--- Greenbrier Neighborhood Association Forum (5/24/17) ---
Questions Asked and Answers from Dale Woodson

Introduction of Candidates

Hey guys. I'm Dale Woodson. I've been living in Charlottesville for about the last twelve years and this area will always be my home. My family has been in the area for a couple hundred years and I hope we will still be here in a couple hundred more… The reason I'm running is that I'm a Millennial I'm tired of complaining and waiting.

Millennials are the future of our city, state, and country. In a few years all of our city councils, state houses, national congress, and our president will all be Millennials… If we're going to make a difference, I don't think we need to keep complaining and "waiting for our turn". We need to decide to go after it and try to make those changes that we want to see NOW rather than just waiting on the world to change…

True Affordable Housing, which is not a problem that is fixed simply with public housing projects but by a broader and market-based approach.

True listening, conversation, and compromise. Representing everyone as individuals, not as certain races or languages. Y tambien quiero tratar de empezar una conversacion con nuestros vecinos latinos, because they've never had anyone representing them.

Bring back the mundane, boring-ness of City Council. This job is not to be flashy and yearning for attention, but to do the job.

Growth and Development

Smart growth concepts, i.e., increased density, increased walkability, increased green infrastructure, and an increased mixture of uses and housing types, have served as the guiding principles for City policy for more than a decade. Do you hope to continue these policies? If so, why is the implementation of these smart growth policies important?

> I will continue these types of policies, but smart growth policies HAVE to take into account that these need to benefit everyone in the neighborhood.
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> The council has been trying to reach out to the real people of the neighborhood, but hosting an extra council meeting or throwing a pizza party in a park is not the answer to bringing the community's actual needs and worries to the council's attention. It's a good try and all, but I feel those are used as excuses. "Well, we did hold a meeting, but only 3 people showed up, so the neighborhood must not care what happens."
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> Our city council needs to be made up of real people from our different communities that will speak to their neighbors and friends and bring those issues up to the entire council… Having the single-faceted representation that we have now means that every idea comes from this wealthy single-vision political class, which only represents a tiny fraction of the diversity of Charlottesville.

As these policies have been implemented, density has increased and so has congestion. Increasingly, driving is becoming less desirable and finding parking is more difficult. However, within the Greenbrier Neighborhood, most of us live over a mile to a mile and a half from Downtown or UVA. This distance makes walking into these core areas unrealistic, as least on a daily basis. On the other hand, the distance is short enough that riding a bike on a greenway trail or taking the bus is a realistic option…….

If elected, what will you do to solve this transportation problem that our neighborhood, and other similarly situated City or County neighborhoods, face due to the increases in density?

> There are certain areas of the city that the CAT system supports very well, but the vast majority of areas are hugely underserved. Where I live at Fry's Spring, we

are luckier than most. Not because the CAT support is so much better there, but because we have two independent bus systems thank to UVA UTS...

We need to add more routes and work to find more streamlined and often pickups. However, there are times of the day where the busses are pretty empty, so there has to be a balance. The thing I worry about is that we would spend a ton of your tax-payer money to improve the system and then very few new people would use it.

Perhaps whenever we are scheduled to purchase a new bus, we could look into purchasing a few smaller busses to serve the underserved areas that will likely not have 20 people lining up at a bus stop. While this probably won't come up to a huge number savings-wise, it could help alleviate the problem while also helping to save money and keep our carbon footprint and environmental impact as low as possible.

Driving around the City, I bet most citizens can't tell you where the City/ County boundary line is... Yet our city and county elected leaders can't seem to coordinate on the major issues affecting our seamless urban area. What are the major City/ County issues that you feel need to be address? How will you work to increase City/ County cooperation on these issues?

Some of the main issues with our county and city working together here are blatantly political. I think that we could do a lot to rectify this issue by having a more diverse cross-section of Charlottesville representing us on the City Council. I have a lot of family in Albemarle and the surrounding counties and I actually care about what they think about some of the issues regarding Charlottesville. At a lot of the council meetings, I see a lot of self-centered personalities that want the things they want and they blatantly joke and say "well, we don't really care what the county thinks, we're gonna do whatever we want."

I think this type of attitude is one of the reasons that relations have degraded. We all live together and work together, and we should be listening to each other and working toward common goals. Not baiting and trying to start a fight saying

"we don't give a crap what they think, we're gonna do what we feel like." Even if it's meant as a joke, this kind of rhetoric is only harmful…

I feel we need to have independent voices that will listen to people from the city and the surrounding counties to highlight the things that connect us, not focus on getting media headlines and trying to simply further their own careers…

If you agree with the concept, in what ways is increased density good for our City? And what policies should we be implementing to maximize those benefits/ offset the impacts?)

Increased density can be a good thing, especially for transportation reasons. If enough necessary services are nearby, it can reduce the need to drive or wait to take a bus everywhere. Of course, a lot of the times with increased density, comes an increase in property value which can push people out. Services and help to lower-income people and businesses in the area can NOT be an afterthought or used to make the area seem more "hipster". One service that is simply not available to people that live near downtown is a grocery store. There's Market Street Market (which is an awesome store, but the definition of hipster and overpriced) and Kim's Market (which doesn't have the largest selection in town). If you want to increase walkability and density, all of downtown and Belmont shouldn't only have the option of the very long walk to Reid's if you don't own a car to take you to Barracks or to 5th Street … Downtown has a lot of great restaurants, venues, and money-making enterprises, but it doesn't have what it needs to simply support normal people that live nearby…

You can't just leave a few poorer buildings in an area and build fancier new buildings around and try to pass that off as being fair. That kind of thinking just trivializes people that may be struggling and will just increase the social and economic divide as opposed to creating the "togetherness" that it may be advertised as.

Implementation of Capital Improvement Projects

I think that many of my fellow residents would agree that the City does a good job delivering core services. Our leaves are picked up multiple times a year. Our streets are plowed quickly after each storm. ETC…

However, when it comes to the big things, we seem to spend years bogged down and failing to get important projects done. The Belmont Bridge and the West Main Street Streetscape projects come to mind. The fact is that several of our schools need major renovations… For more local examples, we are waiting for greenway trail construction to start within Greenbrier Park, even though the City adopted the Greenbrier Park Master Plan in 2013 and allocated construction funding in 2014. Other examples are the numerous traffic calming complaints within our neighborhood that go unresolved. Or the lack of sidewalks in critical areas of our neighborhood, like Yorktown Drive.

Why is does it take so long to get anything built/ implemented within this City? What do you think the root causes of this problem are?
If elected, what ideas do you have for speeding up this process and delivering these projects?

I think that a lot of the city council has forgotten what their jobs actually are. A City Council needs to focus their attention on the mundane and boring parts of the job. Transportation, education, roads, building sidewalks, improving the tax code. There are plenty of places to push one's personal political agenda, but I think the council has become convinced that it wants to be a reality TV drama instead of a city council… Our city councilors shouldn't be trying to get that next Today show interview to help climb the ladder and improve their own careers… They should get a request for a sidewalk, and then be working to find the money in the budget, find a contractor, and get it done… The day-to-day running of city, which is what someone on City Council is supposed to be focused on, seems to be the secondary reason that some people are on city council.

Fighting for racial reasons, or being the 'capital of the resistance' are all fine and important causes, but that's not what the job of someone on the City Council is supposed to be. There are plenty of organizations to join and work toward pushing your platform, but solely focusing on those things means that they lose focus on what their actual job is supposed to be. Being a city councilor should be a pretty mundane and boring job, not a platform to use to become famous.

The City is willing to spend $1.6M on a consultant to advise them to spend $30M to "streetscape" West Main, why can't they spend a few hundred thousand and complete the sidewalks in our neighborhood or give the School Board $30M to update our aging school buildings, or fix the air conditioning in Crescent Hall? If you were given $30M right now as a City Councilor to fund any project you want, and only you could decide, what project (can be anything at all, schools, statues, trails, bridges, tunnels, whatever...) would you choose?)

I think that people feel ostracized from what the city council is doing and that they don't have any pull or control over the people that they give the jobs to. That power needs to be returned to the people… And, if I were to get that money the one thing that I wouldn't want to do is use it to fund a project that I wanted…

We need input from real people on what their neighborhoods need. I would like to try to coordinate with the different neighborhood associations and try to allocate the money to the different neighborhoods. I think that we should, with the connections we can use from our neighborhood associations, send out a direct mailer to citizens that would list the biggest issues that the neighborhood is looking at and ask for a vote (or 'other ideas' section) on what projects real people think should be prioritized. It's hard to get people to return these, but if we backed that up with advertising on local media (and a televised contest where you could win gift cards that local businesses donate) I feel we could get some kind of feel for what the people think are the most needed projects.

Economic Development

There are many proposed solutions for economic development. Broadly speaking, economic development solutions tend to take a two-pronged approach. The first prong focuses on creating pathways for economically disadvantaged citizens to access employment and providing them with support programs to help keep them employed. The second set of solutions tends to focus on the creation of new or expansion of existing economic sectors in order to broaden our general prosperity and increase the City's tax base.

In the interest of time, candidates will be asked one of the following questions: (Note if a candidate is really passionate about one question over the other, they can pick the one they wish to address. Or, if the candidate is quick…, they can answer both questions.)

A. For the first prong focused on employment or social programs that are targeted toward our fellow citizens at the bottom end of the economic inequity spectrum, which programs or strategies that you believe are working and/or need to be expanded?

B. For the second prong of economic development, what economic sectors should we be focused on growing as a City or as a region? What are your ideas for growing those sectors?

We have some good programs here in town regarding job training and placement, but we need to do a lot more. When we train people with new skills, we need to make sure that there are area jobs that will allow them to use the skills and find reliable long-term employment… I know that we are already trying to focus our attention toward attracting more tech-based companies, and I am all for continuing that, but with a caveat…

We need to make sure that the companies that we are working to attract will bring a wide diversity of jobs with them. A company can't say its hiring a diverse work force if it has $100k jobs and then a few janitorial positions. A company needs to show that it can provide a large range of positions, from a six-figure income for some, to a great living for people working a call-center, to a good living for some other support positions. We need to focus on bringing in businesses that can employ and help people from a lot of different walks of life.

Lee/ Jackson Statue Removal & Racial Divisions

The question of whether or not to remove and/ or recontextualize the Lee and Jackson Statues has been a major topic within our community over the past year or so. However, racial and class issues are partially at the root of several other controversial issues that our community must face. The redevelopment of the city's public housing complexes and the Strategic Investment Area, or SIA, serves as another example of our complex history.

When, as a community, we are faced with trying to solve these tough issues, it is tempting to ask a politician, "What solutions do you have for developing a community wide consensus and reducing the bitterness and anger?" However, it may be more interesting, in a forum like this, to ask, "What do you see as the key underlying barriers inhibiting successful dialogue on the issues of race and income inequality?"

This issue continues to be made worse by the fact that our city councilors aren't actively trying to do the job that they were hired to do. There are plenty of platforms and organizations out there to work with, march and protest for, etc… And if that is your personal cause, then that's awesome and more power to you; work your butt off for that cause…

But, once again, being on city council is supposed to be about the mundane things that make our city run on a daily basis. It's not supposed to be a glorious, front-page news, nationally interviewed position… If you want to get attention and further your career, then go ahead and do that, but by doing that while on the city council, the actual issues get pushed to the background.

Racial and income inequality are big issues that we deal with and will be dealing with for a long time. These deep-seated long-term issues will not be fixed by changing a name or moving a statue. It may be a big media-covered victory, but how many people's daily lives will actually be improved by it? Someone in city council should be focused on evening the playing field through tax cuts for lower income citizens, jobs and social programs, rental/utility assistance, etc. Things that may actually help improve the condition of someone's life, not just cause a media frenzy…