

## **Fairfax City Independent Candidates Interview Questions**

### **Personal Background:**

Can you provide a brief overview of your background, including your professional experience and any community involvement?

I served as the Environmental Sustainability Committee high school liaison my senior year of high school and have served on the City Council since January 2023. I have also served as a computational physics research intern and have a bachelor's degree in physics, having completed graduate-level coursework toward my master's program in physics in which I am currently enrolled.

What motivated you to run as an independent candidate for Fairfax City?

I am running with the Democratic endorsement for City Council to serve my hometown and advocate for compassion, integrity, and efficiency in decisions on land use, ordinance and policy changes, budgeting, appropriations, and other city issues while being open and honest about my values, positions, and convictions.

### **Campaign Priorities:**

3. What are the three main issues you plan to address if elected?

I would continue to support development projects I feel are right for the city that contribute to more efficient use of land, an increase in green space, tree canopy, or affordable housing, or improvements in stormwater management and pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure. I would continue to support measures for infrastructure improvements such as the school bond referendum and the redevelopment of the Joseph Willard Health Center and Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center sites. Additionally, I would address safety by continuing to support funding for police initiatives such as the new bike team that is part of this year's budget and advocating for expanding the city's gun ordinance and instituting a law enforcement civilian review panel.

4. How do you plan to improve transparency and responsiveness in local government?

I would continue to do my best to listen to, read, and consider all resident feedback, talk with residents who request a conversation, and make sure their questions are answered. I would also continue to be open about my positions, values, and reasoning behind my decisions.

### **Community and Economic Development:**

5. What strategies do you propose to support small businesses in Fairfax City?

I would continue to support business incubation and retention efforts through Fairfax City Economic Development, improvement of transportation infrastructure to make city businesses more accessible to all modes of transportation, and worthwhile development projects that would add housing near existing small businesses and enhance their viability.

6. How will you address affordable housing and its impact on the community?

I would continue to support development projects that lead to more efficient use of land in the city and include housing, in many cases including dedicated affordable housing. Additionally, I would support a dedicated funding source for affordable housing efforts and programs as well as expanding opportunities for homeowners to build accessory dwelling units.

### **Environmental Concerns:**

7. What initiatives will you champion to enhance environmental sustainability in Fairfax City?

I would continue to support the improvement of pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure while working to reduce the impact of new shared use paths on tree canopy, as well as development projects I feel are right for the city that lead to more efficient use of land and may allow some potential residents to live closer to work, amenities, transit, and bike routes. Additionally, I would support any opportunities for the installation of solar panels on city property that are recommended after completion of the city's Solar Feasibility Study.

8. How do you plan to engage residents in environmental conservation efforts?

I would continue to support and participate in city initiatives that provide opportunities for residents to engage in stewardship and learn about environmental sustainability.

### **Public Safety and Services:**

9. What are your plans to ensure public safety and improve emergency services in Fairfax City?

I would continue to support opportunities and initiatives to expand the ability of our first responders to reduce crime and threats to safety, such as the new police bike team that was part of this year's budget, as well as efforts to improve retention of first responders. Additionally, I would support expansion of the city's gun ordinance and the establishment of a law enforcement civilian review panel that could work to help ensure residents continue to be treated thoughtfully and fairly by city police while working to improve police policies, thus potentially elevating respect and trust in the community with regard to police.

10. How will you support the needs of veterans and active-duty military personnel in the community?

I would continue to support and participate in community events and activities such as the Independence Day Celebration, Memorial Day Ceremony, Ride of the Patriots, and others to honor the sacrifice of our fallen American heroes, maintain relationships with our veterans and members of the military as well as organizations such as the American Legion and VFW, and ensure all members of the community, including veterans and members of the military, feel included and supported.

### **Education and Youth:**

11. What measures will you take to enhance the quality of education in local schools?

I would support keeping our schools part of Fairfax County Public Schools to ensure that we can benefit from economies of scale and the larger regional programs such as the academies that come with being part of a larger, highly-rated school district and also continue to benefit from any improvements to curriculums and new programs that FCPS may institute. Additionally, I would continue to support any school infrastructure improvements that are necessary to ensure our students are able to feel safe, happy, and focused as much as possible during school and related activities.

12. How do you plan to involve youth in civic activities and decision-making processes?

I would continue supporting and participating in activities such as the joint meeting we had earlier this year with KJMS students on the Fairfax Circle Small Area Plan and school events that the Council is invited to as well as talking to students who reach out to me.

### **Partisanship and Governance:**

13. How will you ensure that the voices of all residents are heard, regardless of political affiliation?

I would continue doing my best to consider all feedback I receive, regardless of whom it comes from, as well as basing my decisions on what I feel is the right thing to do having considered said feedback. I would also support keeping our city elections on the November ballot to ensure that as many voices as possible are heard in city elections and that we are making it easier and less confusing for residents to make their voices heard at the polls.

14. What are your views on the role of partisanship in local government?

I have never adhered to partisanship and have strong concerns about partisanship on the City Council. I don't espouse certain values because I'm a Democrat. I am a Democrat because of my values. Due to my prior involvement with the City of Fairfax Democratic Committee as well as several Democratic campaigns, applying for and running with the Democratic endorsement was the most honest decision I could have made. Partisanship is defined by Merriam-Webster as "strong and sometimes blind adherence to a particular party, faction, cause, or person." It is entirely arbitrary and incorrect to believe that endorsement by an officially recognized party inevitably gives way to partisanship in governance and that only endorsees of an officially recognized party can exhibit partisanship. That certainly has not been the case on the Council.

### **Final Thoughts:**

15. What sets you apart from other candidates running for the same position?

I have always prioritized doing what I feel is right and being as honest as possible in serving on the City Council. I also have experience on the City Council having first been elected in 2022 and a degree and research internship experience in physics, and am a recent graduate of Fairfax High School, having graduated in 2021.

16. How can residents get involved in your campaign and support your initiatives?

Residents can reach me at [batesforfairfax@gmail.com](mailto:batesforfairfax@gmail.com) and can donate or express interest in volunteering at my website, [batesforfairfax.com](http://batesforfairfax.com).

This questionnaire aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of each candidate's platform and vision for Fairfax City.