

RESPONSES OF MASON DISTRICT SUPERVISOR PENNY GROSS

TO THE 2019 NAACP CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

1) Will you support renaming Robert E. Lee High School?

ANSWER: Yes, I would support renaming, although name changes for school facilities are within the authority of the school board, not the Board of Supervisors.

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

ANSWER: The award-winning Alternative Accountability Program is changing the lives of youth, and I am very supportive of AAP. The collaboration between the county, schools, and the courts is unique, and more than 400 youth, and their families, have been served by AAP, and diverted from the juvenile system.

3) Do you support the use of police body worn cameras?

ANSWER: Yes. Mason District was part of the pilot program and proved quite successful. Part of the pilot included provisions for an analysis of by American University's Dept, of Justice, Law, and Criminology, and the Board of Supervisors anticipates that the analysis will be available this spring. Currently, there is no county funding provided in the FY 2020 budget. Complicating the funding question is the Virginia Compensation Board's recommendation that one additional Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney position will be needed for every 75 body-worn cameras in use. That equates to 16 additional positions and does not include the actual purchase of the 1200 cameras under the performance standards proposed, but not yet enacted, by the Commonwealth.

4) The county has determined a need for new housing to shelter 15,000 new families making less that \$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?

ANSWER: Affordable housing is an issue for the region and the nation, not just in Fairfax County. The Fairfax County Human Services Council has recommended that an additional cent be added to the real estate tax and earmarked for preserving and building affordable homes. That is under consideration for the FY 2021 budget and would augment the county's annual \$135 million spend on affordable housing, vouchers, rental programs, grants, and other housing programs. Innovative partnerships with both non-profits and developers, along with addressing some of the regulatory barriers to getting through the permitting process, would help achieve the goal of building or preserving an additional 5000 units over the next several years.

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

ANSWER: Not at this time. The Civilian Review Panel has been in operation for a relatively short period and needs more time to determine possible changes to its charter.

6) What do you believe county (sic) should do to address the overcrowding in schools?

ANSWER: School boundary changes are the responsibility of the School Board. To build more schools, and renovate others, the Board of Supervisors has increased the amount of annual bond sales from \$155 million per year to \$180 million per year, with the approval of the voters. Repurposing vacant office buildings for schools, as we did at Bailey's Upper School in Seven Corners, is an excellent and efficient way to provide additional classroom space, and reduce class size.

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

ANSWER: More information may be needed to adopt a policy, but I would support the basic premise of ending prosecution for simple marijuana possession.

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

ANSWER: Cash bail comes under the authority of the courts and the Commonwealth's Attorney, not the Board of Supervisors, but I support ending cash bail, especially the punitive impacts.

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

ANSWER: Amazon should have a positive impact for Fairfax County. Many of the new employees may decide to rent or purchase homes in close-in Fairfax County, which is Mason District. A large headquarters like Amazon also attracts new small service businesses, which are the backbone of our communities, and the corresponding increases in tax base, both real estate and sales taxes, will be beneficial to help pay for the additional services and amenities that Fairfax County residents demand and enjoy.

10) What is the most important policy the county can promote or adopt to live up to the One Fairfax Resolution?

ANSWER: The One Fairfax Policy is the most important policy, already adopted. The challenge is to make it work – for everyone.

11) When the Housing and Community Development office opened its housing choice voucher waiting list this winter, 12,000 people applied and 2000 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?

ANSWER: Federal Housing Choice Vouchers are in limited supply, and Fairfax County continually applies for vouchers when available through the federal government. As noted in my response to question #4, an additional cent on the real estate tax, dedicated to expanding housing options and availability, could help reduce the waiting list, but it will take time.

12) A new survey shows there are 9500 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?

ANSWER: I am not aware of any instance in Mason District where older units were turned into townhouses. In fact, my efforts have been to preserve existing affordable housing, such as the recent bridge funding for the Parkwood Apartments in Bailey’s Crossroads, which will use additional tax credits to maintain affordability. The Seven Corners Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2015, would allow several thousand new units, with specific language about maintaining affordability, in areas that currently are commercial shopping centers. This type of smart growth will require significant private investment, but will maintain, and in some areas increase, affordable and available housing.