

Providence District Supervisor, Erika M. Yalowitz
NAACP Candidate Questionnaire

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

Yes, I support the change of name. This country prides itself in the fight for liberty and we need to be coherent with our core values of pursuing liberty and justice for all. We need to move on and away from exalting the names of those who infamously fought for slavery and oppression as opposed to freedom.

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

This is a program to allow some kids to get ahead. Children of families with resources have more opportunity to outstand others who are generally, minority, children of color or immigrant kids. Equality is giving every child the same resources and equity is giving resources to those who need them to reach the same level as others. I believe in offering equitable education until we achieve equalizing of our society.

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)

Absolutely. The duty of police and public service has to support justice and uphold the truth above all things. Body cameras help in the pursuit of this goal to serve create and maintain accurate records that will facilitate the administration of fair justice.

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 have to aim to cover all of our future needs, not some. There are several ideas I have presented to achieve this goal:

- Incrementally raising the (half) penny fund to 3 pennies to support more construction of affordable housing.
- Build affordable housing where there is demand for it, such as in urban and employment centers as opposed to isolated areas that don't have public transit available.
- Partnering with faith communities to find land, building affordable housing in our existing **public** space due for remodeling. For example, instead of remodeling a public library, the land can be used to build a higher rise of affordable dwelling units with the public library located at the ground level.
- Using ordinances to reduce the cost of building housing. It is no secret that I want to reduce the number of cars circulating in Fairfax County. They are expensive, costing

entire valuable areas in parking space since every automobile requires parking space at every residential, commercial, educational and office space. We can reduce the required number of parking places to one or none per dwelling unit, especially if they are near transit stations. This will reduce the cost of construction by up to 18%.

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

This is something that I would like to study further, but I believe that allowing the civilian review panel to have a seat at hiring or promotion interviews for public safety would bring helpful insights and community buy in to local law enforcement.

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

There has been a serious deficiency in the planning of growth, given the wide authorization of development in Fairfax County. We need to plan for the future, not continue to react to current needs with temporary solutions that have become permanent. I will support the School Board in making a comprehensive boundary study to determine the best way to balance our schools loads and find the areas with the highest need for new facilities projecting on our future, not current needs. Although I expect public reaction from parents who may not want their child to go to certain school, I am optimistic that we can advance our education system as a whole to do what it's supposed to do: serve all of our children by offering an excellent education and equal opportunities to succeed wherever they live.

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

Speaking as a Court Officer, I know that most of these offenses are being sent to diversion, not prosecuted. The problem with this issue is the law in Richmond, not local justice. Now, from a personal stand, I believe that marijuana use is not a crime. It is a substance use problem deserving of treatment not punishment which is often times counterproductive.

From the point of view of a citizen, I believe we need to uphold the law. Therefore, we need to change outdated laws in Richmond that don't serve our public and consume our resources in punishing possession of marijuana. Whether to uphold the law or not is another question. I am weary that some jurisdiction may get to pick and choose what to prosecute and what not to prosecute. If we leave this up for discretion, we may be opening a door and setting a precedent to apply the law based on popular or personal preferences by prosecutors which could result in some areas choosing not to prosecute other offenses, like hate crimes against blacks, Muslims, Jews, LGBT+ or immigrants.

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

I believe that cash bail should continue to be a resource for people who need to return to the community for work, to support themselves and their families and have a return to Court date.

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. Cost of living is high in Fairfax County and if we don't act promptly, the coming of Amazon could result in higher housing costs and unequal opportunity to access good paying jobs. We need to get to work to increase the offer of housing, especially affordable to better manage the market. We need to invest in our kids and especially girls and minorities to encourage and prepare them for the high paying jobs that will be available. The reason why I talk about girls in particular, is because up to a certain age, they are interested in STEM just as boys are, but there is a breaking point when these interests shift and the potential for a qualified workforce in STEM decreases almost by half. We have to pick up the ball wherever it's dropping and make sure that we make an opportunity of this problem. Minorities have the same challenge due to access of advanced education that allows them to prepare for STEM. This is an important task for our FCPS Board.

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

Offering resources where they are needed. It is important to breach the school achievement gap in children, the access to affordable housing for low income individuals and families, access to transportation to students and low-income commuters.

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?

The demand clearly dwarfs the offer and this is indication of an urgent deficiency. We need to get to work on the ideas exposed above in question 4. As Providence Supervisor this will be one of my priorities and I will gladly welcome the community's input to bring solutions, partnerships for action and voluntary work to the table.

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?

This is a scary figure and "if possible" is not an acceptable response. Many thousands of households in excess of 9,500 live on wages \$70,000 and lower. We must act "as soon as possible" as opposed of "if possible" to increase the inventory of affordable housing.