Dear Jason,

Thank you for your engagement with the 2019 Greenville City Council Questionnaire. As a Chamber member, I am honored to have the opportunity to earn the support of fellow members for my candidacy for the at-large seat on Greenville City Council.

Because of the integrated nature of the questions, I trust my responses will be evaluated as a whole rather than on an individual basis. I have devoted much effort to answering these questions individually, but like so much in business and governance, all of these issues knit together and none should stand completely alone.

Thank you for your leadership in this evaluation and for the work that you do at the Chamber. I look forward to hearing from you to schedule an interview with your team.

Best regards,

Dorothy Dowe
2019 Greenville City Council Questionnaire

1. Describe your qualifications for office and identify up to five organizations or individuals who are actively supporting your candidacy and why their support is important.

My qualifications for Greenville City Council are my extensive educational background, professional career and my experience as a community leader and advocate. I hold a Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering from Duke University and licensure as a professional engineer (inactive status) in the state of Alabama. Additionally, I hold a Master of Business Administration from the University of South Carolina. My professional career includes 13 years as a project engineer in manufacturing with International Paper Company in Mobile, AL., and as a design engineering with both CRS SIRRINE Engineers and Jacobs Engineering Group in Greenville. After resigning from my engineering career to prioritize raising my two children, I returned to the workforce and founded two small businesses focusing on academic consulting for students in middle and high school.

As a 30-year member of the Greenville community, I currently serve as president for the Alta Vista Neighborhood Association and I chair the City of Greenville’s Public Safety Citizen Review Board. I am a past Pleasant Valley Connection board member, church session member (Westminster Presbyterian Church), and I dedicated over 15 years of service to our public schools as a PTA President (2 terms in elementary and middle schools), South West Council PTA President, and high school sports booster club representative.

Each of these experiences has shaped me as a leader with excellent skills listening to multiple perspectives and priorities, and working with groups of people to develop solutions to oftentimes complex problems. Through my professional career and education as an engineer, I understand major projects from conception through design and construction, and am comfortable discussing project details with people from a variety of backgrounds. I am experienced in budgeting for large capital projects, and recognize the importance of adhering to budgets and responsible stewardship of funds.

As a person who founded a sole proprietorship as well as a general partnership in Greenville, I have the business acumen necessary to work with small business owners as needed to help promote the long-term success of the businesses themselves. Lastly, as a long-time resident of Greenville, community leader, wife, and mother, I have an understanding of where we have been as a city, and seek to serve on City Council to help ensure we continue to grow at a healthy pace, with economic viability for businesses to thrive, while maintaining a community where people want to live. At this point in my life I am blessed with great health, two grown children, and a flexible business schedule, and have the time, energy, and desire to give back to my community in this office.

I have been planning to run for this at-large seat for two years, and have spent the past year attending over 100 meetings of City Council, the Council Committee of the Whole, Boards and Commissions, Neighborhood Associations and Master Planning Committees. Additionally, I have
met with a broad spectrum of community leaders and key stakeholders in an effort to educate myself on the greatest issues affecting Greenville and its future.

As a result of my qualifications, my demonstrated experience, and my work to better understand the challenges that we face moving forward, I have the active support of multiple former City Council members including Gaye Sprague, Diane Smock and Michelle Shain, and a long-time community business leader, Dan Einstein, President of Rosenfeld Einstein. I am also actively supported by the Greenville County Democratic Party. Just since my announcement to run for this seat, I have received monetary contributions from 261 citizens. I contacted each of these citizens directly, giving me an even broader support and understanding of the needs of our community.

This support, in addition to that of many other former and current elected officials and community leaders has been pivotal in shaping my candidacy. Their advice has steered me towards seeking the perspective of a variety of business owners in the city and gaining support from the voters and community leaders throughout Greenville.

2. What are the greatest challenges facing the City of Greenville and what will you do as a Council Member to address them?

As a result of Greenville’s unprecedented growth, our greatest challenges are to provide affordable housing for a full spectrum of incomes, proactively plan for the pressure on our infrastructure, and manage the challenges to our quality of life from increased traffic. My top three priorities will be as follows:

- Provide balanced housing development for all income levels, including lower income and workforce housing, by consistently funding the Greenville Housing Fund in our budget and through land banking. I will also advocate to our county and state representatives to support this housing initiative.
- Invest in the infrastructure that is the foundation of our community and helps attract business investment.
- Preserve our neighborhoods by focusing on walkability, the tree canopy, and traffic patterns and infrastructure requirements as new development is proposed.

As the city embarks on its comprehensive plan, GVL 2040, these priorities are critical to maintaining the quality of life that Greenville’s citizens value. Success in these areas is also critical to our economic viability by ensuring Greenville is a place that attracts new business investment. I believe Greenville is at a critical juncture and the next four years really matter for our future. As imminent decisions are made with respect to land use, mobility, recreation and other issues, I have the best skills and experience for this moment in time.
3. What do you believe is the most pressing issue facing office and employment growth in Greenville? What would you do about it as a Council member and what experience do you have dealing with such issues.

Office and employment growth in Greenville can only occur if we retain (and hopefully grow) the businesses we have, and attract new businesses to our area. Our ability to do this is based on our ability to supply the trained workforce for these businesses, with housing for that workforce, and efficient means of workforce transportation.

As a council member, I will focus on using the city’s capabilities to provide workforce housing by land-banking and financially contributing to the Greenville Housing Fund with a sustained, line item in the budget. This provides a steady stream of funding for shovel ready, affordable housing projects to serve those with annual income levels ranging from $15K-$55K. Additionally, the city’s Greenlink funding must be a reliable, line item in the budget that supports the long-term Transit Development Plan developed by the Greenlink leadership.

In addition to housing and transportation, as a city we must recognize that it is our responsibility to provide an educated, skilled workforce for businesses that want to locate in Greenville. As a council member, I will proactively engage with the leadership of the Greenville County School District, Greenville Technical College and the leadership of other higher education institutions in our area to work towards providing a skilled workforce for Greenville’s business needs. I have a 20-year history as a customer of our school district as well as Greenville Tech, and have a small business that works to maximize each student’s potential as he/she makes his/her way through secondary education. I am adept at understanding the skills needed by the next generation of workers, and helping young people make informed decisions about their education to meet their goals.

Government funding alone will only scratch the surface of the housing and transportation challenges in our city and public-private partnerships must be continuously fostered through the work of city council members. I have spent my career working with people coming to the table with different perspectives and objectives. My collaborative style makes me adept at recognizing what compromise may be needed in meeting common goals.

4. The plans for a downtown convention center have created much discussion amongst city residents. Do you support the project (or not), and what will you do to ensure it is completed (or scuttled)?

The plans for a downtown convention center have been sporadically disclosed in news publications and occasional public Committee of the Whole meetings for City Council; however, much of the planning has remained within executive session. My goal as a member of council would be to first listen to the cases both for and against the convention center which have not yet been made public, and clearly voice the inevitable concerns about the increased traffic that the proposed convention center will generate. Additionally, the plan for the existing TD
Convention Center would need to be fully disclosed to me before I could support or oppose the proposed downtown convention center.

A new convention center could serve to support the hotel and restaurant businesses that have grown downtown. This project could also increase our tourism revenue which better positions us to support our growing infrastructure needs that are tied to tourism, provide economic growth by creating jobs to serve the convention center, and help recruit new business to Greenville by exposing convention goers to our city. Such recruitment could help us address the growing concern about the amount of vacant office space in our downtown area.

However, this project must not compromise the quality of life for our residents by not fully addressing our current downtown congestion and strains on infrastructure which includes not only our roads and sewers, but also our public safety infrastructure.

5. In June, the CZB consultants working on the GVL2040 comprehensive plan released five “hunches” based on their preliminary research. Please respond to these selected assessments with your assessment of the state of the City.

   a. “The gut feeling amongst Greenville residents may be that the city will, at some point, cease to be a place for middle- and working-class people.”-This possibility can be reduced if we financially support our affordable housing initiative as defined in my response to Question 3 ($15K-$55K earners) with a recurring line item in our budget and leveraging our public-private relationships to support this housing initiative, along with improving our transportation options.

   b. “The gut feeling amongst Greenville residents may be that the weekday commuting traffic has become unbearable.”-I disagree. It has not become unbearable, but it has become extremely unpleasant and will worsen if we do not address traffic as a major quality of life concern for Greenville’s residents. Investment in public transportation, bike/walk connectivity and traffic design with a long-term view rather than a short-sighted solution is our best defense against this growing threat.

   c. “The gut feeling amongst Greenville residents may be that the city will soon be a place where only high-earning households can afford to live.”-Our affordable housing initiatives should focus on providing “missing middle” type housing to provide density that supports local business, and effectively utilizes public transportation as presented in the 2018 Greenville County Housing Forum. The city owned land that has been designated for affordable housing around Unity Park, as well as other primary areas including the Poinsett-Rutherford Road corridor, and the Nicholtown area should remain the focus of developing affordable housing with appropriate density to support our housing needs. As a council member, I intend to focus on these areas and work to expedite the development of the housing that has been promised by the city leadership.
d. “The gut feeling amongst Greenville residents may be that the city has become a playground of sorts for young white people and that the very idea of an African-American community may now be in question.” - This question references the ongoing concern about gentrification in our traditionally African American communities. The City has a role to play in helping manage this trend by proactively working with the neighborhood association leadership in our traditionally African American communities, providing the necessary education to long time homeowners on the true worth of their properties and the importance of a Will and heirs laws to ensure their property is transferred upon death in the way the property owner wishes, and enforcing our building codes that apply to rental and unoccupied dwellings. The City must also work with community leadership to identify blighted homes on an ongoing basis and offer rebuild support or purchase offers as appropriate. Additionally, City Council members should work with our state legislators on advocacy for the property tax exemption bills currently in the House (H:4385 and H:4344) which provide property tax relief for private developers of affordable housing to promote further private investment in affordable housing projects.

It is the inclusivity of Greenville, as well as a great job opportunity, that attracted my husband and me to move here in 1989. I believe that as a modern city, we have a responsibility to build a culturally diverse community that is attractive to young people of all ethnicities. City Council plays a role in this by planning city events that have a variety of culturally diverse offerings which are supported by our direct expenditures as well as through tourism grants.

6. The Greenville Chamber supports efforts to increase the availability of housing for our workforce. What can the City do to support these efforts? Do you support policies to support accessory dwelling units, more density, transit-oriented development, and other solutions? Please elaborate.

I have gone on record to affirm that we, as a city, cannot build our way out of the affordable housing shortage that has developed over the last 10-15 years in Greenville. Through aggressive, reliable investment in the Greenville Housing Fund as I have outlined earlier, and similar investment in Greenlink and our connectivity infrastructure, we can help reduce the problem, but not eliminate it. Affordable housing needs have and will continue to propagate out into the surrounding regions of our city and aggressive investment in these two areas (housing and transportation) will be required from the County.

An additional key area that the City can address to make life more affordable for its workforce is to provide adequate, reduced priced parking for our hospitality workforce as well as support park and ride initiatives for our workers in the city limits, especially in the downtown area. I support more density in the design of “missing middle” housing as described in Question 5C, and business development in our historic corridors such as Pleasantburg Drive, Laurens Road and Wade Hampton Boulevard which are already served by Greenlink and have walk/bike accessibility from many of our existing neighborhoods and do not have the parking challenges
present in the downtown area. I support the evaluation and consideration of including accessory dwelling provisions in our policies provided they address the potential negative impact on our parking and traffic challenges within our established neighborhoods.

7. The City of Greenville and Greenville County are growing rapidly. Some of our new neighbors are retirees, but most come here to take jobs because of our success in economic development. As we create jobs, demand for housing increases. How will you balance the desire to preserve our city’s character, continue economic development, and protect our city-center neighborhoods while balancing the need to provide decent, affordable housing to our city’s residents.

This question ties to a number of others asked and answered within this questionnaire relating to housing, public transportation, parking and traffic design. In addition, I will note that throughout the political primary season, I was well informed by many of the city’s citizens about their concern for preserving the quality of life features of Greenville. In general, I found that our citizens support some growth, as long as it is better managed than it has been up to this point. Common concerns include protecting our tree canopy and avoiding the continued elimination of daylight that occurs as a result of taller building construction. Additionally, people are not well informed on our limitations in traffic management when dealing with roads that are owned by the state rather than the City of Greenville.

As a member of Council, I would proactively work with the staff and neighborhood associations to develop a more robust tree ordinance that would ensure our tree canopy is maintained and regenerated for future generations to come. I would work within the confines of the SCDOT Road Turn Back Program and with state legislators to improve our city’s ability to better manage traffic calming in the city-center neighborhoods and serve the residents of those communities by addressing their traffic concerns. Our economic development must continue, with better consideration for our existing residents of Greenville as major construction and affordable housing projects are undertaken.

8. The Greenville Chamber and the City of Greenville have partnered for decades to face and tackle issues important to Greenville. Where do you see important areas on which to collaborate between the City and business community? What experience do you have to ensure successful collaboration in these areas?

Of the Chamber’s many focus areas, I believe the Diversity and Inclusion initiatives are a critical resource for our city to insure we progress with inclusivity at the forefront of our planning for growth. As a city, we have need for a more diverse membership on our Boards and Commissions, as well as in our civil service areas (police force in particular). The Chamber could provide collaborative expertise in helping recruit a more diverse applicant pool for our open positions in these areas. Additionally, the Chamber and city should work together to insure there are a growing number of minority owned businesses that can meet the qualification
requirements for city-let contracts to help build economic prosperity for our minority workforce.

The Chamber’s leadership on the Workforce Data Collaborative provided extremely valuable information that the city must consider in planning for our future and this information flow should continue. The top barriers to entry into the workforce (Transportation, Housing, Childcare and Criminal Records) must be recognized and addressed by the city. As the Chamber continues to provide research such as this, City Council is given more tools to better guide the decisions for our future.

As a growing city with a dynamic workforce, it is important that we recognize new talent in Greenville and foster an inclusive environment to engage new residents of Greenville. Programs offered by the Chamber such as Leadership Greenville, Networking events and the various Young Professionals programs are essential for us to promote inclusivity, and retain talent in our area.

As a minority myself as defined by the Chamber, I bring the perspective of a woman, wife, mother, and business owner to City Council. I see problems and seek solutions by looking at the issues through the lens of someone who was educated in, and built a successful career in a male dominated profession. I work with students, parents, educators, board members, neighbors and community leaders every week and am able to listen to their perspective better, as a result of my own lifelong effort to present mine and be heard. I am a collaborator and a bridge builder and will bring those qualities to council, recognizing that rarely do all people agree 100%, and we must work for the greater good of Greenville through open communication and relationship building. The Chamber is one of the city’s best resources for facilitating these relationships with our business community.

While being a woman is not part of my campaign platform, I believe it is worth noting that without my service on City Council, there will be only one woman remaining as a council member. This would not present a representative local government for our city, and would be deficient in defining us as a progressive city. As the city and the Chamber collaborate to drive economic growth in our region, it is important that the leadership of both entities is truly representative of our community.

9. Because of our rapid growth, the city’s infrastructure is being tested as never before. What will you do as a City Council member to address items such as road and sewer infrastructure, and what experience do you have to address this issue?

Care of our road and sewer infrastructure is critical not only to insure we are serving our current taxpayers, but also to demonstrate our ability to plan for future growth and attract new businesses to our city. City Council is responsible for building and maintaining the systems that make our city function and our solid waste and stormwater fees are designated revenue sources to help with these needs. Additionally, money from the General Fund Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is used to provide supplemental funding in this area.
The FY 2020 CIP includes over $18M for infrastructure projects which include street resurfacing, sewer rehabilitation, stormwater improvements, parking equipment and others. In the area of street resurfacing, we are limited to the streets owned/maintained by the city. There are 32 well-traveled roads that are owned by the state and fall under the SCDOT’s responsibility that are listed on the Road Turn Back Program and would not be addressed by the city monies unless or until they are transferred to city control. The city should move forward in this program carefully, however, so that existing city streets which require attention do not fall further behind due to the addition of mileage to the city system.

The city budget reflects $1M per year from the general fund CIP to be dedicated to street resurfacing. As a member of council, I want to work to insure our city roads are routinely inspected, prioritized for resurfacing and repair, and priorities are set and maintained to accomplish this work. “Unforeseen” and “pet projects” must not usurp our responsibility to keep our roads and sewers maintained and I will be a champion for our infrastructure needs that are so critical to our city’s future. Additionally, I will work as needed with our state legislators to improve conditions on the state-owned roads as requested by the neighborhood leadership in our communities.

My experience in this area draws largely from my engineering career, working for 13 years on large capital projects. As a result of that experience, I have a sound appreciation for the importance of scope definition, reliable budgeting, adhering to budgets, and fully evaluating the financial and schedule impact of scope changes before they are approved and a budget is altered.

10. Greenville’s investment in transit is significantly lower than our peer communities. (Greenville spends $3.80 per capita, Birmingham spends about $46 per capita and Columbia spends about $56 per capita.) Do you support increase funding and investment in Greenlink? If so, what would you do to address funding for Greenlink and collaboration with the County. Please outline the experience you have to help this effort.

Philosophically, I believe that Greenlink will pay multiple, indirect dividends to help our economic growth. It must be run efficiently, but like most public transportation systems, it will not sustain itself on fares alone. I applaud the City of Greenville’s operating budget support of Greenlink and the GTA in the FY 19-20 budget, which represents an increase of over 23% from the previous year budget for these areas. The Greenlink leadership went through exhaustive measures to develop the 2020-2024 Transit Development Plan (TDP) which now serves as the roadmap for managing and improving Greenlink going forward. Greenville County Council also stepped up in their funding commitment for Greenlink, approving $4.5M total over the next two years.

Although these funding measures represent good intent by the city and the county, and should allow for the matching funds (including land swap measures) needed for the $11M grant for the new maintenance facility, our public transit system will still not be meeting its full potential and
we will remain overly dependent on ever-shrinking state and federal monies to support Greenlink. In order for Greenlink to meet its full potential as a public transportation system, providing efficient work force transit, traffic congestion relief, and an environmentally friendly way to get people in Greenville County where they need to be, on time, seven days a week, additional funding sources will need to be identified.

I support measures to identify new potential revenue streams for Greenlink both in the public sector and through private partnerships. City Council should work on making a business case for our transit needs, and work more effectively with County Council to ensure a united case is being presented to our private partners throughout the area.

My experience in this area began in 2017 when I took part in a Greenlink tour and information session. I have regularly attended GTA Board meetings for the past year, and participated in the Greenville Housing Forum-Intersection of Transit/Housing/Land Use last April. Additionally, I freely communicate with the leadership of the Workforce Data Collaborative and have supported the advocacy for Greenlink by publishing an Op-Ed in support of funding (“Growing Greenville must fund its transit system”-Greenville News, 11/18/2018), as well as providing vocal support for funding the TDP in the Chamber of Commerce Business Advocacy monthly meeting. These activities have made me well versed to help in the effort to increase support from our public/private partners, the business community and the citizens of Greenville.

11. A major issue over the next decade will be the redevelopment of the 37 acres at County Square. The Chamber believes that this is a transformative economic development project for both Greenville County and the City of Greenville. How will you work with the County to ensure completion of this project?

Given its size, this project is not a stand-alone issue and must be evaluated in the context of all the change that is happening and proposed for Greenville. My goal as a council member will be to make sure that all stakeholders in this project are brought to the table and their concerns are addressed. This project was recently outlined by the County Manager and RocaPoint Partners representatives at an informational meeting with the city Planning Commission. Preliminary concerns were suggested about the proposed 10-20 story building heights in sections of the development, as well as traffic impacts associated with this project and insufficient vision of the plan beyond 30 years. The project team did not present any information that ties this project to the priorities of the city for affordable housing which presents a concern for me. Additionally, when asked about considerations for Greenlink (by a senior representative of Proterra) when this project was presented in a Chamber of Commerce Business Advocacy meeting, the county representatives indicated that public transportation was not considered as any part of this project.

The economic impact of this project, particularly in the short term with respect to job creation during construction, makes this an appealing project if properly managed, and if the above concerns are addressed. As a member of City Council, I would work with the county to help
address these concerns, to ensure that this project starts with the support of the community stakeholders.

12. The issue of business license fees is a recurring battle in Columbia that pits the local business community against the City of Greenville. Are you open to streamlining and standardizing the process, and will you be open to compromise with the business community to find a solution that will be acceptable to both business and the City?

Yes, I am open to any process improvements that are fair to all interested parties, clearly documented, and manageable. I fully recognize the contributions of our businesses to the economic strength of our city’s general fund, and I am open to compromise as described above.