

ASF 2021 GENERAL ELECTION QUESTIONS FOR COUNTY BOARD CANDIDATES

Candidate Cantwell Response, Oct 12, 2021

1—PARKS, FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES:

A. The County's overdue updating of the Urban Forestry Master Plan and Natural Resources Management Plan is in full swing. What are your specific goals for this update, especially as they may relate to tree canopy, green space and the County's natural environment? Please be specific.

The Urban Forestry Master Plan was adopted in 2004. The Natural Resources Management Plan was adopted in 2010. The Open Space Master Plan was adopted in 2019. After I join the County Board in 2022, I will demand an annual review of all Master Plans. Are we on track? Are we meeting the goals and objectives in the plan? Have we allocated appropriate resources to meet the goals and objectives in the plan? Are we collecting and analyzing the right data and information? Do we need to change the plan because of changing circumstances? The current county board is failing at basic management and leadership.

B. Critics contend that both North Arlington's Gulf Branch Nature Center and South Arlington's Long Branch Nature Center have endured benign neglect by the County in recent years, with both facilities suffering from deferred maintenance and programming cutbacks. What do you see as the value of these facilities and what is the right amount of operating and capital expenditures for them?

Over the last two decades, my family has visited the County's two Nature Centers dozens of times. They are treasured assets available to ALL Arlingtonians and are especially valued as Arlington becomes more urban. The County should increase funding for maintenance and increase funding for programing. The County should also seek partnerships with private-sector (non-profit and for-profit entities).

C. The County is not on track at this point to accomplish the Public Open Spaces Master Plan (PSMP) goal of adding 30 acres of public space in 10 years. What actions would you support by the Board to ensure meeting this goal?

The County Board's inability to meet even the modest goals set forth in the PSMP is an absolute failure. In 2018 and 2019, I served on the 26th Street & Old Dominion Road Working Group. Dozens of hours spent in meetings with county staff and my fellow Arlingtonians was all for naught. County Board members have been promising Arlington residents a park at this site for 20 years and they have yet to make any progress.

The County also failed to plan and act when the nine-acre Febrey-Lothrop House estate became available earlier this year. This is property was listed as a "generational" site in the county's Parks Master Plan. The County could have used the land for a public park, a school, or other public uses.

D. The County Manager has offered to APS a list of existing parks that could be considered for potential school sites. Do you believe that this was appropriate, and if so, how do you square that with the PSMP goal of adding 30 acres of public space in 10 years and in light of the dramatic growth occurring in our County?

With proper planning, oversight, and leadership, the County should be able to meet the goals set forth in the PSMP and provide proper land for APS facilities and athletic fields. The County Board continues to fail the citizens of Arlington.

2--COST/BENEFIT FISCAL IMPACT STUDIES:

In March 2021, the County entered into a contract with the TischlerBise consulting firm. The contract includes a provision under which TischlerBise will develop “methodologies for forecasting future demand for services and facilities from new development.” Do you support requiring and publicly disclosing the results of such forecasts prior to approving major projects or major zoning initiatives, such as the “Missing Middle”?

Of course. Publicly disclosing the methodologies and forecasts is good public policy and increases the public’s trust in appointed and elected officials.

3--PLAN LANGSTON BOULEVARD AND MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING:

A number of civic associations flanking Lee Highway, including Lyon Village and Donaldson Run, have gone on record to sharply criticize current planning efforts as leading to the widespread loss, over time, of small, locally owned businesses, the reduction of relatively modest single family homes, trees and greenspace, the addition of large, multi-story structures that would be starkly out-of-scale with surrounding neighborhoods, and a sharp rise in property values that would induce gentrification of both residential and commercial development. Proponents argue that Langston Boulevard is ripe for redevelopment and that increased density would yield additional housing, commercial growth and amenities that would benefit all demographic groups and people of all income levels. Who is right and is the County on the right path or does it need to stop and reconsider?

I live 300 feet from Langston Blvd and represented the Yorktown Civic Association on the Lee Highway Alliance from 2016 until I resigned in March of this year, because I was concerned about the direction of the Alliance and conflicts of interest of several Board members. After receiving input from Yorktown Civic Association members, I sent a letter to the County Board expressing my dissatisfaction with the Plan Lee Highway process and proposed plans. I am not opposed to modest increases in height restrictions, but I do oppose “upzoning” of interior residential communities. I’m for maintaining market-rate affordable housing, both single family and multifamily home, but I am skeptical about bonus density agreements with developers. We must also do everything we can to maintain or increase Arlington’s tree canopy.

4--LARGE SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT:

Arlington loses over 200 older single-family homes a year to redevelopment, with often modest ramblers, bungalows and split levels--and the mature trees that often surround them--bulldozed to yield much larger, much more expensive, and less affordable homes that tower over and cast shadows upon their neighbors, feature greatly expanded footprints and impervious surfaces, and no mature landscaping. Is it time to dial back what a private property owner can build on their land and still be sensitive to private property rights? Why or why not, and if so, how would you accomplish that given Virginia property laws?

I support personal property rights, but I am interested in exploring new ways to encourage homeowners and developers to save healthy, mature trees and reduce impervious surfaces.