

Voices to Votes NC Questionnaire: Billy Craig

1. If elected to serve as Mayor, which factor will carry more weight in your future decision making...your professional experience and personal opinions or the wishes of a majority of Wilmington residents?

Personal opinions will take a backseat and should be the last thing to influence any thought that represents so many. Professional experience and wishes of the majority takes precedence.

2. You have voiced your support for increasing the budget to facilitate better pay for our police officers and to expand the total number of officers. Where can we find the necessary funding in the city budget? Would you support a tax increase to create additional funding?

I do not want a tax increase. There has been some mismanagement of expenses and re-imbursements to not only the police department, they have not gone to other city departments (funds being routed to the general fund and not back to the appropriate department/division.) My plan is to identify the waste and direct the funds where they need to go.

3. Please offer your suggestions on how we can limit the negative impact of homeless people on downtown businesses. Do you agree with the final version of the recent ordinance that was passed prohibiting camping on sidewalks and in public spaces? Would you support tax increases to pay for more housing and beds for homeless people?

There are approximately 26 non-profits working towards the same goal to address homelessness. If you were to put them all in a room together, you will receive a statement that they are all working towards a common goal. However; each non-profit operates in their own "lane" and does not have a locally, centralized database or guidance to work under to focus on that goal of addressing homelessness. The latest ordinance appears to be more of a "just in case". There are some laws already in place that can address blocking the sidewalks.

I believe we can tap into grants and other funding additionally leaning on the county to utilize the endowment funds to assist the homeless population.

4. The pace of multi-family residential development has obviously grown beyond the capacity of many of our roads and intersections. Expanding or adding roads is limited by our unique geography and poor long-term planning in the past. We face budget limitations both at the local and NCDOT level. Tell us how you would propose to improve our already stressed road networks or if you might support a pause in new multi-family residential projects until needed infrastructure improvements are made?

The complaint about poor long-term planning is something I have heard my entire life here. I am in favor of some type of moratorium on new high density construction. Projects that are already approved; the city must honor those to keep us void of having a costly defense in court proceedings (in other words, we don't need to be sued.) The city needs to lean on NCDOT to address the roads they maintain and the city departments must address our issues without haste. I am in favor of identifying other grants to assist in roads and I am in favor of allowing companies to bid. We may be surprised...a non-city professional may be able to complete or do a project at a better cost, saving the city money.

5. Why do we need to grow and become a city of 150,000 people or more? What is the benefit of a significantly larger population to those citizens already living here? What is the "right size" for Wilmington? When will we reach our optimal population size?

From a standpoint of jobs, for every 100 jobs created, approximately 75% of the workforce is brought in from outside the state or a several county radius. Mentorship to keep those "local" numbers well above 50% will keep local dollars local, supporting our local economy. Our educational and health care jobs have increased through the years. Again, keeping a "local" workforce is extremely beneficial even with population size and growth. Currently, there are more deaths than births in New Hanover county. The "right" or "optimal" size is a balance between our greenspace, infrastructure (roads, public safety, water, electricity, etc).

6. Every candidate lists affordable housing as a priority. When considering affordable housing as defined by HUD, subsidies are required to reach the required lower rental rates. Would you support increased taxes to finance more subsidies for creating affordable housing? If not, how would additional affordable housing be financed?

Unfortunately, history has shown where workforce housing later became areas of higher crime and little growth. Affordable housing defined by HUD discusses the income limits regarding median and fair market rent. Unfortunately, not even our own city government has made it easier for city employees to obtain housing. Again, identifying wasteful spending in the city to

provide more assistance to the employees who can stay where they work, taking extra pride in their community and re-investing their dollars into the local community is a valuable asset.

7. Do you believe existing Wilmington residents should be willing to sacrifice some level of their quality of life to create more housing for people who want to move to Wilmington?

No. People want what they have worked so hard for. Crushing their spirit is not an option that should be explored. This causes a strong wedge between local government, entities and citizens. We need to foster cooperation, not destroy it.