

2010 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Prepared by the Virginia Beach Roundtable

CANDIDATE: Jim Wood

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- 1) What do you believe to be the top three most pressing concerns to the business community in Virginia Beach?
 - Transportation (#1)
 - Economy – state budget issues specific to the city being able to get things done that would assist businesses.
 - Difficulty in retaining businesses, competition with other US areas and globally.
 - AICPA wanted to come but North Carolina gave them a building and money.

- 2) For incumbents, do you think the votes you have taken during your service on Council have addressed or contributed to those concerns? Please give examples.
 - Yes.
 - Voted for privatization of Sportsplex.
 - Voted for budget each year.
 - Voted for parking swap at 31st Street.
 - Voted for every phase of the Town Center.
 - Voted for purchase of Norfolk Southern right of way.

- 3) Do you support or oppose the use of public–private partnerships such as those created to develop Town Center, the Sandbridge Beach restoration, the 31st Street Hotel and as have been suggested for future projects in strategic growth areas? If yes, what public financing options do you feel appropriate for such projects? Financing tools might include: Tax Increment Financing, Special Service Districts, Enterprise Zones, Innovation Zones (technology) and BID's?
 - Yes, serves as council liaison for Town Center/Sandler Center.
 - TIF financing seems to work very well.
 - Have opportunities to use TIF with Dome and convention hotel.
 - SSD's are good but not first choice, can inhibit business.
 - Enterprise zones have not been used much in Virginia Beach.
 - Use BRAC money, Oceana money, move Town Center Cleveland Street business to Oceana and redevelop area adjacent to Town Center.

4) What do you believe should be the City's transportation priorities for the near term and assuming the General Assembly's continued unwillingness to provide sufficient funding resources for these projects, how do you suggest the City fund critical transportation needs?

- #1- replace Lesner Bridge that is rated worse than bridge in Minnesota that collapsed.
- Lack of highway and maintenance money from state.
- City needs to leverage public-private partnerships, i.e., Bonney Road to Town Center connector.
- Aggressively pursuing Tiger Grants.
- Globally need maintenance funding.
- Not enough money in local budget for local projects, need \$1 billion.

5) Should Virginia Beach continue to participate in the regional economic development alliance to increase our ability to reach out to national and international companies?

- Yes

6) How important is regional cooperation to the future of Virginia Beach and do you support participation in such regional initiatives as workforce development (Opportunity, Inc.), military infrastructure (HR Military and Federal Facilities Alliance), regional policy development (Hampton Roads Partnership), and regional planning (Hampton Roads Planning District Commission/MPO)?

- Yes, supports these groups including HRT.
- Feels regional cooperation is important.
- Regional cooperation is something we haven't done very well.
- We couldn't get a hockey team here due to arguing.
- We need a regional group hug.
- HRMFFA is key to JFCOM retention.
- First alliance is to Virginia Beach.
- Feels transportation will bring the region together.
- Our cities and businesses don't care about the city line.

7) What are the most important steps the City can take to enhance its relationship and communication with the military and ensure retention of military commands in Hampton Roads?

- Feels we have already done this.
- Need to continue to communicate with the military. Two-way communication is key, all year, every year, not only when there are problems.
- Continued support of HRMFFA.
- Reach out to NATO.
- Our emergency services need to support the military.

- Mayor has quarterly meetings with Admirals.
 - City has REDAC.
 - We shouldn't nickel and dime the military bases.
- 8) Is the extension of the light rail system from the planned terminus at Newtown Road east to the Beach District a priority and how should it be financed?
- Yes, it is a priority.
 - Cocktail of funding, 50% federal, 25% local, 25% state.
 - Will get 100% credit for ROW, property, and planning costs.
 - Doesn't agree with Bob Tata's public/private partnership.
- 9) Do you believe the city's budget process ought to budget expenses to meet revenue goals or adjust revenues to meet budget and spending priorities?
- Yes to both.
 - Need to live within our means, but when there is a potential revenue stream that can fund something that is working under funded, like SSD for dredging in Bayside will do that.
 - Sometimes you have to adjust revenues to meet expenditures.
 - Have to look for federal money/grants.
 - Everyone has to do more with less.
- 10) Should the General Assembly empower localities to: provide defined contribution plans in lieu of defined benefit plans, give flexibility to modify retirement service and age qualifications, and to require employee participation in benefit packages as may be deemed appropriate by the local governing body? Why or why not?
- Yes, General Assembly should provide power to localities.
 - There will be changes for new employees.
 - Pension is a benefit to entice new employees.
 - Commitments to existing employees need to be honored.
 - Not fan of Dillon Rule.
 - Haven't given raises in a while, concerned about losing people.
 - Appreciate any flexibility given by General Assembly.
- 11) Do you feel there is waste in the city budget? If so, please site specific areas where you would reduce funding.
- There is waste in every budget.
 - Liaison to Audit Committee.
 - City Auditor was hired by and reports to Council.
 - Must focus on core services as education, public safety, etc.
 - Virginia Beach has fraud/waste/abuse hotline.
 - Believes city is lean in a lot of areas.

12) Do you concur with the recommendation of the City's Blue Ribbon Tax, Fee and Spending Task Force that a "City Budget Study Commission" should be established to assist in the development of the annual budget? If yes, what should be its composition and mission?

- Yes, council did adopt it.
- Composition – cross section of citizens but recommendations be non binding (advising only), not mandated budget items.

13) Do you believe business is fairly taxed in the City? If not, what specifically would you change?

- BPOL, \$40 million to replace, not realistic to eliminate, part of school funding.
- Machinery tools tax, 60% paid by 2 companies, could eliminate it and it would be more attractive to new companies.
- My business pays BPOL, not a hindrance.

14) What is your opinion of the City Manager and the job he is doing?

- Likes him. If you don't like the manager, blame the council.
- Feels he is very professional.
- Have one of the best city managers in the country.
- His tenure speaks for itself.
- Treats his job like a business.
- Only takes a pay raise equivalent to the % that staff gets.
- Don't always agree with him, or he with me.
- His longevity is helpful.

15) Do you support City Council's outright ban on all LED signs for future consideration or use by private business, schools, churches, non-profits and others?

- Voted for ban, surprised it passed.
- Proliferation was issue.
- Thinks there are areas where they can work, Oceanfront, Town Center.
- Doesn't like low quality, not regulated, in residential areas.
- Should be revisited in 6 months.
- Dome, Sandler Center need LED signs.
- Doesn't want Vegas but we need to keep up with other localities and help businesses.
- Supported sign at Wave Church.