

Braddock District Supervisor Candidate: James Walkinshaw

NAACP Candidate Questionnaire

1. Will you support the renaming Robert E. Lee High School? (For School Board candidates “support” means voting to change the name?)

Yes. I graduated from Stonewall Jackson High School in Manassas, VA. I’m proud of the students, teachers, administrators, and parents of my school. I’m not proud of the name. Public facilities named after those who took up arms against their own country for the cause of perpetuating slavery should be renamed.

2. What is your opinion of the current AAP program?

I am deeply concerned that black and hispanic students are less likely to be accepted into AAP programs. That suggests that implicit biases play a role in the initial tracking of students into advanced classes, perpetuating long-term racial disparities.

3. Do you support the use of police body worn cameras? (For Supervisor candidates “support” means voting to fund use of body worn cameras for all Fairfax police)

Yes.

4. The county has determined a need for new housing to shelter 15,000 new families making less the \$70,000. Because of rising land and construction costs, new units in that price range require some form of public loans or grants. How many of these families should Fairfax County attempt to accommodate and how would you do it? What should happen to those who can find no affordable housing here?

In the Braddock District, you need to earn \$64,000 per year to afford the average one-bedroom apartment. Yet thousands of our neighbors, many of whom are county employees, earn less than that.

First, we need to restore and expand the Penny for Affordable Housing Fund from \$.005 to \$.015, started by Gerry Connolly, to preserve affordable units and build new affordable units. Next we have to build more housing units in strategic areas of the county served by transit. We have an affordability crisis because we have a shortage of available housing. I’m excited that we have two significant projects in the pipeline in Braddock with the potential to add hundreds of new affordable units. Project that involve significant numbers of affordable housing units will always be controversial, so advocates will have to show up to community meetings and voice their support for specific projects, not just general support for affordable housing. I have attended dozens of community meetings to discuss projects with an affordable component in recent years and it is rare for an affordable housing advocate to attend and speak up. As affordable housing advocates, we will have to move from the abstract to concrete support of projects.

5. Would you support increasing the power of the civilian review panel?

Yes.

6. What do you believe county should do to address the overcrowding in schools?

I support the increase in bonding capacity from \$155 million to \$180 million for school renovation and construction. Long-term, given the dwindling supply of available land in the property, we will have to pursue the construction of “vertical schools” like Bailey’s Upper.

7. Many jurisdictions have stopped prosecuting possession of marijuana, do you believe Fairfax County should adopt a similar policy?

I support full decriminalization of marijuana as our country’s misguided war on drugs has done incredible damage and done more than perhaps any policy to perpetuate racial disparities. Prosecuting marijuana possession offenses is a waste of taxpayer resources.

8. Many jurisdictions are ending the use of cash bail, what is your position on this issue?

I oppose the use of cash bail.

9. Do you believe that Amazon moving to the area will have a negative impact on Fairfax County? If so, please explain what should be done. If not, please explain.

Amazon’s move to National Landing will have a host of impacts on our region. As a candidate for Braddock District Supervisor, I have focused on the potential impact to the Virginia Railway Express, which serves thousands of Braddock residents. I hope to use Amazon’s pending arrival to convince our state funding partners to invest in VRE capital improvements that will allow us to go from 19,000 passenger trips per day to 25,000 passenger trips per day, some of whom would be Amazon employees commuting to the Crystal City station.

10. What is the most important policy the County can promote or adopt to live up to the One Fairfax resolution? Early childhood education is probably the single most powerful equity tool. So, providing the opportunity for high-quality, pre-k for every child in Fairfax is the most important policy we can adopt.

Specific to the Braddock District, I have for several years been involved in the effort to Save Lake Accotink from sedimentation. Lake Accotink is Fairfax’s only lake front park that’s accessible to underserved communities in and around the Beltway. Children living in Culmore are less than a mile from Lake Barcroft, but will never get to enjoy it because it’s a private lake. But Lake Accotink is for everyone. That’s why I’ve been fighting to save it and will continue to do so if elected Braddock Supervisor.

11. When the Housing and Community Development office opened its housing choice voucher waiting list this winter, 12,000 people applied and 2,000 were chosen by lottery to be on a wait list of about 2 years. What should be done to assist the other 10,000 very low-income people who applied to the list?

Nationally, three in four renters seeking housing assistance don't get it due to limits on federal funding. Sadly, Fairfax County residents face the same challenge of need far outstripping the supply of federal housing vouchers.

Many of those denied housing choice vouchers are working, so one way to help some of them is to update and expand Fairfax's successful Workforce Development Unit (WDU) policy. Additionally, an increased Penny for Affordable Housing can be used to expand the number of available units through the Fairfax County Rental Program (FCRP). Many of those denied Housing Choice Vouchers would be eligible for those units.

12. A new survey shows there are 9,500 market rate housing units affordable to families making less than \$70K in Fairfax County. As land values rise driving rents up and many of these older units are turned into townhouses, we are in danger of losing affordable housing. The county policy is that there should be "no net loss, if possible" of affordable housing. What does "if possible" mean to you? To the county?

Fairfax County and the D.C. region will continue to grow. Building a wall around Fairfax County is not an option, so we will have to manage that growth if we hope to avoid the net loss of affordable housing. We will need to do two things to accomplish this. First, we will need to expand programs designed specifically to increase the number of affordable units and help people afford existing units, like those I've described above. But we will also have to build more market-rate units in targeted areas of the county served by transit. Building new market-rate units increases the overall supply of housing, putting downward pressure on rents.