

Springfield District Supervisor Candidate: Linda Sperling

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 support the renaming of Robert E. Lee High School. I applaud the Fairfax County Park Authority’s initiative in renaming the Robert E. Lee Rec Center and J.E.B. Stuart Park and look forward to the School Board following in their lead.

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

I attended elementary school in Fairfax County in the mid 1980s as a student at Springfield Estates Elementary School’s GT center (the AAP program was called the Gifted & Talented program at that time). However, I didn’t get in on my first try. But my mother – a professional educator with a graduate degree in education – was not only knowledgeable enough about the process but also financially able to pay a private psychologist to administer the tests necessary to ensure that I started the 3rd grade in the GT program.

Decades have passed since I was in school and parents with the financial ability to do so are still able to “game the system” to ensure acceptance by their children into the AAP program. The end result is that children of color are incredibly under-represented in the AAP program. At the same time, the AAP program has grown from a program designed to educate a small percentage of FCPS students (1-5% of the student body) who are truly highly gifted to a program that serves 20% of the County’s 3rd through 6th graders. So we have 20% of our students – mostly white students with wealthy parents – receiving an education that is superior to that of the rest of FCPS students.

We need to ensure that we are providing a world-class education to *all* students, of all backgrounds, at their base school.

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, I support the use of police body worn cameras. I also support ensuring that there are policies in place that support full transparency in regards to when and why cameras are turned off, when and how the public are able to view the footage and the prescribing the length of time for which footage is stored and how it is stored.

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?

Fairfax County is one of the wealthiest counties in the world. Our annual budget is larger than

that of many states, including West Virginia and Delaware. We have the money, but how we choose to spend it speaks to our priorities. Housing our most vulnerable residents must be one of our priorities. We must accommodate all 15,000 new families which can be done by partnering with local non-profits such as Good Shepherd Housing & Family Services, partnering with churches to develop housing on their property (as discussed during the recent "Housing For All" discussion), and securing financial support from corporate partners throughout the County. There should be no reason why families in need can't find affordable housing in Fairfax County. In addition, if families in need of affordable housing want to move to another local jurisdiction, such as Prince William or Loudoun Counties, we must ensure close collaboration with those jurisdictions to make the transition as seamless as possible for our residents.

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?

We need to build more schools, and build more capacity in the schools that we currently have. In addition, we need to look at our boundaries in a manner that will take advantage the space that we have in under-utilized schools such as Lee High School.

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

Yes.

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

Imprisoning someone who has not been convicted of a crime is unconstitutional. However, this is what happens when someone is imprisoned simply because they can't afford to post bail. I support eliminating cash bail for most misdemeanor and non-violent felony offenses.

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.

There will be positive and negative outcomes as a result of Amazon opening its HQ2 in the Northern Virginia area. The positive outcomes include: 25,000 new jobs with Amazon, as well as 22,000 additional "indirect" jobs created as a result of the new HQ2. The jobs directly with Amazon are both technical and non-technical in nature, some high wage and some low wage. The opening of HQ2 will also bring increased competition for employees which should improve business processes and drive up wages and has already driven much-needed infrastructure investments.

However, there are many expected negative impacts to our region. Unfortunately, because Amazon is not going to be located in Fairfax County, we will not benefit from the increased corporate tax revenue as a result of their presence. In addition, there is no guarantee that all, or even a majority of these jobs, will go to area residents. It is very likely that a majority of the

25,000 new jobs with Amazon will be filled by people who move to the area for the job, meaning a huge influx of new area residents. The end result will be more students in our already crowded classrooms, more cars on our already congested roads and more demand for housing in what is already a very expensive market, driving up housing costs even further. This will cause the most harm to our most vulnerable county residents, a population which we are already oftentimes challenged to fully serve. We need to ensure that, when planning for our educational, transportation and housing needs moving forward, that we take into consideration this large increase of residents that will not be reflected in current models/trends.

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

Dedication to providing affordable housing for all residents. Fairfax County is an extremely expensive jurisdiction in which to live – the average home costs upwards of \$500,000 and the average rent is nearly \$1800/month. Because of the incredibly high costs of housing in this area, a family of four must make approximately \$114,000/year in order to live comfortably. Everyone deserves to be able to put a roof over their head and ensure safety and stability for their family.

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 Housing and Community Development office must be funded in a manner that provides the ability to ensure housing for all who require it. Fairfax County – one of the wealthiest counties in the country with a budget larger than that of the entire state of West Virginia – must be able to take care of its most vulnerable residents either on its own or in collaboration with nonprofit and corporate partners.

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?

There should be no “if possible” clause to this county policy. We should lose no affordable housing, period – instead we should be increasing affordable housing to meet the needs of county residents at all income levels. Unfortunately in the past the interests of real estate developers have been put before the interests of county residents and “if possible” has been stretched to the limit, if not downright ignored.