time of its adoption; b) Do you presently support the protections to neighborhoods that Ordinance 1450 provides? Please answer with yes/no responses and then explain your positions.

Governance / Candidate Voting

1. If an issue came up where 80% of citizens held one position but you believed in the opposite position. What would you do?
2. Comments have been made regarding citizen participation on Town boards and commissions. As a graduate of the Town's Citizens Institute, I have applied to serve, but have not been selected. I am willing and want to serve. What options are available for citizens such as me to serve?
3. What personal attributes do you have that would allow you to work productively with fellow members of town council who do not share your views?
4. What, if anything, has the current council done with which you disagree, and what will you do differently?
5. Over the weekend, we received campaign literature which contained a letter with the names of individuals/couples supporting the candidates. 1/3 of these names were of people residing outside of town. What do you perceive as the role of non-residents in campaigns and elections in the town and why should they have any voice?
6. The town has recently discontinued most brush pick-ups and the trimming of limbs overhanging streets while it has increased expenditures on regulations and code enforcement. Do you believe the town should concentrate its resources on providing services to its citizens or on managing and regulating them?

Miscellaneous

1. Are you now or have you ever been a member of the "BURG" Group?
2. What three words describe you?
3. Why do you like living in Blacksburg?

New High School Football Stadium

1. Do you feel the New Blacksburg High School football stadium was an example of smart growth and do you feel the nearby neighborhoods were negatively effected?

Neighborhoods/ Neighborhood Groups

1. How can the Town and citizens work together to revitalize and strengthen neighborhood groups?

North Main

1. Do you support or oppose the North Main project--the proposed improvements to Main Street between College Avenue and Prices Fork Road? Explain why.

Old Middle/High School

1. Can you explain what you propose to do with the old middle school site? Please be as specific as possible!
2. How do you plan to purchase the Middle School property?

Prices Fork Road

1. Should there be further commercial development between University Mall and the bypass?

Quality of Life

1. What 1 to 2 things would you like Blacksburg to be known for?
2. What could be done to address or improve alcohol related quality of life issues in Neighborhoods?
3. According to various reports, Blacksburg is becoming increasingly popular as a retirement location. Do you think this trend is in jeopardy because of the absence of a Sonic Drive-In and a Wal-Mart supercenter in town?

Recreation

1. Is the Town of Blacksburg doing enough to support our recreational clubs, particularly those that whose activities are having a sizeable economic impact on Blacksburg and the NRV?
2. How can the Town of Blacksburg be more supportive of active recreation (soccer, baseball, football, basketball, lacrosse, biking, swimming, etc.) particularly for our youth?
3. Do you or your children participate, organize, or coach in local athletic activities? If so, do you feel that the Town of Blacksburg provides adequate facilities for these activities?
4. How do you feel about the importance of recreational facilities in Blacksburg?

Sonic

1. A Sonic Drive-In restaurant was proposed on South Main. The original plan was turned down for poor design. An improved site plan was approved. Do you feel the Town Council protected Blacksburg by requiring an improved design?
2. Do you believe that more creative young professionals would choose to settle in

- Blacksburg if only we had a Sonic Drive-In and a Wal-Mart Supercenter in town?
3. Did Town Council rule correctly on the Sonic application?

Taxes/ Revenue

1. How hard would you work to get the restaurants and hotel at VA Tech to pay sales tax to the Town of Blacksburg?
2. Do you believe Blacksburg is fiscally stable? How much of your answer is based on Blacksburg current retail entities and are they enough to say the following: “ I pledge not to raise property taxes during my 4 year term?”