



2006 Charlottesville City Council Candidate Forum #2 April 10, 2006

On April 10, 2006, the Charlottesville-Albemarle NAACP held the **second candidate forum for the May 2nd City Council Elections**. The forum was moderated by Dr. Rick Turner, NAACP Branch President, and recorded by Charlottesville Tomorrow at the McIntire Library in downtown Charlottesville, Virginia.

Participants included all three candidates for the two available seats on Charlottesville City Council: Dave Norris (D); Rob Schilling (R); and Julian Taliaferro (D).

The audio is available online on the Charlottesville Tomorrow Weblog
http://cvilletomorrow.typepad.com/charlottesville_tomorrow_/2006/04/city_council_ca.html

Complete election coverage is available on the Charlottesville Tomorrow website
<http://action.cvilletomorrow.org/cvilleaction/elections.html>

INTRODUCTION

Rick Turner: Let me now set the rules for tonight's forum. They are as follows. These are rules for tonight's forum. They are as follows: Each candidate will have 15 minutes to speak. We are hoping that within that period of time each of you will give a brief summary and/or include your platform on the following issues/topics: education, affordable housing, and health care. The order of presentation are Mr. Norris, Mr. Schilling and Mr. Taliaferro. I'd like to thank you, Mr. Norris and Mr. Schilling and Mr. Taliaferro for your presence this evening, and Mr. Norris, you have the pleasure of going first.

Dave Norris: All right. It's my great pleasure to be with you all this evening and in honor of the fact that we're only here for an hour and I'm sure we have lot of questions, I'm not going to take all 15 minutes, but I do want to talk for a few minutes about my vision for the City of Charlottesville and I first want to thank you all for being here and the Board of our local branch of the NAACP for hosting us this evening. The NAACP obviously is an organization over its lifetime that has fought for equality of opportunity in reducing racial disparities and promoting social justice in our nation, in our city and our state and I'm proud to say that I've worked alongside many of the members of the local branch on different issues over the years—some of them are in the room today—on issues like fighting for a living wage, issues like organizing residents of public housing here in Charlottesville to speak up for themselves. These are all issues that the NAACP has been a strong advocate for and these are all—

You know, the issues of promoting equality of opportunity and reducing racial disparities, these are goals that I have committed myself to in my professional career and my civic life and these are some of the central goals of my campaign for City Council so, again, I'm very pleased to be with you tonight.

A lot of what I'm going to talk about over next few minutes is included in this little green booklet and there's copies back there and also for those of you with Internet access, all of this information is on my website which is votefordav.org. It's very easy to remember, but with regard to the three topic that we were asked to address specifically tonight, the issue of education, I think, Chief Taliaferro and I and, of course, Mr. Schilling, all understand the importance of education, public education for the future of our community. I have spelled out some ideas in this booklet about some things that I'd like to see us do more of and do a better job of with regard to education.

Obviously, the achievement gap is an enormous concern to many of us here in this room and many of us in the community and we really have to redouble our efforts to reduce the achievement gap and, you know, the reality is we have to honor and recognize the fact that our current system of education is failing far too many children and when you look at the dropout rates in our schools. In public housing where I've done a lot of work, a majority, a significant majority of kids that live in public housing in Charlottesville do not graduate from high school. Now, if this were a situation in Greenbrier or Keswick or some of these other neighborhoods, we'd have riots. I mean, parents would be outraged and yet we sort of take it for granted that kids from low income families, you know, some of them are just not going to graduate and I think that's unacceptable. We have to set higher standards for our community and we have to really take that issue head on and, again, we have to change the way we're doing things and I agree strongly with the idea of promoting innovation, promoting creativity in our schools, rewarding those teachers that reach out and try different ways to reach the kids that are currently not being reached in our schools today. This is one of the reasons why against the advice and wishes from some in my own party, I have come out in favor of charter schools, public charter schools that are targeted and trying new and creative ways of reaching our kids.

Some of the other issues with regard to education—youth development, you know, making a community-wide commitment to youth development. So many times we expect our schools to solve all the social problems and we as a community have to step up our efforts to make sure that our kids are coming to school inspired to achieve and ready to learn and that includes things like tutoring programs. I've run tutoring programs in the past through Madison House where I worked and I know the value of the work that you all are doing and the work that we need to be doing as a community. Youth mentoring, summer youth employment opportunities—these are all things that we need to do a better job of.

Improving teacher recruitment and development and retention and I don't want to minimize the importance of adult literacy as well and adult education. We have 5,000 adults here in the City of Charlottesville alone who do not have a high school diploma

and that's, again, an unacceptable situation. When you are without a high school diploma, it's going to severely limit your ability to get ahead and to get a better job and on a micro level, to be there for your kids when they're trying to learn and be a good homework helper for your kids.

With regard to affordable housing, again, this is an issue that I've spent a lot of time over the years researching and advocating for. In fact, it's one of the central planks of my campaign. Last fall, two reports came out almost within a month of each other. One was put out by the Monticello Area Community Action Agency which I served on their board. It's an organization that serves some of the poorest of the poor in our community. The other report was put out by the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce which doesn't always serve the poorest of the poor in the community, but does a good job advocating for our business sector. Those reports, talking about the needs of our community came to the same conclusion: that the number one need in our community, the number one issue in our community, is affordable housing, because it affects entire sectors of our community. It affects everybody from the people that we house in our homeless shelter every night who are working. Some of them working full-time jobs and still can't afford to live here in our community. It affects young families that are trying to buy their first home and can't find one they can afford. It affects existing home owners that are being hit hard by these rising property taxes. It affects neighborhoods that are feeling the pressures of gentrification and it affects businesses that are having a hard time attracting and retaining good workers because of the high cost of living which, again, goes back to the high cost of housing, so affordable housing across the board is a huge priority and I have an eight-point plan here in my booklet and I know it's, again, a concern of others as well.

The number one thing that I would do when I'm elected to City Council is to push for the creation of what I'm calling a Charlottesville Affordable Housing Investment Fund. This would be a set-aside in the City budget and a dedicated pool of revenue to create income funding streams to do more affordable housing development targeted at those low- and moderate-income residents that are currently being priced out of our community.

Lastly, health care—this is an issue that I've done a lot of work as well. I currently serve as Chairman of the Board at the Westhaven Nursing Clinic which is actively working on a daily basis to reduce disparities in terms of access to health care for very low-income families in our community and what we find is that a lot of times people will let chronic health conditions go for long periods of time without getting them checked out or getting untreated and the conditions become worse and worse and worse and so sometimes we have to take the health care system to the people and into the neighborhoods and connect with the people where they're living and that's what the Westhaven Nursing Clinic does and I'm very proud of the work that we've been able to do there to bring health care into the neighborhood and expand access to health services.

I'm going to leave it there and pass the baton onto Mr. Schilling. Thank you all very much.

Rob Schilling: Good evening. Thank you, Dr. Turner and the NAACP for inviting me to address you this evening. Friends, I'm City Councilor Rob Schilling. It's good to be with you here again in this same room. During my Council tenure, I have enjoyed working with the NAACP on important issues that face Charlottesville and I'm pleased that you've invited me to join you this evening.

Four years ago when I first asked for your vote I made a promise to you that if elected I would serve as a voice for the people of this community and not as an agent for the elites, that if elected I would bring commonsense leadership to Charlottesville City Council, shunning the frivolous and focusing on the issues that were important to citizens, that if elected I would work for an inclusive government and the inclusive government process, one that serves the public and not the powerful few. The promises I made then are promises that I have kept.

Over the past four years the people of Charlottesville have known that they have a friend on City Council, someone who will respectfully listen to all concerns and all points of view. As your City Councilor for the next four years I would continue to treat all constituents with the respect they deserve, to be your citizen advocate, your voice and your ears inside City Hall.

The people of Charlottesville know that I trust them with the power of self-determination. I did not stick my head in the sand but rather I stuck my neck out when the citizens of this community demanded a direct voice in educational policy. While other elected officials ran from the debate and refused to take a definitive stand on what was one of the most important decisions in this City's history, I led a bipartisan coalition of citizens to victory when the elected School Board referendum was passed last fall by nearly 75% of the voters.

The people of Charlottesville know that I'm only the Councilor who can be counted on to reliably advocate for fiscal discipline within City Hall. Affordable housing is a problem in the City, but it's a part of the larger problem of affordable living in Charlottesville. I understand that the high cost of City living is directly related to the high cost of City government. Council can and must do better to alleviate escalating financial burdens placed on the backs of renters and home owners alike.

Now, let's talk about the future. Regarding education—I understand that education, employment, and economic development are three closely linked and key ingredients to the personal success of our citizens. In order to give our young people the tools they need to succeed in life, we must provide not merely a good education but an excellent, an outstanding education. As Charlottesville moves into its future with an elected School Board, there is a need for experienced, energetic and committed leadership to manage the transition. My continued presence on the City Council for the next four years provides genuine support and trusted guidance throughout this transition.

While the majority of Council virtually ignored the public outcry for ward or mixed ward elections for School Board seats, I alone made the case that an elected School Board must be representative of the community and that diverse points of view deserve a place at the educational policy-making table.

Council has the power to make running for School Board seats more accessible to the people across the community if it wants to do so. During the next four years, I'll continue to stand with the public which overwhelmingly voted for the elected School Board and which overwhelmingly favors ward-based School Board elections to demand an equitable School Board elections process.

Currently, at \$13,000 we're spending the highest dollar per pupil in central Virginia and among the highest in the state, but have we had good returns on the investment? Is our money always being spent as wisely as it could or it should be? For many years, in order to avoid a public debate over school funding, City Council has simply given the schools a fixed percentage of new revenue it needed. That practice discourages valuable public discussion about educational accountability. As your City Councilor, I have advocated for a needs-based school budgeting process. This change in the school budgeting process would require the schools to thoroughly analyze the results of their current efforts, then present to Council and the public their actual financial needs. This change will help us to have necessary annual community dialogues about the needs in our schools and how the City can best meet them.

It's important that we allocate school funds and resources where they will do the most to enhance our students' chances for success. Research tells us that the single-most important school-related factor in regards to student achievement is the classroom teacher. It's time to redirect existing funds and resources away from overhead and into the classroom where they will directly help our students.

This year we have a new summer program initiative for our young people. Charlottesville City Schools c.l.a.s.s. has teamed up with Parks & Recreation to create Club Excel. This program effectively extends the school year by melding traditional camp activities with educational enrichment opportunities. The use of existing funds in creative ways like this will encourage students to continue building essential educational skills year round in a safe, enjoyable environment.

In order to prepare students who prefer work in the trades or to initially follow a vocational track of education, we need new initiatives to attract City residents to CATEC. During my time on Council, I've worked with Mr. Norris to bring limited bus service to CATEC where none had existed previously. I've personally taken trades classes at CATEC and have found the program to be wonderful. There are great opportunities in this community for skilled tradesmen to earn a very good living and we must ever promote the excellent CATEC programs already in place as well as look for ways to expand existing programs as needed.

Let us also work closely with our CHS students to encourage career ladder educational opportunities. I currently am the Council representative on the Weed & Seed Committee and a good example of this is Weed & Seed's Students on a Mission Club. This Club helps students to successfully complete high school and graduate with solid plans for their future goals. Students in the Club work closely with graduate student mentors at UVA to work on college applications, test preparation, and other important activities affecting their future career and education prospects. Stepping out of high school and up into a college or career track is critical for the future economic success and independence of our students and efforts to do this must be supported.

Lastly, there are many terminally unfulfilled positions in this community and many employers who would welcome the opportunity to hire educated and well-trained employees at substantial wages. We should not be satisfied with our high school graduates and community members simply accepting entry-level jobs as permanent employment. We should support initiatives aimed at raising and assisting residents to get their GEDs and/or finish their education or to qualify for higher wage positions. We should continue to support our workforce development efforts in conjunction with PVCCC. The nursing program there, for example, has been particularly successful in meeting a critical employment need for our community while providing excellent well-paying employment opportunities for its graduates.

To better serve our work force and our community's potential employers, we should support new collaboration between CATEC and PVCC and the many areas where college and vocational education overlap, it's crucial for the success of our students and our workforce that we broaden educational opportunities however and whenever possible.

In addition, while some students see PVCC as a stepping stone into the workforce, others see their work at PVCC as a stepping stone to higher education. My own education followed this very path as I began at a community college and then transferred to a four-year university where I eventually received my bachelor's degree in business management.

This community must continue to encourage and assist all students who are interested in furthering their college education and PVCC's two-year to four-transition program is a great resource for incoming students who'd like to go on to a four-year school.

Regarding affordable housing—the people in Charlottesville know that I can be counted on to stand with them in demanding fiscal responsibility and accountability at City Hall. Affordable housing is a problem in the City but it's part of the larger problem of affordable living in Charlottesville. Council can and must do better to alleviate the escalating financial burdens that we discussed earlier.

It's important to realize that real estate taxes have become one of the largest barriers to affordable home ownership and affordable renting in the City. Young families who have barely managed to scrape enough money together to buy and purchase a home in the

City worry that they won't be able to afford both the mortgage and the annually sky rocketing property taxes. Residents on low or fixed incomes who've been hit year after year with crushing tax increases fear they may have to sell their homes and move out of the City and many renters are bearing the brunt of increasing taxes with annual rent increases.

In addition, affordable living in the City is greatly impacted by other costs. For example, during my first Council term, I voted repeatedly against higher water rate structures that subsidize University students while putting a greater financial burden on year-round City residents. Part of the reason for higher housing costs for new housing in the City is increased fees placed upon builders. Whenever the City charges a developer more money for a permit or a fee, those costs ultimately are passed along to the home buyer. During my four years on Council, I've worked to keep permits and fees lower in order to assist in the affordability of housing and I'll continue to do so.

I also support the City's increased use of CDBG funds for home owner repairs and to assist first-time home buyers. These expenditures are helpful in maintaining our existing resident base and improving our current housing stock, giving a start to those who need a little extra help in order to buy a home here.

Through the various programs, grants and other expenditures, Charlottesville is already spending well over a million dollars annually in housing initiatives, but have we been spending this money effectively. While some are offered relief, others who can ill afford it are paying more and more year after year. I want you to ask yourself does the money the City is spending on housing initiatives substantively help you or your neighbors or, in some cases, has new affordable housing just helped raise the housing assessments and consequently the property taxes in your own neighborhood and driven out another long-time resident.

Council should be wise and demand accountability regarding the monies it spends on housing initiatives. Agency recipients of funds should have a proven track record of success in providing affordable housing and should be completely trusted by the community. Affordable housing agreements made between the City and outside organizations should be strictly adhered to and enforced by the City and finally, all initiatives should be closely scrutinized for any potential negative effect on existing residents and homeowners before being implemented. Careful handling of our City budget and careful stewardship of your tax dollars is the first step in maintaining affordable living in Charlottesville for our existing residents, our most valuable asset.

As your City Councilor, I have been and will continue to be a strong and reliable voice for fiscal responsibility in City Hall. We cannot buy our way out of housing problems, but Council can make things better by working smarter, by carefully managing City budgets, by respecting each and every tax dollar and minimizing fees and permit costs wherever possible and by carefully evaluating the impacts of our programs and proposals on existing residents.

In conclusion, Charlottesville stands at a crossroads tonight. Decades of neglect have left many neighborhoods in need of immediate attention. Decades of neglect have left too many of our school children without the excellent education that you've all paid for and that they deserve. Decades of neglect have left too many in our community wondering why sadly they can no longer afford to call Charlottesville home. Decades of neglect have excluded too many people from participating in their own government process, but I do bring you a message of hope tonight.

Working together we've made the City-wide infrastructure repair and neighborhood maintenance an issue worthy of immediate attention. Now we must work together to prioritize long-standing neighborhood problems and repairs to fix the old before building new. Working together, we did what many considered impossible in bringing an accountable elected School Board to Charlottesville. Now, we must work together to make sure that those elections are not exclusionary, but that all are welcome at the decision-making table. Working together, we've shone a light in the dark recesses of City Hall to expose cronyism, neglect and favoritism. Now we must work together to resume control of local government, taking it back from the hands of a powerful few and returning it to the people in whose hands it rightly belongs.

This election is not about a Council majority. Regardless of the election results, Democrats will hold a super majority on City Council. That means if they have the political will, they can do anything they desire with or without my consent. However, of the three candidates here, I alone bring four years of valuable Council experience specifically working with the many issues that Councilors face day in and day out. My unique presence in City Hall will ensure that diverse viewpoints will be brought to the table, that the hard questions will continue to be asked, that at least one person who stands outside of the dominant power structure will continue to speak out on behalf of the public and then a stronger, better government will result because ideas and plans will be challenged and tested before being implemented.

The times that we've disagreed over issues I've always tried to be respectful of your opinions. The times we've agreed over issues, I've worked long and hard to represent your interests before the Council and I vow to continue my work. I'm grateful for the trust you placed in me four years ago. I'm humbled and honored by your support and I ask you for your vote on May 2nd. Thank you.

Julian Taliaferro: Good evening to everyone. My name is Julian Taliaferro and I guess as most of you all know I'm a candidate for Charlottesville City Council and I certainly want to thank Dr. Turner and all the officers of the NAACP for the opportunity to speak with you tonight and tell you where I stand on some of the issues that are facing our City.

I'll go back— When I recently retired from the Charlottesville Fire Department I had a lot of people approach me and say, you know, you ought run for City Council. You ought to give it some consideration. So after much thought and deliberation, I asked myself, if I run, can I make a significant contribution that will benefit all of the citizens in

our community and after I thought about, I really think that I can and that's why I decided to run. I know that I can do this best by listening, being a consensus builder and using the input of all our citizens to make the Charlottesville community a better place to live. My record of public service demonstrates that I can provide the needed leadership that will be mindful about our challenges while at the same time dealing with our conflicts with compassion, stability and optimism.

My platform essentially is that, first of all, we need to maintain our financial stability in the City. We must support a strong public school system by working with the newly elected School Board that we'll have soon and also supporting our new superintendent to ensure good quality education for all the children in the Charlottesville system and another issue that I think we really have to deal with in the system is the safety issue that confronts us and we absolutely need to find a better way to deal with that.

Also I want to insure a fair and efficient delivery system of City services to all residents in the City and above all, we must preserve and enhance the quality of life that we enjoy here in Charlottesville. And neighborhoods— neighborhoods are very important to me and as a resident in the City for over 40 years I know the importance of protecting and nurturing all of our neighborhoods and when I speak of neighborhoods in our community, I think of the affordable housing issue that this City has to confront. The ability to live where one works is no longer possible for our school teachers, for our firefighters, our police officers and folks who work in other trades and businesses within the community. We need to address this, I think, by strengthening our workforce development programs and we also need to do this by supporting the concept that we need to pay a living wage in this community because that's another chief component of the problem we face today. I think to do otherwise we make a mistake.

I know that Dr. Turner mentioned health care. Health care I think is a major concern. I know a lot of people in this community that don't have health care. I know some people do use the Free Clinic, but there're a lot of people, as was pointed out, who they put off having care and they just don't go. The other day I talked to a lady in Belmont and she called me and she was talking about some of the property tax issues, etc., and she said I'm raising my grandchildren and I have care for them, but I don't have any health care and she said I can't even afford to go the dentist to get my teeth fixed and, you know, that's a really sad commentary when I hear it from people and, you know, personally myself and, of course, it's kind of beyond the purview of City Council, but I would certainly support national health care because I spend time in Canada with the International Association of Fire Chiefs and I think you've all heard the horror stories about health care in Canada so I made a point when I'm in Canada to talk to different fire chiefs and I asked them, tell me about health care. I hear all the horror stories and I can tell you, 9 out of 10 fire chiefs and I respect those people, have told me they're satisfied with the care they're getting there. One gentleman had cancer and was taken treatment and he said he was fully satisfied, so that kind of made me feel that maybe it's not as bad as we hear sometimes.

And going back to the affordable housing issue, I can only think back—when I first came to work for the Fire Department in 1962, I made \$300.00 a month and worked 84 hours a week I think it was, but I was able to buy a house in the City in Johnson Village in a few years and, you know, I know folks in public service and people working here, they can no longer do that. A lot of people like the lady the other day who voiced a lot of concerns about taxes and providing City services, that is something that I'm looking forward to addressing as a member of Council. I personally will support analysis with our City services and benchmarking ourselves against other municipalities, not only our input, what we spend, but also we need to develop measurements to determine where our money is being spent and to be sure it's being spent wisely and I can tell you, you can measure anything if you really truly want to do it.

I will tell you I know how to deal with budgets. I've had to make difficult decisions in the Fire Department in order to reduce expenditures. Also I served on the Board of Directors of the International Association of Fire Chiefs since 1992 and I currently serve as their international treasurer and I'm proud to say that I played a major role in making that organization debt free for the first time in anyone's memory. I was able to reduce the Association's dependence on membership dues, kind of like trying to reduce the dependence on property taxes, but I was able to reduce that from about 67% down to 47% and also I've been able to increase the net assets of our organization each year from an average of 5 to 7%.

And I had the honor and pleasure of serving our citizens for the past 43 years as a member of the Charlottesville Fire Department and I hope I can continue my service to the community. Today, we have an internationally accredited Fire Department, one of only 106 in the world and our department is highly regarded for quality of service, employment and development opportunities, and a positive work environment.

I will tell you that perhaps the best mark of a person is what they have accomplished during their tenure and I can tell you that some of the accomplishments that I'm proudest of is when I first went on the Board of Directors of the International in 1992, I had a lot of African American fire chiefs work to help get me elected, but next year they came to me and said we really need some help in getting more people involved in the International on and on, so I went to our International president and I said we need to create a cultural diversity committee to address some of these issues and get people talking to one another and the president at that time did that. Then he came to our board and they said, well, who wants to be on there. Well, nobody wanted to be on the committee. I said, well, I'll be on the committee and I had a lot of these people tell me, you don't want to do, a lot of people don't like this. I said, well, I'm going to do it anyway since I'm interested in it and I think it's important. Well, we started that and we've been successful. I still serve on that today and then Governor Wilder appointed me to the Fire Board many years ago and at that time we started the first national fire service diversity meeting that covered fire departments from all over the United States and we have six or seven hundred people come to that every year and that was a real success.

I just want to share a couple of other things with you. There was a student who wrote a paper at J. Sargeant Reynolds University about the Charlottesville Fire Department and I'm rather proud of it. I just want to share it with you and I'm going to take just a couple of lines out of here. One of the things he said was a "successful program for promoting cultural diversity can be found in Charlottesville, Virginia. The Charlottesville Fire Department has a comprehensive diversity program." Then he goes on to saying, "this proactive approach promotes multi-cultural organization in the Charlottesville Fire Department comes straight from the top. Fire Chief Julian Taliaferro established the personnel _____ team in the Charlottesville Fire Department in 1992. At that time, he was serving on the International Association of Fire Chief Committee to promote cultural diversity within the fire service."

Also, several years ago we started a program at CATEC. It was an outreach program trying to get more young people interested in the Fire Department and we're starting to see some success in that area and I'm rather proud that I had a small part in doing that.

I will also tell you that there's a recent report that's soon going to come out— This is the report here. This is a draft report that was put together by the International Association of Fire Fighters Diversity Initiative. It hasn't been released yet, but it will be released shortly but it talks about Charlottesville, Virginia in here and that Charlottesville, Virginia is one of the case study examples and it states in here: this department ranks third in black representation with a ratio of .83 and they talk about this group ratio and it says, for example, a department with a black ratio between .69 and 1.0 exceeds the national ratio for blacks in the fire service as a whole or comes closer to actual population representation, so this is another thing that we've done in our organization that I think we've done well with.

I will tell you that if I'm elected to City Council that I will be responsive to you and I will be responsible. I'm going to be responsible for the financial well being in the City. You can be assured of that. Another thing that I'm going to do, I want to create opportunities in this community and I want to create— I want to strengthen our workforce development program. I think it was mentioned earlier. It really is key to take these children— They're not college-bound and get them in a well-paying job because that's one of our solutions. I'll also tell you that I'll will certainly govern with compassion and civility and also I will keep my eye on the ball in City Hall and I tell you what, I've been in local government a long time and I think I know the right questions to ask and with that I'm going to conclude and I would certainly like to ask for your support on May 2nd. Thank you.

Rick Turner: This concludes our candidates' presentation. Will you please pass your cards or give your cards to the monitor. We'll follow the same order. I will, first of all, ask Mr. Norris to answer the question, then Mr. Schilling, then Mr. Taliaferro. The first question, Mr. Norris, **how would you empower teachers in the face of this litigious environment and in the face of school board pressure for SOL performance?**

Dave Norris: That's a good question. I have a lot of friends that are teachers in our public schools and I have two children of my own in the public schools and I'm always talking with the teachers about their experiences as educators and what I find across the board is a real sense of frustration because they're not allowed to do the job that they were hired to do and we have some excellent, well-talented individuals teaching in our schools who are frustrated having to teach to the tests, as they say and conform to what's being driven from Richmond, from D.C., in terms of the SOLs and No Child Left Behind and one of the things that I mentioned earlier that we can do to empower teachers is to change the way that we structure the schools and encourage innovation in the schools. This proposal that came forward this year for a charter school that would be targeting kids from disadvantaged families and using the arts and using other ways to reach these kids that are currently not being well served by our schools, that's in a way to also involve teachers and involve parents and let them do what they are hired to do and let them do what they're inspired to do.

We have to also look at reaching out. There's an excellent new program in the community—African American Teaching Fellows, reaching out to teaching assistants and also to high school kids and college students and nurture them from an early age, nurture them as their assistants, nurture them from college and mentor them and provide financial support to allow them to become teachers in our schools and, again, reaching out to teachers who can reach out to our kids.

Rob Schilling: I know education very well. I believe I have the unique qualification among all candidates and perhaps among all Councilors as having worked five years as a classroom teacher across grades K-8. My mother was a teacher at the high school level. Both of my wife's parents were teachers, one at junior college at the university level, the other one from preschool all the way up to high school. I have been steeped in education my whole life and the time I spent in the classroom gives me a real understanding of what our teachers face and it's not an easy job. In fact, it was harder than this job and this is a hard job being a City Councilor but that was harder.

The question of empowering teachers is really a critical one and I've given a lot of thought to this over the past year and I think that part of the problem is that we don't know what our teachers need. We don't have a good handle on the needs of our classroom teachers. I was actually a little astounded in talking to the School Board last year or perhaps earlier this year about teachers' needs and they were conjecturing on what teachers need and I said, well, have you ever asked them and the seven people all kind of looked around and shook their heads. They never thought to ask the teachers and so I asked the School Board at that particular meeting to commission a questionnaire of our teachers to find out what their needs were and what they need to be most successful in the classroom and I think it's that sort of thinking that needs to start taking root in our schools. I believe the elected School Board is going to take us there and give our teachers what they need in the classroom, something they haven't been asked.

Julian Taliaferro: Well, I have some experience with this myself. I've taught fire service training I guess for over a quarter century in the Commonwealth of Virginia and I'm very familiar with what happens when you teach to the test. We confronted this same issue a number of years ago and we had people teaching our fire fighters and they really weren't very creative because they taught to the test so they made sure they passed the test and the quality of instruction really went down, an issue that we're still trying to correct with the fire service community.

I think another thing we have to do, I think we need to ask the community because we've got a lot of people in this community that I think could really help the situation and it's not a Democrat problem, it's not a Republican problem. It is a community problem and we need to harness the energy in this community and bring everybody together to solve this problem because I'm going to tell you something—I hate to see the educational system in Charlottesville at the bottom because we shouldn't be there. We should not. Thank you.

Rick Turner: Question no. 2 for the candidates. **How would you change the City's current spending priorities? What major changes in spending policy would you make?** Mr. Norris—

Dave Norris: I think one of the first things that we have to do is look at the size of the City work force and in the last 30 years the City workforce has grown tremendously and yet the population of the City has not and looking at— Particularly looking at the central office upper management type of positions and where are we allocating our resources. Where I don't want to see us cut is those frontline positions, the teachers, the police officers, the fire fighters, others that are serving the public on a daily basis and doing a good job of it. And related to that is the fact that we're not currently paying them enough money, those frontline positions—the teachers and the police officers—to afford to live here. You know, again, the teachers that I know in this City, the police officers that come up to me and express frustration with the fact that the salary we're paying them, they have to live in Waynesboro or Buckingham County or Greene County and we need them here in our community, so I want to look at the way that we're allocating our resources internal to the City government.

We also have to take a look at some of the sort of the big ticket projects and these consultants that we bring in and the studies that we pay for and are we really spending our money as wisely as we can. We are stewards of the taxpayers' dollars and we need to make sure we're acting responsible.

Rob Schilling: I have over my past four years of service worked and discussed this often and it has to do with prioritization. I have continually called on City Council to have a discussion of prioritization of wants versus needs and for some reason, Council doesn't want to have that conversation. Some Councilors don't even understand the distinction, but I think when we're looking at prioritizing City spending and knowing that there is a finite amount of money that is available—it's not infinite, it is finite—which means at a certain point, our spending is going to reach the level where the majority of

people in this community can no longer afford to live here and I want you all to picture what that community might look like because that means the end of the middle class in Charlottesville and believe me, I've talked to enough people during this campaign, people who've called me from all over the City who are fearful of being forced and taxed out of their homes. They can no longer afford this annual 15, 12, 20, 25, in some cases, 40% increase and the City Council, whoever's on that Council, had better be willing to sit down and make some hard decisions.

We have been counting for years on the rising assessments bloating our coffers in the City. There's going to come a time when that's going to stop and we are going to have a \$5 million hole in our budget and that's going to be painful, so the time is overdue for this discussion and it has to be had as soon as possible with City Council and the community.

Julian Taliaferro: I've already taken a look at some of the spending priorities in City government and I can tell you right from the start and I don't have the exact figures in front of me—we spend way above the average on general government expenditures, so we have a lot of overhead there and if I'm elected to City Council, I'm going to certainly take a look at that and I'm going to tell you a little bit just about my philosophy while I'm talking with you this evening. In the Fire Department, we always had to put every person on the street on a fire engine. I never had that luxury to have a lot of administrative staff. It was myself and a secretary all my years in the Fire Department because I knew those people needed to be out taking care of folks that were in need. One time in the City, probably seven or eight years ago, we had fire engines responding with only one person on them and we've got that changed now, but at the same time, we put the emphasis on serving the people.

I can tell you another thing—we did a lot of studies in the Fire Department. I never hired a consultant to do it. We had people in our organization who were able to do it. When we went for our international accreditation, everybody said we've got to hire an accreditation manager. I never hired accreditation managers. We had people in our organization that did all that, so that's just kind of where I'm coming from. Thank you.

Rick Turner: For the next question I'm going to reverse order so that Mr. Norris can have a little bit more time to respond. So I'm going to start the next question with you.
How would you improve public transit? And when can we look forward to Sunday bus service?

Julian Taliaferro: Well, that's kind of a loaded question. I think one of the things that I would certainly like to look at in improving public transportation is I think we need to look at the frequency of service because I think that's a detriment. Some people don't use the system because it's not available enough. I know we have to look at where some of the current routes are. Some areas do not have service or regular service. I think you can call for service. I think it would be important to have Sunday service. I would support that because I think particularly people that have no other way to get around the City, I think it's pretty important.

Frankly, another thing that I'm really interested in and has been talked about some is bringing back the streetcars to Charlottesville. I think that would be wonderful if we can figure out how to do it and pay for it. I think it'd be a nice service. You know, they're talking about maybe making the University kind of a hub for that and maybe the first leg might be from downtown to the University and then ultimately maybe from the University out to Barracks Road Shopping Center, but that would be great to be able to move people around, people being able to get out to the shopping center and shop, etc., so that's basically where I am on public transportation.

Rob Schilling: I enjoy taking public transit and a lot of people might think I'm crazy because there seems to be some resistance to taking the bus, but I love to take the bus, but when I take the bus, I have to walk about 25 or 30 minutes to get to the nearest bus stop from my house. We do not have service at all in Greenbrier unless, of course, you know four hours in advance what time you want to go somewhere and four hours in advance what time you want to come back and then it's very convenient for you. You get someone to pick you up and take you around. I think we have a lot of room for improvement.

We are a one-car family. We have done that by choice. Since moving here from California in 1998, our family has maintained one car in order to be lighter on the environment and in order to try and be just lighter on the City and we've made do with that. It's been a sacrifice but we have. There're a lot of people who don't have that choice and I think as we look around at our buses, there're many people who are concerned over huge empty buses rolling around that people are not using and other areas that have no service. I think what we need to do we need to reevaluate how we're spending our transportation dollars and we need to avoid dumping huge loads of money into transfer stations that look beautiful but that will do nothing to better our public transportation and while we're at it, when we're looking at making changes in public transportation, let's decide what we want to do first and then build the center to fit that later. Right now we've built a center to fit our existing buses and we're talking about putting trolleys in. I think we got the cart before the horse.

Dave Norris: Transportation is in many ways, it's an environmental issue, it's also a social justice issue because when you don't have access to your own automobile, being able to get around and get to your job and get to your schools or our adult education program in Charlottesville is an example of an organization that provides a valuable service to our community and there's no bus transportation there and I commend Councilor Schilling for working to get bus transportation to CATEC. We need to do everything we can to improve access to these facilities that serve our public.

Councilor Lynch has for a couple of years been promoting an idea of restructuring the routes in the City and I think that deserves a real close look at how we can make the system work more effectively for its riders. We also have to look at regional cooperation in terms of the transit system and I've advocated for creating a regional transit authority

to help the different transit systems—CTS, UTS, JAUNT, etc.—to do a better job of coordinating their efforts and coming up with regional solutions.

Sunday bus service is something that it's in my platform. I think it's a very valuable initiative and something that I will certainly prioritize. I know a lot of residents who— They don't have Sunday off from work and many of them do not have cars and it's quite a burden and it needs to be a priority.

Rick Turner: How do you feel about the issue of a district or ward system for the election of City Council members?

Julian Taliaferro: Well, that's an issue that's been discussed for some time and I think I would probably support that, but I think if we do that I think we ought to probably have a representative from each ward and maybe a couple of people elected at large or some system like that, but I think maybe that might possibly get better representation. The only drawback I have to it I guess is the fact that Charlottesville's such a small city, a little over 10 square miles, and one of the things that I have seen in a lot of cities across the country and I hope it wouldn't happen here, but when you get a ward system, you start having these people representing different wards wanting things specific for their ward that really is not in the best interest of the overall community, so I think that's the only drawback to that, but I would certainly be willing to take a look at it and I probably would support it. I'd like to hear a little bit more about it, though.

Rob Schilling: What an appropriate place for this question to be asked. Anybody who has studied the history of this community knows that this issue was brought forward by the NAACP in 1978. It was brought forward to the City Council who did not want to hear about it, but they had to because of the courageous members of the NAACP came forward and said we have a representation problem in this City and they were right. Anybody who's looked at the numbers in the history of Charlottesville, you can count on one hand the number of African American councilors that have served on City Council in this community. You need to ask yourself why that is. But I think there's a solution that's at hand.

There was an extensive study done in the early 1980s. In fact, there was a referendum put on the ballot and it passed in six of the City's eight precincts. Yes, City Council, move us to a ward system. What happened? It went back to City Council and one councilor said it wasn't decisive enough. Let's put it on the ballot again and it went on six months later during the City Council election and it was defeated because the councilors who were running for re-election did not favor it and those people that came out put it down and many of you know the very history of the fracture of the NAACP that occurred over that issue that has not been healed to this day. It is beyond time for us to look at this seriously as a City Council. I'm so pleased to hear Chief Taliaferro say that he's willing to look at it because there weren't very many others on the City Council who wanted to do it. I commissioned a study of this last year or two years ago; the information's still there. It's time to look at it again.

Dave Norris: I certainly am open to studying the issue and I look forward to reviewing the data that's been gathered in the past on the issue but I have to say my natural inclination is to go with Chief Taliaferro's comment when he talked about how small a city this is and with a city this size, does it make sense to divide us up and you have one member of this neighborhood representing that neighborhood and not necessarily being accountable for all the citizens in the community and I think accountability is what's key and responsiveness is what's key and if the citizens feel like their elected representatives are not accountable and not responsive, they may go to a ward system as a way of changing that but I think we need to get at the basic accountability and responsiveness first. I'm certainly open to studying wards but I would not say at this point I'm prepared to vote for them.

Rick Turner: With the newly elected School Board, what policy role should a Councilor play in developing school policy?

Julian Taliaferro: Well, I'm going to give you my opinion and my views. I certainly would not attempt to micromanage the School Board. I think those people who are elected or appointed, but anyway, those are the people that should be running the school systems. As City Councilor, I would want to be able to support them in their efforts to insure they have adequate funding, to provide for quality programs in the system, but I certainly would not want to be setting policy for the schools or being a micromanager to start off because I'm not a educator anyway.

Rob Schilling: It is a very good question and I think really it's the reason that today I'm standing before you and talking about School Board elections that are coming here on May 2nd. In the issues and the troubles that were here in this community a couple of years ago or a year ago, there was a great deal of angst in the community because it appeared that some City Councilors were stepping over the legal line of accountability in attempting to manage or micromanage the School Board outside the public eye. I had School Board members who told me this, who told me there were Councilors pulling strings and telling School Board members to do one thing or the other when that is absolutely outside of the law. The law empowers the City Council to fund the schools. It's what we should be doing. We can have broad discussions on policy and we should have those discussions. All of us have brought up many ideas that need to be discussed about things that go in our schools, but I understand and respect the sovereignty of the School Board in setting educational policy and I have not and will not cross that line.

Dave Norris: I would agree with everything that you gentlemen just said. The School Board has a function and a role to do and the City Council is not there to micromanage what the School Board does and certainly now that we have an elected School Board. When there's funding involved you want to have— Make sure that those funds are well spent and that there's a wise stewardship of our taxpayer resources. Where the City Council and where our City and where our community does have a role, a very important role as I mentioned earlier, is making that community-wide commitment to youth development and that's well beyond what the schools are able or supposed to be

doing and that goes to are we providing the support from the City Council, are we providing the support on a non-profit level, in the faith community, to our children in terms of the tutoring, the mentoring, the youth employment opportunities. There's a whole lot more that we need to be doing as a community to lift up our children and not dump all the problems on the schools and that's where as your City Councilor I will be a strong advocate.

Rick Turner: Can City Council influence action by the University of Virginia related to student housing, increased health care for low-income residents and use of cars by students? If so, how?

Julian Taliaferro: You ask all the tough questions, Dr. Turner. I think the only way that we probably can effectively do that is really by trying to really lobby those people on those issues. I think it's hard to force them to do anything. I think probably the one issue, the living wage, is probably a good example of that. It's really tough to push those people hard on that issue. I think the same thing with eliminating cars. I mean, we all know they have rules now. I think students for the first year maybe can't have cars. I don't know what the rule is now, but they probably all have them anyway, stuck somewhere.

I think another issue that we have that obviously is with the housing. If we could get the University to provide more housing I think it would take a lot of pressure off the local housing market. Rents would probably be more affordable. We all know what happens. You get four kids come here to college and they rent a \$1,200-a-month apartments. It's 300 bucks a person, but the average working person, he can't afford to do that, so I think the only way we'll be able to do that is to really just keep lobbying and working on them and try to bring pressures where we can.

Rob Schilling: I've had four years of experience in working with the University and it is a very tricky tricky proposition. The University is a state institution and they trump the city institution. The University has been causing a lot of pressure, especially on our housing by buying up properties in the City for their own use and taking them off the tax rolls. That's lost us a lot of money in direct tax revenues. It's put a crimp in some of our housing and has forced rents up.

Now, working with the University, I think what I've learned over these four years is that we have to work hand in hand and not contrary to the University. When Council at one point in time decided to kind of step out and challenge the University, the results were not as good as they could've been and I think it was a risk that the Council took. It was worth seeing what happened, but ultimately they're going to do what they want to do. I think we have to rebuild the trust between the City Council and the University and I think that's starting to come back. There were some issues of trust when I first came on, some agreements that had been broken, but ultimately we always have to advocate for what is right but we have to do it in a smart way if we want to get results in working with the University.

Dave Norris: I think sometimes you have to hold people's feet to the fire. When you've identified a need in the community— We've identified a problem in the community, when the University is not paying its employees, its entry-level employees a living wage, we end up in effect subsidizing the University because those employees that are working 40 hours a week and still living in poverty or having to rely on Social Services that are provided by the taxpayers and that gives us some moral standing to go to the University in a very public way. I'm probably going to ruin our little surprise on this, but Friday, this Friday, Chief Taliaferro and I are going to be the University and publicly signing the living wage resolution to put pressure on the University.

Now, as Councilor Schilling said, part of it, you know, it's carrot and a stick approach. The other side of that is we have to work in a smart way and this is where the whole issue of regional cooperation comes into play and that involves the County and the City and the University and in many cases, the surrounding counties, in finding solutions that we can all agree to with regard to transportation, with regard to land use, with regard to housing. We have the Planning District Commission over here that is doing yeoman's work in trying to identify regional solutions to some of these problems and we need to increase those efforts, particularly on issues like housing. Where can we combine our efforts, where can we reduce or eliminate duplication of services, where can we move forward as a region to address some of these really critical issues.

Rick Turner: I want to thank you guys for honoring us with your presence tonight. As you can see, time has expired and I want to thank the residents of Charlottesville for coming out tonight. I hope that they've given you enough information that you become more intelligent voters on May 2nd. Thank you very much.