

“Student Issues” City Council Questionnaire

Please return to zbpilc@wm.edu by 11pm on Sunday, April 6, 2008

Submitted by Terence J. Wehle

TOWN-GOWN RELATIONS

- 1. As a member of City Council, what proposals will you pursue to improve town-gown relations?*

Represent all citizens, students, workers, and retired such that each is treated fairly. Relationships are able to bloom wherever mutual respect is fostered.

- 2. As a member of City Council, what will you do to reach out to William and Mary students?*

Make clear to them that they are an integral and important part of the character, charm, vibrancy and economic vitality of our City.

- 3. What are you doing, or will you be doing, in your campaign to reach out to William and Mary students?*

I look forward to the offered interview with the Flat Hat editors and to participating in the student sponsored debate in the historic Wren Building. I am available for any student group who would like to talk. My phone number is 220-9598 and my email address is tjw@crswebsite.com. Students can visit my website at www.TWForCouncil.com to access my point of view on many issues.

NIGHTLIFE

- 4. What will you do to attract student-oriented businesses within walking-distance of the College, especially for students who are under 21 years-old?*

I believe in the free market system. Successful businesses are driven by filling a need and providing a competent level of service. This is the greatness of our system, letting the market freely respond to public need.

Students can use their considerable market power to let it be known what services they are looking for, and what services they feel would be supported, so that they themselves or other entrepreneurs can provide those services and do so profitably.

I don't believe it is the role of Government to interfere in the marketplace, except in the supporting role of keeping taxes low, the City attractive and regulating for the public good as needed. Therefore, I don't consider it a high priority of Council to spend tax dollars to conduct surveys or to invest in promoting any one particular business idea.

How will you involve students in this process?

The spark and energy must come from the students; perhaps there are some who would take on a project of starting a student business. The planning department has all the zoning information and is full of dedicated and helpful employees; they have helped me many times! This information is also available on line on the City Web site. Doing this research, students will find what kind of businesses are allowed where and begin the exciting task of designing a service that will meet the needs of the students and be profitable.

Places that are available for new businesses do come available and students will want to keep your eyes open. After many months of being vacant, a storefront in the triangle building was leased by a pizza owner. I believe the original Master Craftsman building is available. There are also opportunities in the Williamsburg Shopping center which has large spaces available that could accommodate many different ideas.

What will you do to promote student-oriented businesses in the High Street development?

I think my previous answers probably covered this. I believe the kinds of business that are successful are a function of demand and the owner's dedication. Government cannot create demand nor should it subsidize business ventures which are unable to sustain themselves competitively.

Ironically, the college provides so many services on campus, that I would imagine it may dissuade an entrepreneur from trying to compete with a similar business off campus. For example, I do see that there are multiple dining options on campus including the Quiznos chain. These, of course, will have an impact on the number of additional off campus dining places that could be supported by the market.

HOUSING

5. *Do you believe the Three Persons to a House Rule has been a successful policy for the City of Williamsburg? How or how not?*

This response is taken from the summary section found at www.TWForCouncil.com:

Three Person Rule – CONSIDER allowing up to 4 persons **ONLY WHERE IT MAKES LOGICAL SENSE**. For **EXAMPLE**, the home next to mine is rented to 3 students. It has 4 bedrooms in the main house **AND** a 500 sq ft detached servants' quarters. It does not make sense to restrict these living arrangements to 2 persons in the 4 BR home and 1 person in the detached quarters.

Parking: Consider restricting "on street" permit parking to two vehicles per household. Consider increasing the parking fine amount; and update the ability of the police to quickly track violations by using a license plate scanner.

6. *As a member of City Council, how would you propose altering this policy, and what is your specific timeframe for completing this process?*

This response is taken from the Three Person Rule section found at www.TWForCouncil.com

Solution: Review Mrs. Murphy's study results on this issue from 2005 and consider increasing the limit to four persons *where logical*. The criteria would likely be based on a combination of bedrooms (rooms with built in closets), total square footage and the presence of accessory buildings used for habitation. It may be advisable to also examine the number of automobiles granted parking privileges per dwelling. Increasing the number of potential boarders should not be allowed to adversely impact the neighborhood parking needs.

7. *Generally, should a five bedroom house be restricted to only three students living in it?*

In general, four persons do not seem unreasonable for a five bedroom house.

However, other factors need to be considered for instance, square footage and defining what constitutes a bedroom. I also believe that, when having this debate it would be better not to describe the occupants as 'students' but rather as 'unrelated persons'. This should not be a student only issue, but one for fairness and reasonableness to all renters and landlords. The most important and critical aspect is to offer *guarantees through mutual respect* and clear noise and parking regulations, and options to deal with the occasional problem, so that residents are convinced that they have nothing to fear and everything to gain by having a more inclusive and varied neighborhood.

8. *What should be the proper governmental response to students found living in violation of the Three Persons to a House Rule?*

As with enforcing any community regulations, the response should be fair and appropriate and effective – that is, solve the problem and make the solution one that will discourage future violations.

9. *What will you do to expand availability of affordable, student-oriented housing options in Williamsburg, especially in the area directly around the College?*

I support the rights of renters to have free market access to rental properties. I support the rights of owners to rent their property. I don't support a particular class or segment of the population over others.

What is important is to demonstrate to the community that renters are a large and important segment of our city. What is important is that we all expect and demand respect for our own quiet enjoyment of our living place and that we give this same respect to others.

If I could ask for your help in this regard it would be for student government to come up with its own recommendations as to how the 80 year old widow on Matoako Court or Griffin Avenue can address the midnight party, high pitched squeals of late night delight that wake the working, deep base noises that shakes the windows, cars that swerve around corners and park on the lawns –These are the bogeymen that need to be put back in their closets. They happen infrequently, but they make an indelible mark on the memories of all who experience them and set the cause of off campus housing back to NO in the minds of many.

10. *What qualities will you look for in appointing members to (A) the Planning Commission and (B) the Board of Zoning Appeals?*

I would want persons less impressed by development for development's sake, or by the financial worth of the developer and his backers, then with preserving the character of our town. What we all love about Williamsburg, the environment that makes this a great college town and a great place to live, should be carefully nurtured. There should be no hurry to build everything we can, and fill up every available space, as soon as possible.

In the words of Stop 22 *"Stop 22 is not against growth, it is for continuing to develop under the existing guidelines. These guidelines have been in place since 1991 and stipulate a maximum of 8 units per acre in most areas, and 14 units per acre in other specifically selected areas. These limits were carefully crafted and implemented by government in order to preserve our town's unique character. "*

We go on to say *'In the event special projects arise where a higher density may be desired, then these projects should go through the normal rezoning processes already in place''*

This battle was lost in that the Council proceeded to increase density limits to 14 for many of the parcels that were previously limited to 8. Now the determination to build or not build at these levels is not in the zoning, but in the hands of Council to grant or deny. This is the #1 reason I feel we need at least ONE Council member who is not as enamored of growth as the current Council, and planning commission, has shown themselves to be.

For more please see www.stop22.org

11. In what circumstances would you, as a member of City Council, feel comfortable over turning a decision of either the Planning Commission or BZA?

If these bodies have not properly taken into account the general will of the people

12. What responsibilities, if any, does the Williamsburg City Council have towards making sure that landlords are keeping rental properties are safe and livable?

I would prefer less interference by council in this regard rather than more. If tenants are dissatisfied they should use the available legal remedies. If council would provide information as to what these remedies are and what options are available in pursuit of fair treatment then this would be appropriate.

TRANSPORTATION

13. What are your ideas to improve the Williamsburg Area Transport system, to make it more accessible and useful for students?

We need to insure that the schedules are reliable. Whether bus or train, if they don't run on time, they are of limited value, so this must be a priority. We need more shelters at bus stop – particularly at the Williamsburg Shopping Center, Monticello Avenue. We should have the goal of extending and expanding the service hours. If this requires added fares for less travelled times, so be it, as long as the service is available. In time the fares should decrease again as more riders take advantage of more consistent and later hours. I support trolley type continuous transportation between Merchant Square and the Williamsburg Shopping center. This is an entrepreneur's possible opportunity and I would support that.

STUDENT VOTING

14. Do you believe students should have the right to vote in the town they attend college?

My research tells me that the Council has no jurisdiction in this area, but here is my experience:

I moved to Williamsburg to attend William and Mary and lived at Spring Road apartments. Though I often visited my parents on the weekends, and received some financial help from them, as far as the IRS and the DMV were concerned, I was a resident of Williamsburg, and I voted from Williamsburg since this was my declared and documented place of principal residence.

15. Will you work with the General Assembly to ensure that all college students in Virginia have the statutory right to vote in their college towns, so that rogue voter registrars can no longer arbitrarily change requirements for registering to vote?

Not all students may wish to declare themselves as permanent residents of the town in which they attend college, but should they do so, based on the courts rulings as I understand them, they are allowed to vote.

For the sake of discussion, it occurs to me that the residents of Williamsburg have no vote or influence over the residential lives of those who live on the college grounds, while the residents of the college do have an influence and vote over the residential lives of those who live in the general City. As an example: this questionnaire advances the proposal that the Council should do more to favor student oriented businesses in town. Those who live on campus can influence policy because they have a vote. On the other hand, voters in the general City may want the college

to build more student housing, but since they have no say (vote) on College policies, they have no political leverage to advance that view.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and for your involvement.

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