

2011 City Council candidates make their cases

PUBLISHED IN: OPINION

Democrats at-large

PATRICK D. CANNON

From newsrooms to manufacturing plants to big corporations, it seems we hear of layoffs, furloughs, or pay cuts often.

My ideas for creating jobs and improving the economy:

1) Work with the Charlotte Chamber and the Charlotte Regional Partnership to recruit more companies to create jobs. 2) Have a more fluid business permitting process so employment isn't hindered. 3) Promote CharlotteBusinessResources.com for businesses that seek resources. 4) Provide Business Investment Grants. 5) Issue Small Business Enterprise Loans or Business Equity Loans through the city. 6) Encourage the CRVA to attract more conventions and people. 7) Encourage a private sector "Shop Charlotte" campaign relative to its products, services, leisure and hospitality. 8) Look at the Greensboro initiative "1 Job for Greensboro" where 16,000 businesses were asked to hire one full-time employee. The Chamber and city should discuss a "3 Jobs for Charlotte" campaign to create jobs and stabilize the economy. Additionally, public-private ventures must continue now more than ever.

The economy is where it is because of less spending and more saving, which I understand, but nothing grows if nobody spends.

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CLAIRE FALLON

The Charlotte City Council can help its citizens if they want a job by seeing that they are prepared for it.

There are grants available from the private sector to local colleges; lists of these should be advertised and widely disseminated to the public. There should also be a fund established for qualified people to get retraining. There is a great need for service people like electricians, plumbers, air conditioner technicians and other service and repair people. The labor unions should be encouraged to assist in this.

The council must also temporarily relax business fees and documentation requirements. There is no reason to make business so difficult in Charlotte. Planning department rules must also be reviewed to see if they are hindering good development.

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We must encourage good development but not make it so that we discourage it at all. If fees become prohibitive to business they will totally discourage it. Charlotte must remain the place people want to live in, do business in and delight in .

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DAVID HOWARD

His piece was late; it will run Wednesday.

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BETH PICKERING

Can the City Council help create jobs? Yes, it can and it must.

Obviously, the key question is how - how can the council help create jobs?

First, council members must use their leadership role to cheerlead local business development in their districts.

In conjunction with this, council members should particularly focus on bringing investment into their lower-income communities. Job creation is key to lifting up these areas. Education will also play a huge role - not only four-year degrees, but vocational and technical training as well. We have a wonderful community college system - members can be a champion for it.

We should also explore tax incentives and look at ways to make the entire registration and permitting process easier for small business creation. How can we reduce red tape and streamline the process?

So, yes, the City Council can help create jobs and, thus, improve the economy. Council members should ask themselves each day, "What can I do today to put Charlotte back to work?"

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JARRISHA ABRAHAM RORIE

Cut taxes for small business owners.

Lower taxes on all Charlotteans permanently, building consumer confidence. Why should entrepreneurs invest in business development when the governments acquire most of the earnings? Why should they jeopardize so much "high interest" startup capital for such a small nonguaranteed compensation?

Formulate permanent tax incentives to hire new workers.

Work with developers to ease the stipulations for land use permits when opening a new factory.

Change the rules for banks that borrow cheap Federal Reserve money and just use the proceeds to invest in Treasury bonds. The low Fed Funds Rate is meant to stimulate lending and economic growth. If small business owners cannot get the loans to grow, how can they create jobs?

District 2, Democrats

CAMERON WEBB GARDNER

District 2 has been neglected over the past 10 years. District 2 has seen a disproportionate amount of foreclosures compared to other parts of Charlotte. There are many vacant "new" houses and substandard construction. This area was targeted to entice residents into purchasing houses they couldn't afford. The incumbent should have seen this coming. He was on City Council throughout the entire housing boom and bust. Didn't he know what was going on in his district?

District 2 also needs jobs, amenities and improved educational opportunities. The incumbent has pointed out the job growth in and around Northlake Mall and the Mosaic Village on Beatties Ford Road. However, the vast majority of these jobs are service sector jobs that pay relatively low wages. The residents of District 2 need access to proper education and training so they can live and work in the district. Why has the incumbent not addressed this issue more broadly?

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GREGG GREER

I may not be a city councilman but I've already become a fixture in Charlotte politics. Over the past 24 months, I quietly took notes during council meetings, Democratic Party meetings and community coalition meetings to prepare for this run.

The experience has opened my eyes into how the council can be improved and more civic participation in the city can be encouraged. I've been looking for our leadership to be involved and to have an impact on the city, but I was disappointed. I certainly saw a huge need for a fresh perspective and also just to have the folks represented.

If our leadership just showed up for community meetings and encouraged participation, we could change the landscape of our city.

With my background as a coordinator for the ACLU and with my 20 years in corporate America, I could help change this city, with passion, desire, motivation and great humility.

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JAMES "SMUGGIE" MITCHELL JR.

Let me first say "thank you" to the citizens of District 2 for allowing me to represent you on the Charlotte City Council for these last two years. You told me to focus on economic development, roads, public safety and neighborhoods. I am pleased to report what we were able to accomplish together during these tough economic times.

We relocated Husqvarna's North American headquarters that created 160 new jobs, and six other companies for a total of 620 new jobs. We funded \$3.1 million for the Mosaic Village along the West Trade Street corridor. We provided a security grant for small business at the Stewart Creek Crossing Beatties Ford Road. We funded the disparity study for our Small Business program. We completed I-485 between Little Rock Road and Northlake Mall, and we have secured funds for multiple road projects. We funded 225 additional police officers for Metro, North, Freedom, and Center City Divisions. We provided neighborhood matching grants and started capital improvement projects in about a dozen neighborhoods. We even built a playground in the Peachtree Hill neighborhood. And we have started to re-develop Double Oaks (\$25 million) community.

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VIVIAN C. MITCHELL

I want the best for District 2. I admire the mayor and our City Council for all they do, but why continue to wait for decisions to be made for District 2? I have the time to serve, ideas and know the concerns of my district. I am a 22-year resident of Charlotte and have a fundamental grasp of how our city works.

Growth is our biggest issue. It is crucial that we recruit new companies to District 2 while proactively encouraging more entrepreneurs to start their own businesses. District 2 does not have enough commercial development to sustain many of our working men, women and young people with good paying jobs.

I differ from my opponents both in leadership style and message. I want to use technology to communicate regularly with the residents of District 2. Gone are the days when an incumbent can be running for re-election unopposed. The voters of District 2 now have a choice.

District 3, Democrats

SVEND DEAL

Incumbent Warren Turner has not been responsive to the needs of the residents of District 3. In contrast, every job I have had - from dishwasher to waiter to bartender to camp counselor to entrepreneur to lawyer - has centered around one theme: customer service. It is the hallmark of my personality and I would not be successful if I did not have a commitment to serving my customers.

Part of serving a customer, in this case my potential constituents, is being prepared to serve. I am better qualified than both my competitors for two reasons: 1) Education. I am a West Charlotte graduate and learned at an early age to relate to all of the diverse citizens our community is blessed with. While at Carolina law, I studied civil rights under Julius Chambers, Housing and Community Development under Charles Daye and Land Use Law under David Owens. 2) Experience. Dedicated volunteer and board member. And as a lawyer, I continue to practice the necessary skills to find consensus and resolve conflict in even the most adverse conditions. In the golden age of grid-locked government, I am uniquely qualified, as both a business owner and long-time community servant, to be a finder of common ground and a catalyst for cooperation.

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LAWANA MAYFIELD

Our district, like few others in Charlotte, shows the great promise of our great city. But we are not there yet. As your representative, I will promise three things I will ask myself in all decisions: 1) Will it keep our community safe? 2) Is the economic development smart for all of District 3 and Charlotte? 3) Will it help keep property values stable?

Our district needs someone who recognizes that all of our district is worth fighting for, not just specific areas. I will work with local business owners to improve our district. I will identify properties which have been turned into eyesores and fight to make sure they will no longer be permitted. We will work with these property owners to find ways to renovate these properties to rejuvenate long forgotten parts of the district. I will hold the city responsible for improving these areas, and landlords

accountable for the condition of their property. When I'm elected, District 3 will have council representation that shows up.

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WARREN TURNER

I am a native of District 3. When I was elected eight years ago, District 3 had the highest unemployment, the highest housing vacancy rate, the highest crime rate and the most compromised infrastructure in the city.

I have worked with developers to increase economic opportunities in the district. These include such projects as the Super Wal-mart on Wilkinson Boulevard and the current and future development of Bryant Park.

To diminish vacancy rates, I worked with developers to bring mixed housing to the district: million dollar homes and affordable housing.

Public safety has been improved by lobbying for and supporting increased number of police officers, the construction of new fire stations and the implementation of a prostitution exclusion zone.

Infrastructure issues have been addressed through the construction of crosswalks, planting strips, repavement, and improved drainage systems in various locations throughout District 3.

District 5, Democrats

JOHN AUTRY

It is imperative that commerce in East Charlotte change and grow to enhance our way of life. Our neighborhoods' well-being can drive economic recovery; business revival will in turn speed the perception and reality of area prosperity.

The immediate change I can bring to my community is to broker and foster progress: to define the common interests of citizens, businesses and the city and push for changes that enhance District 5 and Charlotte.

The pieces are in place. What is needed is someone who can pull the players together and move forward on common goals.

I am a long-time resident of East Charlotte and a member of my neighborhood association's board of directors. I am a successful business owner. I have hands-on knowledge of city government as a long-term activist, and have been twice-elected to the Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation District.

I'll show that growth isn't the sole domain of Charlotte's edges and center city. District 5's challenged neighborhoods are ready for progress; our stable neighborhoods are ready for quality development; and our prosperous neighborhoods are ready for discovery.

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DARRELL BONAPART

Declined to write in time for this package.

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ALEX HARTLEY JR.

We have to stimulate our city, especially east Charlotte. We have to redevelop Eastland Mall and address social and economic issues. I intend to network with Realtors, appraisers, mortgage lenders and government officials to revitalize the east Charlotte area.

Constant budget constraints will continue to plague our city and rob us of the ability to properly perform basic city services if our local economy is not strengthened. Forward-looking management of the city's finances along with the proper collection of taxes, fines and fees will help restore our city back onto sound fiscal ground. Infractions must not only be enforced among Charlotte residents, but non-compliant businesses as well. My goal is to keep the burden as minimal as possible, while providing necessary services. We must support initiatives that focuses on keeping jobs here in Charlotte. We must remain vigilant in providing the infrastructure necessary to support a skilled and competitive workforce.

District 7, Republicans

WARREN COOKSEY

In my campaign four years ago, I said, "District 7 needs more roads, less crime, and affordable taxes." That is still true.

Those three items represent core functions of local government. In good times and bad, local government must not stray from providing necessary basic services.

Sometimes I have been successful in keeping the focus on core functions. Sometimes I have not. Overall, I believe I have provided effective conservative leadership.

I voted for additional city-funded police officers. I stopped a cut in funding for street resurfacing. I helped prevent subsidizing an uptown market with \$1 million of tax money. When last year's budget proposal included giving raises to government employees I tried to give taxpayers a property tax cut instead. The motion failed. Unfortunately, I have also lost eight separate attempts to stop the streetcar project. I am often the lone vote against the council's requests for so-called "stimulus" money.

When voters speak decisively on an issue, however, all elected officials must listen. Four years ago, 70 percent of voters chose to continue funding the transit plan with a half-cent sales tax. My goal is preventing the use of other local tax dollars for transit projects, which would take away from other core functions.

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JAY PRIVETTE

I have years of experience in the private sector managing a sales territory in a very competitive market, and I consistently achieved double-digit growth. I know how to invest resources in order to get optimum results.

For about six months I have attended the Friday morning meetings hosted by Warren Cooksey. He promotes himself as a conservative, yet he wants to spend well over a billion dollars to extend the light rail to the university area, an area currently very well served with buses. He has not disputed the

\$20/rider subsidy both the John Locke Foundation and Cato Institute have concluded it costs taxpayers for light rail. Warren has also historically been one of the most benevolent benefactors of the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, an organization that has had more than its share of improprieties. Warren was among the first to recommend the CRVA get the full \$10 million it recently requested, and he added the City Council should not put too many restrictions on how the CRVA uses the money. I concluded from these and other examples that Warren is not the conservative he professes to be, and he is not focused on what is in the best interests of the citizens.



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