

2009 Candidate Questions

Friends of Horseshoe Farm posed the following questions to all the candidates for Mayor and all City Council seats in Raleigh in this election. Their answers are posted below; the mayoral candidates are posted first, followed by the at large council candidates, and finally the district candidates. Each grouping is done alphabetically. The following candidates did not respond to the questions: Larry Hudson and Gregg Kunz for Mayor, Nancy McFarlane who is running unopposed in District A, John Odom in District B, James West in District C and Bonner Gaylord in District E.

1. Are you aware that Horseshoe Farm Park has been designated as a Regionally Significant Natural Heritage Area by the State Natural Heritage Program office?

MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Mark Enloe: I was not.

Larry Hudson: No, I am not aware of this designation.

Charles Meeker: Yes.

AT LARGE

Mary Ann Baldwin: Yes.

Champ Claris: I am and that is a fantastic honor for Raleigh.

Lee Sartain: No, but this provides a great ongoing impetus to continue to preserve Horseshoe Farm Park.

Russ Stephenson: Absolutely, and that designation, along with the overwhelming wishes of Raleigh residents is why I have worked to ensure that Horseshoe Farm Park will be preserved as a nature park.

DISTRICT B

Rodger Koopman: Yes.

DISTRICT C

Chuck Reis: I was not aware of this but I just reviewed the website and it looks wonderful.

DISTRICT D

Thomas Crowder: Yes...this is a rare and wonderful natural resource for Raleigh and Wake County, with many rare native plant species and wildlife, wild turkeys being one of many.

Ted Van Dyk: Yes.

DISTRICT E

Waheed Haq: I am an environmental consultant and have a passion to preserve and create more environmentally friendly amenities for better & healthy living. In summary my answer is yes to all four questions. I believe the parks are a vital factor in a balanced equation of our city, especially the HS farm. I would like to see more amenities incorporated into the farm to attract a wide range of activities necessary for healthy living.

2. **Are you aware of the current City Council's decisions to preserve this park as an environmental and arts education nature park? Do you support their decisions and will you pledge to protect the park as the current City Council has done? Why or why not?**

MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Mark Enloe: I was not aware of the Council's efforts. I support any efforts to preserve the park as an environmental and arts education nature park. I think of the park as a nature preserve and cultural preserve. I enjoy visiting Hemlock Bluffs in Cary and I don't see why we can't do something similar.

Larry Hudson: I believe that this park is vital. With its natural resources and educational opportunities. I will pledge to protect this park.

Charles Meeker: Yes and yes. While the City is just now designating nature parks, the Horseshoe Farm Park is an outstanding natural area which should be preserved.

AT LARGE

Mary Ann Baldwin: Yes, I serve on the Public Works Committee and this was a priority.

Champ Claris: I think HSF is going to be a very nice example of passive recreation and I think the Council has done a fine service to our citizens. If elected I will continue to support the park because I think having a balance between active and passive recreation in our city parks is very important.

Lee Sartain: I agree with the current council's decision to preserve the park in a natural state.

Russ Stephenson: I am proud of my efforts as a part of a team of councilors and environmental advocates to establish this center and turn away plans for heavy public utility interventions that would have compromised the integrity of the park.

DISTRICT B

Rodger Koopman: Yes. I'm proud of my decisive role in making this happen.

DISTRICT C

Chuck Reis: I personally support the decisions of the current council in relation to the park. I think keeping the park as natural as possible is a good idea. I would however have to listen to the opinions of the citizens of District C in relation to the matter in pledging any support if I was to be elected.

DISTRICT D

Thomas Crowder: I absolutely support our decisions and was the first to take a vocal lead on Council to insure this property is preserved for future generations. In fact, I continue to insist that any built amenities for the park are developed in the most environmentally sensitive manner possible, using them as an educational tool for park visitors, school children, designers and academia; including the use of composting toilets, onsite water reclamation and re-use, using photo voltaic arrays for onsite energy use, as well as other cutting edge best practices to insure this land remains as pristine as possible.

Ted Van Dyk: It is my understanding that Mr. Koopman and a majority of constituents saw the property as most valuable to the City as a natural area and resource. I think that the unique opportunity to preserve this natural, open space is the right decision. I do think that active facilities are also needed in the area, and active efforts should be made to find a home for such facilities.

DISTRICT E

Waheed Haq: (See answer to first question)

3. Do you feel that development of active recreation facilities for organized sports program activities would be appropriate at Horseshoe Farm? Why or why not?

MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Mark Enloe: I don't think other forms of recreation would be appropriate there. This park is highly valued as a cultural preserve, allowing people to see the way of life in the area of past generations. I understand fully the need for other types of recreation. Let's provide those but in another location.

Larry Hudson: I will support hiking, nature preservation, kayak, and other related outdoor activities that does not disturb the natural environment. I would be opposed to developing this park for other activities such as softball or football.

Charles Meeker: No. After a lot of public input, the Council correctly decided that there should not be organized sports programs, only limited canoeing and the like.

AT LARGE

Mary Ann Baldwin: This is an environmentally sensitive area that needs to be preserved.

Champ Claris: I support the council's opinion that our citizens will be best served by keeping HSF a passive recreation facility.

Lee Sartain: Active recreation is important, however other opportunities exist to leverage existing taxpayer investments in active recreation facilities at Wake County Public Schools, and the city should work with the county system to achieve this goal.

Russ Stephenson: Development of active recreation facilities for organized sports programs is absolutely inappropriate for this location. That is why as Chair of the Public Works Committee I worked with the new 2007 City Council to relocate those much-needed facilities to a much more suitable location at the closed North Wake Landfill borrow site.

DISTRICT B

Rodger Koopman: No. I spearheaded the effort on the council to eliminate active rec from HSFP and to ensure it would be protected and preserved in its natural state.

DISTRICT C

Chuck Reis: I have not visited the location of the park so I cannot make an informed opinion. Looking at the information on the website I don't think ruining the natural beauty of the site with rigid structures would be a good idea.

DISTRICT D

Thomas Crowder: No, as a Natural Heritage Site, this environ is too sensitive for active sports programs. We have many other appropriate sites for active sport activities, including the reuse of existing brown fields and gray fields (blighted commercial sites) throughout Raleigh.

Ted Van Dyk: See above- I think that there are other places that these facilities could be located.

DISTRICT E

Waheed Haq: (See answer to first question.)

4. How important do you consider public input to be when planning new City of Raleigh parks? What is the best method for securing this input and how much weight should this input be given in the final park plans?

MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Mark Enloe: The citizens are doctors, attorneys, engineers, teachers and tradesmen who I think are capable of making decisions regarding the parks we need. The public should be heard regarding parks at council meetings, special forums and in one-on-one meetings and their views should guide decisions.

Larry Hudson: I will consider the general public opinion regarding park planning but not at the sake of losing significant natural beauty. I believe in open forums and community involvement from the surrounding homes. This will allow the city to better understand its citizens' concerns.

Charles Meeker: Listening to the public is very important, particularly in the park planning phase. While the City has had missteps in this area, I am hopeful that things are improving.

AT LARGE

Mary Ann Baldwin: Again, I serve on the Public Works Committee as part of the City Council. We recently hired a consultant to advise us on improving parks planning and I was an instrumental part in expanding public input in this process.

Champ Claris: I believe public input is important on all major decisions that a municipal government makes and if elected I will welcome discussions with the citizens of Raleigh. After all, Raleigh is home to all of us so I think the input of our residents should always be seriously considered.

Lee Sartain: Public input is very important for park planning. Participation should be made available through traditional workshops as well as online formats. The city should develop a planning evaluation tool to weigh responses, as well as weigh other city requirements, a one decision making tool for park planning.

Russ Stephenson: Raleigh is coming out of an era when citizen engagement in city planning, especially parks planning was not appropriately valued. I will continue to work with all stakeholders to invest citizens more in all aspects of city decision-making. I am proud of my role in helping engage the services of Steve Smutko and the Natural Resources Learning Initiative to develop a new citizen-focused process for park planning. An essential part of that new process will be a fundamental retraining of city staff to understand the pre-eminent value of citizen participation in public decisions.

DISTRICT B

Rodger Koopman: Public input is vital to ensure the city's parks policy reflects what the city's residents feel is needed. This should also include annual surveys of what city residents believe priorities ought to be and what elements of our parks they most enjoy. The public input process needs to be balanced against a comprehensive approach to ensure resources are equitably distributed across the entire city. We can do a lot more to leverage technology to make the input process more open and accessible. We can also do a lot more in terms of notifying people of processes taking place, as well as keeping people informed as particular efforts progress. I would also like us to build out a library of articles and other reference materials, all published online, as to what are best practices used by other successful cities across the US and perhaps in Europe, as well as peer reviewed articles by recognized experts as to what constitutes good parks planning and policy-making. It's useful to balance opinion, sometimes based on limited knowledge, against a knowledgebase of sorts that is gathered from a wide variety of reliable and objective sources.

DISTRICT C

Chuck Reis: I think the public should be as involved as possible. I think presenting the information via websites and seeking comment from the public from the web is a good method of gathering input. Also, emailing or mailing information to existing organizations that are active in the city seeking comment would be a good method. I think the public's opinion should carry more weight than city officials on such matters as this is their city, they pay for it, they should have final say via their council people.

DISTRICT D

Thomas Crowder: As with any city planning or design project, public input and participation is a must. A citizens advisory group should be established to assist with site and building design programming, as well as forwarding review comments to the Parks Board and City Council at all stages of the design process. We are fortunate to have so many universities, experts and professionals in Raleigh and throughout the Triangle who can lend their expertise to insure that this treasure becomes a national model for nature preserve parks. It would be foolish for the City Council not to utilize these renowned resources.

Ted Van Dyk: Public input is a major factor in parks planning. A combination of community sentiment and input, parks staff expertise, and individual characteristics of each site should be considered in making plans for parks. It seems that many times the notification process, and the dissemination of information based on public meetings, could be improved.

DISTRICT E

Waheed Haq: (See answer to first question.)