

Background

Age: 50 years

Marital Status: Single

Children: Two boys
Fred - GWHS - 17 years old
Andy - OT Bonnor - 11 years old

Education: Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering (BSCE)
Virginia Tech

Occupation: Professional Engineer
Professional Land Surveyor
Small Business Owner

Length of time living in Danville: 33 years
Born 1957 and lived here until I attended Virginia Tech
Returned to Danville to live in 1994.

Questions

1. Why are you running for a seat on City Council?

As a father of two boys in City public schools and as a small business owner, I have a vested interest in the success of the City and region. After serving on the City Planning Commission for the past 12 years, I was ineligible to serve another term. A natural progression for me is to use this Planning Commission experience and my engineering knowledge to serve for the betterment of our region. Regardless of the outcome of this election, there will be at least four newcomers to Council, including the recently appointed Dr. Miller. Except for me, none of the newcomers and none of the four Council members who are not currently up for election have served on the Planning Commission. Depending on the outcome of the elections, there may be no one on the new Council who has served on the Planning Commission and only one who has any historical perspective on the City's 2020 Land Use Plan, Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance.

Danville and the Dan River Region are at a critical stage in its development. Knowledge of these documents, the historical perspective related to each, and knowledge of the City's land and growth patterns are critical components in leading Danville and the surrounding region into the future. I believe this knowledge and experience, coupled with my civil engineering background, are needed and I am at a point in my life that is right for me to contribute to this community as a member of City Council. I hope the citizens of Danville agree and support me in this endeavor. For more information, please visit my website www.fredshanks.com.

2. What would you like to accomplish during your first year on City Council?

Remain dedicated to the regional economic development efforts for a diversified economy, while beginning to focus more on the repercussions of our success. I believe this focus should strive to assist in 1) creating world class public education programs for our youth and workforce development programs for our adults, 2) creating a strong infrastructure program to insure that our roads, bridges, utilities, and schools stay ahead of the growth, and 3) providing a safe place for the citizens of Danville as well as the tourists who come to Danville to shop, visit and do business.

The home run would be the successful recruitment of a major utility user that would not only provide additional employment opportunities, but would also utilize some of our excess water and wastewater capacities, which should result in a much needed decrease in our utility bills.

3. What would you do about the cost of utilities in Danville? Do you support utility rate relief for the elderly, poor and disabled? Do you favor more across-the-board rate cuts for utility customers?

Utility cost will not go down until we replace the loss of the large manufacturing businesses that required Danville to have water and wastewater treatment plants that are larger than what is presently needed. The cost of this excess capacity is now the burden of you and me. It will remain that way until we recruit a business or businesses that will use this excess capacity. In the meantime, we must find ways to operate more efficiently.

I do not support utility rate relief for the elderly, poor and disabled, unless it is an across-the-board rate decrease. There are other programs, such as "Neighbors Helping Neighbors," individual churches and private sector donor programs, that are in place to assist those who are unable to pay. A strong local economy with diverse employment opportunities will help minimize the number of our citizens who need assistance with their utility bills.

I do support exploring the possibility and the legality of property tax relief for the elderly, assuming that we are successful in raising our overall tax base through continued economic development success. It is my belief that the elderly require fewer services from the City, and if this is proven to be true, then property tax relief may be appropriate, as long as there is no tax increase to accomplish this objective.

4. Do you support the City's Plan to join with AMP-Ohio to build a new electric power plant? Is that our best chance to stabilize electric rates?

I support the City's Plan to join with AMP-Ohio to build new generating plants and I believe, based on what I know now, this is our best chance to stabilize electric rates. Like water and sewer rates, electric rates will not be coming down. I believe this agreement will help stabilize the rates, or at least minimize the increases.

5. Does Danville Public Schools receive enough money from Danville City Council? Would you support more local dollars going toward the public schools?

I believe that it is imperative that City Council works with the City School Board to provide the greatest opportunity to retain and recruit the best educators, administrators and staff for Danville Public Schools (DPS.) To do this, I would support increased local funding for the DPS. But first, I would need to be sure that the School Board has done all that it can to find cost savings through efficiencies in operation. I would expect the same from City Council. And these new found savings, coupled with a healthy business environment will make it easier to increase local funding for the Danville Public Schools.

6. Do you support the city's cooperative economic development efforts with Pittsylvania County? Would you like to see more joint city-county projects in the future?

I strongly support the city's cooperative economic development efforts with Pittsylvania County and would very much like to see more joint city-county projects in the future. This is the way of the future for our region. We need to work together to share land and infrastructure to bring more diverse employment opportunities to the region, as well as additional utility users to help minimize our excess utility capacities and lower utility rates for the City's utility customers who are located both in the City and the County.

7. How would you grade Danville City Manager Jerry Gwaltney on his job performance? What is his strongest asset? What should he do differently?

Mr. Gwaltney has done a fantastic job in promoting the region in terms of economic development. He has also done a fine job in trying to mend the "negativity hangover" that we seem to have at times. He has done that by promoting the positives. The landscaping projects around the City's interchanges are classic examples of the positive environment that he has worked to create. There are other areas in which I believe he has not fared as well. I find that he and I on occasion have had differing views on development, land use and zoning issues.

I believe the offer to house his Civil War collection in Danville by Danville native and nationally noted Civil War historian James I. (Buddy) Robertson should have been handled differently. Although it is probably too late, I would urge the new City Council and City Manager to attempt to open a dialogue to correct that poor decision.

There has been little discussion on the possible loss of the United States Court and the United States Bankruptcy Court in Danville. These courts are not just a local service to the citizens of Danville, Martinsville, and the Counties of Pittsylvania, Halifax, Henry and Patrick. They serve as an important business center, creating jobs and attracting visitors that spend time in the City and possibly shop, eat or stay overnight. I would urge the new City Council and City Manager to attempt to open a dialogue to preserve the Federal Building at 700 Main Street and the Federal Courts in Danville.

Not being a native of the area, the City Manager may not share some of the historical significance of buildings and landmarks around the City. As such, I would hope to see the new City Council and City Manager be more open to discussions concerning ancient and

historical properties. Open discussions need to take place regarding the vision for the former Dan River Mills Schoolfield complex and nearby properties. This visioning process needs to also occur with the Long Mill and White Mill properties along Memorial Drive and Riverside Drive.

I believe that it is very important that City Council remember that it is the City Manager's role to provide the facts and make recommendations to Council. It is Council's role to analyze and critique the data in order to make decisions that are in the best interest of the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Danville.

8. How would you address the issue of population loss in Danville? Is this now the time to try to recruit former city residents "back home?" How would you do this?

First, those of us who are here need to see and live the "positives" and lose the "negativity hangover." We are about to reap the benefits of the recent successes in the economic development arena. A strong and equitable Zoning and development policy will promote a successful business climate. Orderly growth insures business success. A successful business environment raises the tax City's tax base, which keep local taxes down. Lower taxes attract more businesses, which hire more citizens and attract more families to Danville. More employed citizens and a larger population buy more homes. Demand for more homes raises property values, which again increases the tax base . . . and on and on the cycle goes, resulting in more jobs, a healthy local economy, a higher tax base, and lower taxes rates.

Following this model, recruiting new residents to and former residents back to Danville will not be necessary. Where there is opportunity and quality of life . . . they will come.

9. Do you support Danville's retail hub strategy (to attract retail stores here as part of the overall economic development plan)? Do you think it will work?

I absolutely support Danville's retail hub strategy and believe it will work, if transportation networks are sufficient and if crime is kept in check. The first point being, when the shopping public is in line, it must be the cash register line and not a line of traffic. If traffic is a problem, the experience will be frustrating and they will go elsewhere. Secondly, and it is all of our responsibility, it is imperative that all shoppers, tourist, and locals feel safe as they travel to and from their cars to stores, offices and businesses. We must keep crime at bay.

10. How should the city help prepare local residents for the jobs that are coming to the community? What role should City Council have in the development of an effective work force development system?

First and foremost, it is the City's responsibility to promote a safe and successful business environment, and one way is to recruit businesses that provide diverse employment opportunities. Beyond that, I believe the City's role is to facilitate other entities, such as Danville Community College, State and Federal programs and agencies, private sector stakeholders, and, if applicable, Tobacco Commission opportunities to put

in place workforce development assistance and employment readiness training. City Government's role should not include City run programs to accomplish these objectives, unless they are part of DPS. We should continue to take advantage of outreach programs offered by the Institute for Advance Learning and Research as well as Danville Public Schools.

As new technology based industries move into the area, or existing ones expand, Council should encourage partnerships between these industries and Danville Public Schools, Danville Community College, and the Institute for Advance Learning and Research.

11. How important is tourism to Danville? Are Danville's historic sites attractive to outside visitors? Should the city spend more or less on tourism?

Tourism is extremely important to Danville. We are at the crossroads of US Highway 29 (Future Interstate 785) and US Highway 58. We are less than 20 miles of four-lane highway east of Future Interstate 73. Danville has several places of historical significance which should continue to be promoted. Equally important, is the "retail hub" model now near implementation. We must remember that a tourist is defined as "*somebody who travels in order to take advantage of a particular service or benefit that is not available at home.*" This is significant in that the tourist, as well as the citizen, will purchase goods and services. The goods will include a local sales tax. If they have breakfast, lunch or dinner, they will contribute to the tax base through a meals tax. If they stay over night, they will contribute to the tax base by way of the hotel tax.

If we can expand these opportunities by promoting historical sites and with more and better concerts, athletic events, educational opportunities and trade shows, these endeavors would be worthwhile expenditures for the City and worthy of incentives or seed funding.

12. How would you attract people to the city/retain those that are already here and make it a place that is attractive to people of all ages?

The reasons I returned to Danville in 1994, after living in Richmond and Roanoke, include the facts that there was a low crime rate, efficient transportation system, a solid school system, and an affordable cost of living. To preserve these important quality of life issues, we must strive to retain the businesses and people who are already here. This requires a low crime rate, an efficient transportation system, a low tax rate, a pro-business environment, and a quality education system. With these, businesses will flourish. Their success will result in more businesses. More businesses will hire more employees, some of whom will relocate to the area, either the City or the County. Either way, they will shop for goods and services and dine in the City. With more opportunities available, more of our youth will stay or return to the region for employment and raising a family.

13. What is your proposal for revitalizing downtown?

When I opened my business here in 1992, I realized that one problem with downtown

Danville was that very few people worked downtown and fewer people lived there. With so few working or living there, why would anyone go there to support the few businesses that were left? I visualized Danville's central business district looking like Martinsville's, Greensboro's and Richmond's just a few years earlier - desolate.

In an effort to support downtown, I relocated my small business there. When I purchased a business in Martinsville, I did the same thing. All said, I added only ten or twelve daily visitors to the two downtowns. But, that equaled a few purchases here and several lunches there.

As a downtown landowner and business owner, I am anxious to see the central business district thrive with small shops, service industries, restaurants of various theme/decor, government services and a mix of residential uses.

My proposal is to continue the incentive programs already in place that have been successful in promoting the downtown revitalization efforts. I believe these programs are critical to the continued success of downtown revitalization. Equally important are the growth of the high-tech businesses that have chosen to locate in the district and the continued operation of the Community Market, the Science Center and the River Trails and expansion and improvement of events at the Carrington Pavilion.

My proposal would also include a study of the parking and public transportation needs of the central business district. If the study confirms there is a need, perhaps the land is now available for an isolated river front parking area (with amenities) and with shuttle bus or trolley service to the businesses, government centers and other places of interest within the central business district.

For Danville to continue to improve, we must have a diversified economy. A healthy central business district coupled with the "regional hub" model for the mall, Coleman Market Place, Piney Forest Road, and Riverside Drive will provide this diversity. And most of all, it must be free from crime and panhandling.

14. Is the city's landscaping program worth the money that has been spent on it?

Yes, absolutely! I believe this program is one of the great achievements that has taken place under the leadership of the City Manager. A feeling of pride is generated as we pass these areas around the City. In terms of cost, a good amount of the costs associated with implementing and maintaining these projects are underwritten by sponsoring companies and organizations.

15. How should City Council attack the problems of crime in general, and gangs in particular?

City government's role is to insure the protection of the public health, safety and welfare.

Deterrence of crime along with the ability to move the public into, across, and/or back

out of the City will be two of the most important issues facing the City for the short term (not to be confused with the most important long term issues). How we deal with these two issues will certainly determine the success or failure of the “retail hub” strategy in which we have invested so heavily. Equally important, these two issues will also have a tremendous impact on Danvillians’ quality of life.

City Council should continue to promote the Neighborhood Watch program through out the City. While Council is not involved in the day to day business of the City Manager and the various departments, Council should stress the importance of crime deterrence and carefully analyze the crime data and the requests of those who are directly responsible for public safety. Should the data indicate additional personnel are needed, then Council must find the funds. Should the data indicate that the salaries are not competitive, then Council must find the funds.

With respect to gangs, the City’s role is to provide public awareness, sufficient and adequately trained police and support personnel, and the tools and resources to enforce the law. We must act quickly and forcefully to gain control of the gangs before they gain control of our neighborhoods and business districts.