County Council Questionnaire

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Each of the following questions includes a 100 word limit

Briefly describe why you are seeking public office:

With Greenville County projected to grow by almost 50% in population by 2040, I am running to usher in a new and more representative era for our community: an era that sees our County Council support smart and sustainable growth, include and represent our diverse community, and work proactively with other governmental entities (city/state/federal) to implement real and lasting solutions for our citizens. My vision for our neighbors, in every corner of Greenville County, is one in which all residents have the opportunity to truly thrive.

Briefly describe a significant accomplishment that would reflect your ability to lead our community:

I am a proven builder of good things for our community. Whether it was co-founding the award-winning edible Upcountry magazine to foster and build momentum across the local food community, or reinventing the Old Family Courthouse in downtown Greenville as a vibrant literary hub and gathering place as the co-founder of M.Judson Booksellers, to launching and serving as founding board chair of Emerge South Carolina, an organization dedicated to bringing Democratic women into the political process, I’ve demonstrated the leadership, tenacity and work ethic to make good change happen in both business and nonprofit settings.

If elected, after your first 12 months on Council, what do you hope is your most significant achievement?

In terms of acute need, we should see 100% of the CARES Act funds circulating and benefiting our community. In terms of more permanent groundwork, relating to my campaign pillars: 1) Smart Growth: passing the Unified Development Ordinance, the outlined next step in the county comprehensive plan and establishing a visible dashboard on comp plan implementation progress. 2) Inclusive Action: passing a county-wide anti-bias law and establishing an Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for county government. 3)
Intergovernmental Solutions: convening a county-wide gathering of elected officials to build direct dialogue for seeking solutions to our community’s most pressing issues.

Greenville County is home to nearly 500 nonprofits, ranging from small community centers to large institutions that provide health care, housing, food support, education, arts programming, and so much more. Most recently available data show that nearly 90,000 people in our state are employed in the nonprofit sector and one in three South Carolinians volunteer in a nonprofit organization. Nonprofits and the foundations, companies, and individuals that support them are vital to Greenville County.

Tell us about one of Greenville County’s non-profits that you think is doing important work in your community, and what you have done to support this organization’s mission?

I’ve served on boards and committees of 10 nonprofits at the local, state and regional level and donated to and volunteered for many more. One example is Frazee Center, the faith-based organization providing a safe, after-school environment for underprivileged children in our community. I’ve supported Frazee since 2007, when I served on Stone Academy’s School Improvement Council with founder Matt Reeves and saw the impact of the organization’s work. Our family donates monthly and we’ve provided many meals for the students. My sons conducted Boy Scout projects with the center and I have also served as an afterschool tutor.

How could County Council and Greenville non-profit community better support one another in our shared goal of improving the lives of people in Greenville County?

While local government and nonprofits have different missions and organizational realities, they often serve the same clients. Finding synergistic ways to work efficiently together begins with a sincere desire to listen, learn and understand each other and catalogue, if you will, the tools each has in their respective toolkits. This two-way essential dialogue happens in both formal and informal ways, from including each other in critical meetings, advisory councils and decision-making processes—e.g. the county’s 2-year budgeting cycle which will begin in early 2021—as well as simply keeping the door wide open to communication and relationship building.

Housing

What would you do to encourage the production of more affordable homes for these families? What would you do to support to local Affordable Housing developers, including community organizations and private developers (e.g., incentives such as density/parking bonuses, reduced fees)?

There are a minimum of 21 strategies outlined in the comprehensive plan on proactive ways the county can support an environment of affordable housing in a way that aligns with a smart growth model. In addition to the targeted use of public funds for direct investment in collaboration with other local public and private partners, there are many incentives identified in the plan such as density bonuses and fee waivers or reductions, which I would support. I also support favorable zoning ordinances, the encouragement of employer-assisted housing, and “YIMBY” (Yes In My Backyard) practices such as accessory dwelling units.

Transit

Describe the role you believe transit plays in our community’s future growth and success and what role should County

Per comp plan citizen input, over 88% indicated traffic congestion is a major problem, 76% advocating for expansion
Council governance authority?

Open communication between these future industries – and in the public transit demands?

Growth

How will you balance the interests of private property owners with the community’s broader vision for how to manage growth across the county (i.e. the future land use map)?

The adage “that which gets measured gets managed” applies. Key metrics outlined in the comprehensive plan will help our community march forward more in step together than at odds. A “focused growth” scenario was adopted unanimously by the County Council after over a year of thoughtful community input. At the highest level, it’s monitoring our progress to the goal of a ratio of no more than 40% urban to 60% rural density by 2040. The plan should be consistently referenced in decision making and progress should be communicated in a proactive way throughout our community and, in particular, to developers.

Arts

How do you believe the County can further support the arts now – during our economic crisis – and in the future?

Beyond the intrinsic value the arts provide our community, many working artists are small business owners and need support for their industry during this time of crisis. Appropriate allocation of Greenville County CARES Act dollars for the industry should be considered along with key nonprofit partner collaboration such as the Metropolitan Arts Council and local theater and performing arts entities. The county should make sure all Greenville organizations are aware of the new pot of state Cares Act Funding for nonprofits recently announced. The process will prioritize sectors hit the hardest such as the arts.

Municipalities

What steps will you take to ensure open communication between these diverse entities, many of whom are independent of Greenville County Council governance authority?

Transportation, affordable housing and environment issues will not be solved in a vacuum by one city, and one of my campaign pillars is the concept of “Intergovernmental Solutions.” We need leaders who will reach out proactively to municipal, state, and federal partners and do the hard work to ensure we solve the complex problems facing our community. Leaders must show up early in the process, proactively reaching out to each other and collaborating as strategic allies. It starts by building relationships, and I will advocate for a county-wide annual summit of elected leaders with the goal of building more collaboration.
Citizen Engagement

Greenville County Council represents more than 10% of the population of South Carolina. With that comes an incredible diversity of thought and experiences shared by our citizens. Do you seek input from people with different perspectives? In what way and to whom do you turn for input? One of the priorities of the Greenville Nonprofit Alliance is an increased involvement of non-profit leaders and board members in shaping policy at the local level. If elected, how will you ensure local non-profit leaders have the opportunity to provide a voice in the decisions being made throughout the county?

“Inclusive Action” is central to my campaign and requires all possible tools to engage and represent our community—in drafting ordinances, in appointing citizens to our 22 boards and commissions, in inclusion in forums, meetings and workshops. Nonprofits both represent a vital component of our societal fabric as well as, in their missions and operations, serve many of the most vulnerable populations within our community. Ensuring our nonprofits are represented at county decision making tables is essential in ensuring we have given our solutions well-rounded thought—meaning they will be the solutions that do the most good for our community.