

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

CANDIDATE: Bill Desteph

DATE: 9/14/10

- 1) What do you believe to be the top three most pressing concerns to the business community in Virginia Beach?
 - Taxes-in favor of phasing out BPOL Tax.
 - Vision for the Future – compatibility with our SGA's. Need holistic vision and infrastructure to link SGA's.
 - Make agenda consistent.
 - Transportation & Infrastructure – Lynnhaven to Centerville Turnpike should be a higher priority.
 - Many questions about signs over last few days.

- 2) For incumbents, do you think the votes you have taken during your service on Council have addressed or contributed to those concerns? Please give examples.
 - Has brought up BPOL 3 times, it has been set aside.
 - Need to take a more macro (60,000) foot view of envisioning the city 20, 50, and 100 years from now.
 - A lot of votes have addressed issues but time to stop studying and take action.

- 3) Do you support or oppose the use of public-private partnerships such as those created to develop Town Center, the Sandbridge Beach restoration, the 31st Street Hotel and as have been suggested for future projects in strategic growth areas? If yes, what public financing options do you feel appropriate for such projects? Financing tools might include: Tax Increment Financing, Special Service Districts, Enterprise Zones, Innovation Zones (technology) and BID's?
 - Supports PPP's in specific instances. Contingent on public/private funding ratio.
 - Believes the public contributions to PPP's should be more where they started (15%) than what the current requests have been (33%).
 - Does not like the public putting in too much of the public/private ratios.
 - Fully supports Enterprise Zones when they make sense. Enterprise bonds supported where necessary.
 - Supports more equitable tax collection.
 - Supports Vet's house, city put in 15K, results very positive. Good example of a functioning relationship.
 - Funding methods through tax incentives and tax breaks, Sandbridge TIF needs to be adjusted.

- 4) What do you believe should be the City's transportation priorities for the near term and assuming the General Assembly's continued unwillingness to provide sufficient funding resources for these projects, how do you suggest the City fund critical transportation needs?
 - Need Gas Tax – 10-15cents used in locality where raised, put in lockbox only for transportation. This would be a user fee, tax on miles driven through tax use.
 - Likes use based tax.
 - Supports MPO/City transportation priorities.

- 5) Should Virginia Beach continue to participate in the regional economic development alliance to increase our ability to reach out to national and international companies?
 - Continue to participate but continually re-evaluate our return on investment.

- 6) How important is regional cooperation to the future of Virginia Beach and do you support participation in such regional initiatives as workforce development (Opportunity, Inc.), military infrastructure (HR Military and Federal Facilities Alliance), regional policy development (Hampton Roads Partnership), and regional planning (Hampton Roads Planning District Commission/MPO)?
 - Regionalism is important, but we need elected people on regional boards, look out for Virginia Beach's interest, make sure we get our fair share.
 - As with SPSA, supported weighted voting so our population is adequately represented. Virginia Beach should have more influence in these regional efforts.
 - Smaller localities may have too much influence on policy.
 - Elected officials should voice their concerns.

- 7) What are the most important steps the City can take to enhance its relationship and communication with the military and ensure retention of military commands in Hampton Roads?
 - Virginia Beach doing a good job expanding existing commands.
 - Added jobs at Dam Neck, Fort Story and Little Creek.
 - Believes we should have a military liaison on the city's payroll.
 - JFCOM should not have been a surprise. Should have been on JFCOM much sooner. A lot of residents work there.
 - Virginia Beach is veterans regional site.
 - Military invitations have not been coming to City Council. Should be getting a "heads up" on military functions.

- 8) Is the extension of the light rail system from the planned terminus at Newtown Road east to the Beach District a priority and how should it be financed?
- Transportation solution is a priority. Not sure light rail is right one today.
 - Believes in alternatives as direct bus service from NAB, airport, Little Creek, Oceanfront, and TCC.
 - Need to put it out to referendum.
 - Definitely right to purchase Right-of-Way.
 - First pave Right-of-Way and run buses to prove ridership with upscale buses, then switch to BRT, then to Light Rail.
- 9) Do you believe the city's budget process ought to budget expenses to meet revenue goals or adjust revenues to meet budget and spending priorities?
- Believes in zero-based budgeting to meet core responsibilities, public safety, infrastructure, and education.
 - Don't like starting point being what was funded prior year.
 - Once you have budgeted for providing core services you should cost justify every dollar spent.
 - Core roles of government should be budgeted.
 - Referenced his research of budget and extensive work in this area.
 - He digs up budget alternatives using city staff and briefs colleagues.
- 10) Should the General Assembly empower localities to: provide defined contribution plans in lieu of defined benefit plans, give flexibility to modify retirement service and age qualifications, and to require employee participation in benefit packages as may be deemed appropriate by the local governing body? Why or why not?
- Yes, allow city to adjust. Will be part of legislative package.
 - Existing employees get what was promised; new employees defined contribution like 401K.
 - New employees pick up more of health insurance cost.
 - Get in line with private sector.
 - Cannot sustain what we are doing today.
 - The current plan has cut future liability for city.
- 11) Do you feel there is waste in the city budget? If so, please site specific areas where you would reduce funding.
- Private club membership – no city employee should have this provided.
 - Look at our 5 municipal courses and use them more often.
 - Give the employee a raise to pay for it.
 - Gives perception of public waste.
 - The credit card issue must be addressed. Oversight is lacking.
 - We need a culture shift.

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

- Yes, Bob Dyer is a big proponent and is working on a proposal.
- Composition – accountants, GAO accountants, business experienced individuals who have made large and small payrolls.

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

- Gross receipts, if you have other offices in other cities, you get taxed on the whole gross receipts number – should be corrected.
- BPOL, phase it out over 3-5 years to attract and expand businesses.
- Machinery and tools tax increased without discussion with 3 affected – repealed increase.

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

- Agree with his job performance about 75% of the time.
- Occasionally he takes liberties and makes unilateral decisions on policy matters that Council has to go back and correct.
- Does a good job-managing budget.
- Needs to do a better job of giving Council timely and accurate information.

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

- No, blamed the issue on the business community, which was wrong.
- City should not have been excluded. A large percentage of signs belong to schools, city and churches. Largest signs at Convention Center and Sandler Center.
- Believes the city is hypocritical and the issue will come back up after November elections.
- Voted against it when it came up.
- Current law is not fair.