

## **Mason District Supervisor Candidate: Gary Aiken**

### 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?)

The recent name change of J.E.B. Stuart High School in Mason District was a very challenging experience for everyone in the community – for and against. Excellent points for and against can be and were made by all involved. After the fact, those who were against the name change felt that the process itself was problematic and that the community’s voice was drowned out by groups that were from as far away as California and that promised to pay for the name change. The history of school names in Virginia is well known to many. The original name of Robert E. Lee High School was simple “Lee”, named in 1958 for the magisterial district in which it was located as was the custom to name schools for their locations. The name was changed to Robert E. Lee in 1964, substantially in opposition to school integration.

Your school is one of those things that people take special pride in – both while you are there and long after you’ve graduated. As such, there’s a lot of emotion when a change is necessary. I support investigating name changes for buildings named for Confederate military or civilian officials. We should not glorify the leaders of the insurrections of the several states that fought to maintain the institution of slavery.

The Republican Party was founded in opposition to the expansion of slavery and shortly thereafter became a vociferous advocate for its abolition. I am proud to be a part of that moral tradition.

Community decisions require direct involvement. Any name change should be voted on in a referendum in a regular election. The name change referendum should clearly enunciate (a) the old name proposed for the change, (b) the new name proposed for the change, and (c) the approximate cost of the name change to the nearest ten thousand dollars.

This question did not ask about monuments, however, I think it is important to distinguish between historical markers meant to draw attention to the history of Virginia, rather than a name meant to reflect popular political opposition to racial integration. We cannot and should not erase our history. This nation fought a bloody civil war so that all men would be free. We should never forget that the immorality of slavery was difficult to overcome, and ultimately, only overcome through bloody sacrifice.

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

I have a couple of opinions, however they are just that. As uninformed as I am on this subject I would be more inclined to ask questions I believe are relevant. As a member of the Board of Supervisors, these are the questions I would investigate:

- a. Is there any evidence to support that AAP in elementary schools has achieved desired results?
- b. What would eliminating Elementary AAP centers do in terms of (1) capacity at elementary schools (2) bus costs and (3) school start and close times?
- c. Is there another, less intrusive way to provide additional before/after school resources to

gifted and talented students?

d. As the school system grows, is there room for a second TJ (or a third?) – rather than fight over spots at TJ, why not allow our top students to choose another magnet?

e. How important is it to go to TJ? Are we willing to sacrifice the reputation of TJ and the spotlight it brings?

I believe three things on this subject ultimately:

(1) Only the best and brightest should gain entrance to a magnet school.

(2) There are lots of good reasons not to go to a magnet school, even if you get in.

(3) Not getting in to TJ is not the end of the world.

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)

Not at this time. As of the writing of this response, the University study ordered by the Board of Supervisors has not produced findings. Any opinion as to the use of BWC’s should be based upon study. The following study was released recently on BWC’s and its findings were mixed. In fact, if communities feel harassed, according to this study, the number of citations issued rose. BWC’s might have, like many well-intentioned programs, unintended effects. Before expending money on solving a problem that may not exist, I think we owe the tax payers some due diligence.

Anthony Braga, James R. Coldren, William Sousa, Denise Rodriguez, and Omer Alper, The Benefits of Body-Worn Cameras: New Findings from a Randomized Controlled Trial at the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, December 2017

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?

I will support additional affordable housing subsidies to the extent that the funding comes from other government program budgets and results in zero budget growth to Fairfax County.

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

I support the abolition of the civilian review panel. FCPD has multiple internal controls including an internal affairs group and an auditor. If members of our community feel their issues are not being adequately addressed, they should contact their Supervisor. The Civilian Review Panel is additional cost with little to no benefit. It takes up valuable time and resources that could be used in keeping our neighborhoods safe.

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

Build more schools.

The student-teacher ratio is arguably the most important factor to success in early education (although the studies cited are generally not of high quality and judging student achievement is fraught). If FCPS's goal is to give each child individualized attention, large class sizes prevent success.

We should not bus children to schools far distances from their homes. I had a chance to study a huge amount of the literature on the subject of "bussing". "Bussing" has mostly been implemented in cities under court-ordered desegregation mandates. Bussing in Fairfax County will only lead to more traffic, strange start and finish times, and negative impacts on before and after school activities, including the arts, sports, internships and jobs.

The cohesiveness of community schools is something that we must strive to keep. Fairfax County is not a city. We may have urban pockets here and there, but we are a suburban community at heart.

Further, home values are linked to schools. Many families buy their homes because they want to send their children to a certain school or within a certain school cluster. We should strive to improve schools that lag, rather than try to create a false "equitable" distribution. Building new schools will have a positive impact on housing prices and tax revenues.

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

Fairfax County should prosecute the abuse of marijuana and other illicit or illegally acquired prescription drugs in the same way as tobacco and alcohol. Public intoxication is a crime

Operating a car, truck, or heavy machine under the influence is a crime

Open carry or display is a crime (you can't walk around with a beer in your hand!)

Distribution to a minor is a crime (We should tell our children to say no to drugs, even if they are legal)

Use in a prohibited public area or private establishment that bans its use is a crime.

That said, as long as marijuana is illegal in the United States or the Commonwealth of Virginia, Fairfax should follow federal and state law. If the federal or state governments pass decriminalization or legalization, citizens who wish to enjoy marijuana should find some relief at concerts, festivals, sporting events, etc. All in moderation. As long as a citizen under the influence of marijuana, alcohol, or tobacco is not harming another in their person or property, we should strive to accommodate not incarcerate.

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

I would be open to the idea of a controlled experiment to determine the efficacy of cashless 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.

Capitalism is unequivocally good. American capitalism is the engine of growth, prosperity, and freedom around the world. Amazon will have a positive influence on Northern Virginia, the same way that other companies moving from high tax states to Virginia have had, including Northrop Grumman, Hilton Hotels, and Nestle among others. The State and County governments should strive to keep their budgets in line and taxes low. Otherwise, we'll kill the golden goose and businesses and citizens will flee like they do now from Washington, California, and New York. This same issue is largely played out in our "Right to Work" laws. Virginia is competitive and attractive because of our pro-business laws and low tax structure. I think it is wonderful that people from all over America come to Virginia to live and work. They come here because our government has implemented policies that make Virginia attractive. Policies that make Virginia less attractive are not helpful.

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

Adopt a budget that keeps taxes low. If we don't do that, we'll continue to have "Minus One" Fairfax. Fairfax citizens are moving out of Fairfax and taking their money with them. It's causing huge problems on our roads as people who used to live in Fairfax, now travel through Fairfax to get to Arlington and Washington, D.C. It's also causing stagnating housing markets. During 2018 according to the Washington Post, housing values in Mason District were either flat or declined.

In Mason District, One Fairfax won't mean much at all if there's no money to improve our ailing schools, refurbish our pothole filled roads, or encourage businesses to fill our vacant buildings and build on our vacant lots. The rest of One Fairfax won't mean much in a future where Fairfax isn't prosperous.

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?

Where are they now?

In Mason District, we have a number of areas available for additional economic development. I am in favor of scrapping a plan for a \$125 million human services building and contributing the county owned land to the project in exchange for Affordable Dwelling Units (ADUs) in the residential portion of the development, if apartments. We could also sell the land and use the money to cover other areas that impact low income communities – e.g., making much needed and long overdue improvements at the Bailey's Community Center, creating additional shelters at bus stops, taking better care of existing infrastructure, and cleaning up areas where our low income neighbors live.

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?

As Supervisor in Mason, I would champion workforce housing that addresses the 80-120% Adjusted Median Income (AMI) threshold. This effort should emphasize housing for teachers, police officers and firefighters. Only 60% of our teachers live in Fairfax and only 26% of our police and fire personnel live in Fairfax. This lack of community is at the heart of teachers leaving, low morale in our police force, and crime in Mason District. If other Magisterial Districts wish to help with “no net loss, if possible” in a tax revenue and expense neutral way, I would support their efforts. I am also generally in favor of a program of housing allowances for county employees in exchange for other benefit reforms.