

Lee District Supervisor Candidate: Rodney Lusk

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?)

I believe that the name of Robert E. Lee High School should be changed, and that we should begin the process immediately. That process must include an open dialogue with the community, as well as suggestions for alternative names for the school. Personally, I would like the Board of Supervisors, in coordination with the School Board, to identify potential names that specifically honor African American or female leaders in our community. Additionally, we should take steps to understand the financial implications of the name change, and move to make plans to address those as soon as is viable.

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

We must recognize that there is a disparity of race and socio-economic status among those selected to AAP centers in our county, with large portions of our county being severely underrepresented. It is my understanding that the School Board has recently acknowledged this growing divide, and is in the process of studying potential strategies for addressing the program’s shortfalls.

In my view, one of the most immediate things that we can do to close the gap is to ensure that “gateway” courses, specifically in the subjects of math and science, are being widely taught and emphasized in every middle school in our county, which will create a wider base of opportunity for underrepresented student populations to gain access to AAP programs.

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)

In order to have a functioning 21st Century community oriented policing system in our county we have to foster a culture of trust and accountability between our law enforcement professionals and our wider community. The use of police worn body cameras is one of the ways that we can ensure that trust and accountability, and as Lee District Supervisor I would vote in favor mandating their use.

That being said, I recognize that there are financial implications associated with this position, and I would work with the Sherriff and Chief of Police to best understand how we can quickly and efficiently overcome those challenges.

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?

We are facing a housing crisis in Fairfax County, with a recognized need for an increase of 15,000 affordable homes. The County must move to not only completely fill that need, but also take steps to preserve the existing affordable homes that we can keep pace with future need. There is no silver bullet to addressing this crisis, but there are some immediate steps that I would support that I believe would help to turn the tide.

First, the county must move to enact a dedicated and permanent revenue source for the development of affordable housing. This revenue stream should begin with a penny on the real estate tax, and should increase by an additional penny over a designated period of time. The funds from this revenue stream should be leveraged with non-profit and for-profit entities to first preserve housing stock, and then develop new affordable homes, ensuring that we have no net loss in our affordable housing stock.

Next, the county should move to find additional opportunities to co-locate new affordable housing stock on the sites of carefully selected county owned assets. This removes the accompanying land costs associated with new development, allowing new stock to be built at a reduced cost, thus making it more affordable to the purchaser or renter.

We should also look to explore corporate partnerships similar to what we've seen between Microsoft and the city of Seattle. As a magnet for similar companies, it's important that we adopt best practices that have been successful in other localities. Additionally, we should explore the use of the industrial revenue bonds as a method for preserving and creating new affordable housing in Fairfax County.

Finally, the county should take advantage of its oversight role in land use cases, and enforcement of local development regulations. For example, in certain cases steps could be taken to waive parking requirements associated with high-rise buildings. Additionally, the county could grant density bonuses to projects that commit to incorporating affordable units beyond standard requirements. Finally, we could work to provide fee waivers and exceptions on a case by case basis for non-profits that focus on developing and maintaining affordable housing.

There is no easy answer as to what we should be done for the families that will continue to be priced out of our market as we work to address this crisis. That is precisely why we must move with such a sense of urgency before the problem grows any more severe.

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

I strongly support the existence of the civilian-review panel, and am pleased with the sense of openness and transparency that it has worked to bring to our criminal justice system. One of the ways that I believe that we could broaden the scope of the panel, and strengthen its mandate, is by amending the process through which the panel is empowered to make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. Currently, the review panel can only make recommendations based on complaints that are referred to the panel. As a representation of the

community, and an increasingly integrated part of our criminal justice system in Fairfax County, I believe that the review panel should have the discretion to make recommendations and referrals to the Board of Supervisors based off its collective expertise and its prevailing assessment of the law enforcement practices in the county, whether they be the subject of a complaint or not.

If leading organizations in our community, including the NAACP, have recommendations as to additional expansions of the review panel's role than I would be more than willing to hear those recommendations.

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

Fairfax County is facing a major issue with overcrowding in our public schools, and unfortunately it's not a problem that we can build our way out of. I recognize that this may be viewed as a controversial position by some, and will take careful thought and study to properly implement, but I believe that the time has come to revisit our current school district boundaries. Last revisited in 1984, the County has outgrown our current boundaries, and the negative results are clear. If we are serious about the One Fairfax policy, then I believe that this has to be done.

I'll say at the outset, this will not be easy, and we must work to do all we can to mitigate the unintended impacts on homeowners and students that purchased homes based on the current lines, or do not wish to relocate in the middle of their primary education. Some of this could be remedied by a tiered approach, with phased adjustments of the lines, but we can't afford to wait any longer, we must get to work on this issue.

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

I recognize that marijuana legalization has been successful by a variety of indicators in other states and jurisdictions across the country. However, the reality is that it remains illegal in both our Commonwealth and at the federal level. That is not to say that the county does not have a say in how we choose to prosecute these cases, and how many resources that we dedicate to them.

Currently, the county is spending too many resources incarcerating individuals for minor, non-violent drug offenses. Those resources could be put to much better use as increased pay for our law enforcement officials, in support of diversion and rehabilitation efforts such as the STAR Program, or youth education campaigns about the implications of drug use.

In Fairfax County I believe that we need to be dedicating serious resources to serious crime, and low-volume marijuana possession is not a serious crime but rather a ticketable offense.

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

Cash bail is an antiquated and ineffective aspect of our criminal justice system. The terms of an individual's release pending trial should be based on the threat they represent to the community, not the number of dollars in their bank account. It penalizes the poor for being poor, and incurs

downstream costs on the county by often putting our residents in a downward spiral of income loss and increasing dependence on county assistance, even in cases where individuals are found to be innocent. I would wholeheartedly support an effort to end cash bail in our county.

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.

I don't believe that Amazon moving to our area will create a net-negative impact on our community. The county is facing a number of challenges as it stands now, many of which have been raised in this questionnaire, but Amazon's exacerbation of them will be nominal, especially in the near-term.

Our county economy is home to roughly 600,000 jobs. In the first year Amazon will only bring in 400 new jobs, gradually increasing to 2,000 a year over a 10 year period. Keeping in mind that those figures represent a regional increase, and we currently host a job base of 600,000 in Fairfax County alone, the increase is nominal.

What remains to be seen are the spin off effects that Amazon will bring to the region in terms of other business and industry seeking to take advantage of their presence here. If that can be leveraged, especially in an area like Lee District, I believe that we could actually see a net positive from Amazon's move to the area.

10. What is the most important policy the County can promote or adopt to live up to the One Fairfax resolution?

Housing is foundational to so many of the other issues that the Board of Supervisors is charged with managing. That being said, I believe that the dedicated housing funding stream model that I put forward in my answer to question 4 would be my top priority in terms of addressing the County's most pressing needs.

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?

There is likely little that we can do in the immediate term to assist those families that are currently being priced out of our housing market. It's a matter of resources, thus the limited scope of the housing choice voucher program. We can obviously work with local groups such as Good Shepard and New Hope Housing, as well as HUD, to make a targeted impact; but this won't be enough. That is why it is so important that we move with a sense of urgency to create a dedicated and permanent revenue stream for affordable housing in Fairfax County as first step, followed the implementation of the additional strategies that I put in forward in my answer to question 4.

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?

I can't speak to the current Board's rationale for including the above mentioned language as a part of County policy. I can only say that as a member of the Board of Supervisors I would prioritize the retention of current affordable housing stock as much as I would the development of additional home. It will do us very little good to meet the identified 15,000 shortfall if we are not properly retaining the homes we already have in place.