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.
   a. Qualifications for Office
      i. 4 years as a member of City Council
      ii. 8 years as Executive Director of the SC Council on Competitiveness
      iii. 21 years as a Business Owner of Consulting Engineering Businesses (and a continuous member of the Chamber)
      iv. 8 years in Manufacturing
      v. Past Chair, Greenville Chamber of Commerce
      vii. Past Chair of Greenville County Stormwater Task Force that led to the County Stormwater Management Plan
      viii. Past Chair of Clemson/Greenville Chamber Task Force that led to CU ICAR
      ix. Coordinator (and primary author) of Greenville Chamber initiative for Vision 2025
      x. Past Chair of baseball stadium task force that led to Fluor Field
      xi. Republican, which in itself is not particularly significant in the City, but is important when it comes to County, State and Federal relationships in South Carolina which are important to the City.

b. Five supporters and why their support is important
   i. Minor Shaw
      Minor Shaw may be the single most influential community leader in Greenville.
   ii. Knox White, Mayor, City of Greenville
      1. It was my vote that broke the 4 to 3 log jam of the previous Council to move Public Works, which was necessary to initiate the process to begin Unity Park
      2. The Mayor will soon be elected for his 6th term and has had a 75+ % approval rating
   iii. Bob Hughes, Business Leader, Former Chair, Greenville Chamber of Commerce
      1. Bob and I were Chairs when the County ripped away economic development and started the GADC. Bob currently has some different approaches to economic development.
      2. The next six months will be critical in redefining the city/chamber relationships and the Chamber’s role in economic development.
   iv. William Timmons, US Congressman from Greenville
      1. At 35, he can be a national leader for a long time
      2. Short term, William can play a pivotal role in solving the Conestee Dam crisis.
v. David Wilkins, Attorney
   1. David Wilkins and Dick Riley are the two most respected political leaders in Greenville. I would not be hesitant to call either of them.
   2. David has a very strong connection to Republicans on both the Legislative Delegation and County Council. A positive relationship with Greenville County is the single most important thing that the new City Manager should do. It is far different now than my year as Chamber Chair and the years working on Vision 2025, CU ICAR and the baseball stadium when the County would not even talk to the City or the Chamber. I credit this change to three things: the Joe Kermell/John Castile relationship, the leadership of Butch Kirven, and the Swamp Rabbit Trail, which dramatically showed the evidence of connecting to downtown Greenville. David’s connection to County Council could help continuing to build this relationship.
   3. David is also on the Clemson Board of Trustees. He and two other Board members have contributed to my campaign. The Clemson Greenville relationship will be very important for the future.

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

   a. Affordable Housing. There has been a renaissance of cities across the country. Because of the work of previous civic leaders, Greenville was well positioned to take advantage of this opportunity. The City has grown by 10,000 residents since the last census. The boom has resulted in an increased demand for housing at all levels, but it has particularly put pressure on places like the West End where housing was more affordable. We are now approaching a crisis in workforce housing – the so-called missing middle. To address this problem, we formed the Housing Trust Fund in 2017 as a subsidiary of Community Works. The purpose of this group was to incent private sector investment in ways that government could not do. The City has put $3.5 million into the fund to date and committed to investing another $1 million per year for the next five years. Both the County and the private sector need to contribute to this effort.

   b. Public Transportation. This is the other side of the affordable housing coin. Two-thirds of the Greenlink ridership is coming from the County, but the County has only reluctantly invested. We need to implement the five-year plan of increasing the connection frequency to 30 minutes and extending evening and weekend hours. We need to build a new maintenance facility, for which we have procured $11 million of federal funds. We need to work on new solutions to the first/last mile problem. (See Smart City section)

   c. Economic Development. The City has seen a dramatic increase in downtown residences and downtown amenities. Tourism is a major source of revenue. However, we have lost the
economic development churn that made us what we are. We currently have 700,000 sq. ft. of empty office space and more being planned at County Square and Camperdown. The ring of textile mills on the west side and south side of downtown have converted or are in the process of converting to non-manufacturing uses. We do not have the Fortune 500 companies or the major University that often drive downtown development. We do not have 300,000 people in the city, that we would have if we had North Carolina’s annexation laws. Yet, for all practical purposes, that is the size of the city. It is time to rethink what we are and what we are going to be.

d. **Smart City Technologies.** In the next four years, smart city technologies will change much of what we routinely do. Big data and the “internet of things” represent an estimated $30-trillion-dollar market. We need to be anticipating these changes. I have been the City’s point person on these initiatives for the past four years. The first changes are occurring right now and the public will become increasingly aware of them. It is critically important that anticipating these changes become part of our planning.

e. **Utility Consolidation.** It is time to address this problem across the County, and the City and the Chamber can play a major role in this initiative. I will provide more detail at the interview.

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?**

a. Do a better job of recruiting regional and corporate headquarters. As a result of conferences that Bob Hughes and I had with two groups of Senior Executives, I believe that far more can be done than we are doing now.

b. Recruit Silicon Valley. I know this has been talked about before, but I have a specific plan that is similar to what Raleigh, Charlotte and Atlanta are doing.

c. My work with the Council on Competitiveness and a 2011 tour of Israel suggested that incubators should focus on the technology component of specific clusters, e.g. life sciences, automotive, etc. I think Smart City technologies will provide a new opportunity to do this.

d. As part of our Downtown Master Plan, we have asked the consultants to do a separate study on the issue of downtown office utilization. Their recommendations will be out by September. They have indicated that they believe we need to raise our commitment to local startups and innovation. I hope to incorporate items B and C into this plan.

4. **The plans for a downtown conference or 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)?**

I am a huge supporter of this project. In February of 2015, I met with Bob Taylor and some BJU Board members to suggest that we start a project to move the Bob Jones Museum off campus and in to an “architecturally significant” building. I met with several other groups, including Dr. Jones, and we finally settled on an approach of redesigning the existing façade
and building an adjacent parking lot that could be accessed from the front entrance. I also felt their world class collection should be marketed as Italian Renaissance rather than religious art. About that time Erin Jones and Tom Styron started talking about doing something jointly and the idea of moving off campus once again took root. Other problems caused the closing of the M&G downtown. The facility on campus badly needed a renovation and has also been closed. BJU hired a consultant to do a study for financing a new museum. The conclusion was that it could be done, but it needed to be located somewhere downtown.

Fast forward to today. Phil Hughes and Bo Aughsy combined the idea of a joint facility for the museums with a downtown conference center on land adjacent to the Embassy Suites. They have a very viable plan for financing the project. (I’m not sure if the finance plan is public, but I would be happy to discuss it at the meeting.) Advantages include a permanent space for BJU, auxiliary space for GCMA (only 5% of their collection is on display at the current location), 25,000 sq ft of downtown conference space for corporate meetings and 1200 parking spaces in the West End.

Unlike what the newspaper said, this is NOT an alternative to the Greenville Convention Center. The Center has some 300 events a year that are largely local. Programs like the Boat Show, the Gun Show, the Home & Garden Show, etc. are better suited for spaces where parking is available and free. I think the two facilities should be jointly owned by the City and County and operated by common management so that they don’t compete. Perhaps an arrangement like SC TAC or the Bon Secours Arena could be considered. All convention facilities require subsidies from the local governments, but it is offset by hospitality and accommodation taxes. I believe there is broad based support on County Council and almost a no-brainer for City Council. NOW is the time to move forward with the Conference Center.

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.”
      i. This is a problem. Unlike the 70’s when wealthier people fled the cities for the suburbs, the renaissance that I spoke of earlier has caused younger and older people to want to live near downtown. This has driven up the price, particularly in the poorer areas of town.
      ii. I believe aggressive initiatives on affordable housing and public transportation are critical in addressing this problem.
   b. “The gut feeling amongst Greenville residents may be that the weekday commuting traffic has become unbearable.”
      i. Again, traffic problems are the #1 concern of cities all over the country. It doesn’t matter whether it is a small city like Greenville or a large metropolis like Atlanta, the “traffic is unbearable.” The problem is usually around rush hours, major intersections and specific problem corridors like Woodruff Road.
ii. I personally believe that this is the area where Smart City technologies will have the greatest immediate impact. Right now, we are in the process of installing the first phases of adaptive stoplights that talk to each other adjust timing according to traffic, weather or other conditions. Parking garages in the city will eliminate gates and incorporate license plate reading technology and automatic credit card billing by the end of the year. We will have phone apps to tell people how many spaces are available in each garage. Both City and County are increasing their investment in public transportation.

iii. Down the road, the Smart City technologies will offer new alternatives to personal transportation. That is why the next four years are so important.

   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.”

      i. The disparity between rich and poor is not limited to Greenville. It is growing all over the country and is a huge concern. One of the downsides of Smart City technology is that more and more service jobs are being automated. However, various groups are now looking at subsidized housing for teachers, for restaurant workers, for veterans, for fire and police personnel.

      ii. In some ways, this is a return to the mill village concept that was Greenville a century ago. We need to consider all alternatives.

   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.”

      i. This is related to previous comments about the renaissance of cities and income disparities. It was not long ago that the national objective was integrating all communities, but I understand the concern. Gentrification is occurring in cities around the country.

      ii. I think the Chamber’s current initiatives to support the minority communities are extremely important.

      iii. Unity Park is an attempt to connect an historically black community to the heart beat of the city.

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.

   a. I have supported these efforts. See my earlier comments on the Greenville Housing Fund.

   b. The Housing Fund recently hired Brian Brown from Columbus, OH as Executive Director. Columbus is one of the models around the country for implementing both smart city technologies and affordable housing. I look forward to visiting Columbus in September with the Chamber group and I am encouraging members of the Housing Fund to go as well.

   c. Transit oriented development is a buzz term often used to justify light rail systems. The Blue Line in South Charlotte is a prime example, and while it has been reasonably successful, the
bus systems are failing. I support the concept of Transit Oriented Development and would like to see a test route using Proterra buses incorporated into the plan and marketed accordingly.

d. The County received one proposal for a $1.6 billion privately financed Personal Rapid Transit (PRT). These are overhead pod cars, that are significantly less cost per mile than light rail. (See former County Councilman Fred Payne.) However, procuring right of ways is an enormous task. We made a major effort to get Fluor involved and they concluded that the system needed to be further tested before it could be deployed large scale. We proposed that the company do the test at the airport, which was seriously considering a PRT system, but the company declined the offer. However, I do support the idea of transit-oriented development, and I love light rail systems. I have not yet seen where they could work in Greenville.

e. The problem with public transit in less dense cities like Greenville is the so called first/last mile issue. It is getting from your residence to the bus stop and from the bus stop to wherever the passenger is going to go. This problem can potentially be solved by autonomous vehicles. These don’t have to be full size cars, but could be smaller buses, three wheeled covered vehicles, golf carts, etc. Greenville has at least one significant initiative on this concept right now.

f. Increasing density and accessory dwelling units are happening now. It is often a battle ground with neighborhoods, especially when the dwelling become short term Air BNB units or a large house is torn down in order to build two or more smaller ones. These situations must be considered on a case by case basis. In general, zoning in the city allows more density than most near-downtown neighborhoods currently have. We also need to look at more creative uses of density that allow for common spaces that can be used for a variety of purposes.

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.

a. This question should be either first or last. It is related in some ways to every other question on this survey. The answer does involve balancing sometimes conflicting objectives. Breaking down the question into elements, it is easy to see who would support which objective:
   
   i. Creating jobs
   ii. Maintaining and improving neighborhoods
   iii. Preserving the city’s character
   iv. Providing decent affordable housing

b. The reason that local government is the most highly rated level of government is that it is accessible to ordinary citizens and it is capable of solving problems. As an at-large representative, it is important to listen to all input, and then make decisions based on what you believe is the best choice for all of Greenville. It is a balance and I think we have made pretty good decisions over the last four years. Even the bad ones were good decisions in that we felt that we had no choice given the circumstances. (See McPherson one way.)
c. I recruited Bob Dotson to retire to Greenville. Bob was the 8-time Emmy Award winning correspondent for NBC, did 6000 American Story pieces for the Today Show, and was a fraternity brother of mine at the University of Kansas. Bob recently wrote a great piece on Greenville for the new “Yeah That Greenville” publication of the CVB. I posed this question to Bob and he wrote the following: “We want to preserve the Greenville lifestyle. Did we enjoy the service at Hall’s Chop House? Well, you can’t keep the best workers if they have three jobs, no car and can only afford a place to live miles from Main Street.” He said that the City needs to address those who ask why the government should subsidize for affordable housing. He then pointed out cases around the world where it is in the self-interest of constituents to do so. In Mystic, CT, no new downtown retail can open without provide additional parking OR helping to pay for public transportation. In Aspen, CO, no business can get a license without showing how it will help house their new employees. In Great Britain, rich people from London were buying weekend getaways in the Cotswold Villages and thereby weakening the communities by driving out the postmen, the butcher, etc. Parliament passed a law essentially protecting the existing residents of Cotswold Villages.

d. Some of the solutions are radical, but the point is that we must decide what we want to protect and determine ways to do it.

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 the business community? What experience do you have to ensure successful collaboration in these areas?

a. Collaboration (see previous sections)
   i. Economic development
   ii. Minority initiatives
   iii. Utility consolidation
   iv. Affordable housing/public transportation
   v. Common vision

b. Experience
   i. Past Chamber Chairman and a member for more than 30 years
   ii. Past Chair of Clemson/Greenville Chamber Task Force that led to CU ICAR
   iii. Past coordinator and principal author of Vision 2025
   iv. Four years’ experience on City Council
   v. Closer connection to County Council than any other City Council members except the Mayor
   vi. Significant statewide economic development experience as Executive Director of the SC Council on Competitiveness.
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?
   
a. Sewer
   
i. I am by training a Civil/Environmental Engineer and spent 30 years in Greenville as a Principal/owner of Engineering and Environmental Management companies.
   
ii. I spent 16 years on the Board of REWA and was Chair three times. I worked on the 1993 Upstate Roundtable (long range sewer plan) which resulted in building $.5 billion of new infrastructure. The sewer authority went from 300 violations per year in 1999 to zero five years later. I chaired the 2008 plan and am chairing the 2019 Upstate Roundtable. This time we are working hand in hand with Paula Gucker, Assistant County Administrator, and Mark Farris, Executive Director of GADC, to ensure the 10 year County plan and 10 year sewer plan are in synch. We are also addressing issues like septic tanks, Conestee Dam and consolidation.
   
iii. We currently have 17 sewer subdistricts in Greenville County. This arrangement makes little sense. I am working on some initial steps for consolidation.

b. Roads
   
i. The City will complete the Parallel Parkway this fall. It will take 9% of the traffic off of Woodruff between Verdae Boulevard and I-85. The road is a very well designed and DOT is now looking at extending it over I-85 and I-385 to connect to Smith Hines. This would provide a complete parallel connector from to the most difficult sections of Woodruff Road.
   
ii. Most of the roads in Greenville County and the City of Greenville are owned by the State. Funding in 2017 has allowed DOT to begin catching up on re-pavement. They are also about to issue a proposal for the City to take over some key roads. We are planning to do so for at least the roads around Unity Park and other specific roads like E. Park where we have issues that DOT has been unwilling to solve.
   
iii. Completing the I-85/I-385 Gateway in early 2020 will help traffic throughout the city.

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 increased 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.
   
a. I do support increased funding and we have funded an increase in the new budget. We recently announced that our annual hospital allocation would go to public transit. We have worked on grants to increase the number of Proterra buses circulating the city. We currently have four electric buses and hope to eventually convert our entire fleet. We have an $11 million grant for a new maintenance facility. We need to complete the maintenance facility project and procure additional electric buses. The County has also increased their allocation and is beginning to recognize the importance of transit to the whole County.
b. We need to implement the five-year plan to expand evening and weekend service and increase the frequency to 30 minutes on key parts of the day.

c. We need to find and test new first/last mile solutions. I personally worked for two years trying to raise private funding to match a $2 million grant from the Global Autonomous Vehicle Partnership, which in turn would have matched a $4 million DOT grant, to test autonomous vehicles on first/last mile solutions. We failed on procuring the funding.

d. We need to find an experienced replacement for Gary Shepard. His replacement will hopefully have experience on innovative approaches to public transportation elsewhere and will serve as a dynamic spokesman for transit.

11. A major issue over the next decade will be the redevelopment of the 37 acres at County Square. The Chamber believes 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?

   a. I agree that this could be a transformative development. We are working now with the project developer on solutions that would be acceptable to both the County and our own planning commission and staff. There are some needed compromises on both sides on issues like affordable housing, existing zoning standards, parking requirements, building height, etc.
   b. We are thrilled that the County wants to build their offices downtown and we will make sure that happens.

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?

   a. I am support streamlining and standardizing the process. I certainly understand the frustration of businesses working in multiple South Carolina cities. The Municipal Association has been our spokesman in this regard. The MASC and the Chambers are in agreement that there should be both streamlining and standardization. The problem has been that every time a reasonable proposal gets put forward, some legislator who hates cities proposes something that kills the whole process. The City currently collects about $10 million per year in business licenses.

   b. Side comment. Had the state not made annexation so difficult, the business licenses would have been less necessary. We are a city of 70,000 in a county of 525,000. Durham is a city of 267,000 in a County of 311,000. Ditto Greensboro, Raleigh, Charlotte. NC has no business license.

Thanks to the Chamber for initiating this questionnaire and candidate evaluation process.