

On November 4, voters in Lexington will elect a new mayor and at least one new member of city council. John Knapp is not seeking a third term as mayor. Council member Mimi Elrod and planning commission member Mary Harvey are running for Knapp's job. There are three seats on city council up for election. Incumbent Tim Golden is not running. His fellow council members Jack Page and Ron Smith are, as are Marylin Alexander, David Cox, and Bob Lera.

Ironically, perhaps, both Elrod and Cox have run for higher office, namely the House of Delegates. Cox has also run for the State Senate.

This publication sent a questionnaire to all of the candidates. What follows are the questions and their answers. They have not been condensed or edited. The answers are printed with the mayoral candidates' first, in the order received.

1) Name, age & experience(s) that may be useful for the voters to know.

Mary Harvey: 54 years old. I own my own business, which allows me the flexibility to schedule duties as mayor. I have 16 years of volunteer experience in Lexington and Rockbridge County, including Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Rockbridge Area Youth Task Force, Youth Services Board, East Lexington Planning Commission and the Bicycle Parking Committee.

Mimi Elrod: I am old enough to know I don't have to tell anyone my age. Shortly after arriving in Lexington I was trained as a volunteer on the hot-line for Project Horizon and was part of the first group to staff the hot line. I have had the privilege of serving as a Board member of Project Horizon, Yellow Brick Road, The Mental Health Association, Association of Retarded Citizens, The Rockbridge Area Community Services Board, and the Total Action Against Poverty Advisory Board. I was honored to serve as president of the Project Horizon Board for four terms, as Chair of the Rockbridge Area Community Services Board the Mental Health Association, and Vice President of the Lexington Parent Teacher Association. Currently I serve on the Washington and Lee's Shepherd Poverty Program Alumni Committee and The Habitat For Humanity Advisory Board. I was appointed to the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia by Governor Mark Warner and reappointed to the Board by Governor Tim Kaine. I am an elder at the Lexington Presbyterian Church, and was part of a medical mission trip to Haiti in 1999. Recently, I was asked to serve as a member of the Board of the Rockbridge Area Free Clinic which I will join in 2009. The most critical experience for this election, however, is that I have had the privilege of serving on Lexington's City Council since 2003 and working with other fine members of Council. We work well together, and I am grateful that although we may disagree on some issues I believe that we have respect for one another and we are always civil. This experience has let me to become

more interested and involved in this city. Serving on Council has taught me how City Council works., which is certainly a benefit to being mayor.

John 'Jack' Page: I am a home owner and father of two adult children. I work as a professor of Civil Engineering at VMI. As a civil engineer, I have a background in transportation issues and a working knowledge of the problems and challenges associated with maintaining an aged infrastructure. I have served on the Lexington City Council for four years, the Lexington School Board for eight years, the Lexington Planning Commission, and presently on the Rockbridge Partnership.

Ronald W. Smith: Age 60 BS & MS in Education. Seven years teaching high school and community college technical courses in Norfolk and Virginia Beach. Worked for a number of government contractors, for 20+ years, the last one being Halliburton Company. Developed technical training, procedures and pursued new business opportunities.

Bob Lera: age 63. Community involvement: Four year term as City of Lexington Planning Commissioner. Chamber of Commerce: Board, Christmas Parade chairman, Hospitality chairman, Strategic Planning, Economic Development, Food & Wine Festival. Rockbridge County Public Schools Foundation: Board, Treasurer, Development Director. Rockbridge Area Hospice: Board, Personnel chair, Development. Rockbridge Area Transportation System: Communications consultant, Service Expansion committee. Lexington Sunrise Rotary: Board, Club Service director, July 4 Balloon Rally chair, Membership chair; Adopt-a-Highway coordinator. Rockbridge Historical Society: Secretary, Executive board. Friends of the Rockbridge Choral Society: Board. St. Patrick Church: Pastoral Parish Council chair, Endowment Fund Management committee, Justice & Peace minister, Lexington Area Ministerial Association representative. Volunteer: Mental Health Association of Rockbridge, Lime Kiln Theatre, American Cancer Society driver, RATS driver. Nominated by service club Quality of Life program as Citizen of the Year (2007) and Volunteer of the Year (2006). Business Experience: small business owner and operator in Lexington for over nine years (White House on Jackson B&B), 28 year corporate career in accounting and information technology, 3 years in university support and consulting in information technology & computing services.

Marylin Evans Alexander: age 55. Most of my adult years have been spent in public service so at this stage of my life, it's what I know, what I do and who I am. I attended college during the era of protests and advocacy, the "wanting to save the world" sort of mindset. As a teenager, my father told me a story about being laid off back in the 50s' from the old tannery in Buena Vista. He went to the local employment office where he had to spend an entire day sitting in the lobby, constantly being passed over while waiting for a turn to get assistance. He knew he couldn't leave because he needed to feed his family somehow. At the end of the day he was

finally waited on, but he figured it was only because there was no one else left in there but him! This true story helped to formulate who I am as a person and what I needed to do to help change my little part of the world. When I returned to the area after college my career began with a great deal of irony, because the first place I visited was the Va. Employment Commission! By that time, I was waited on with no problem and actually got a job working there and stayed with that agency in various locations for over 20 years. The last 10 years have been in management in the subsidized housing industry and as a member of the Lexington City School Board. It's important to give back to the community that invested in me, to give my time and energy in helping others, especially to help our youth to reach their potential. Hopefully they will also be able to return someday to give back to the community in the same way.

David Cox: 61 and counting. Retired from full-time Episcopal ministry but still active in a parish in Bath County. Our three children all profited greatly from the Lexington school system and from RCHS. My wife, Melissa, works at W&L; I teach occasional courses at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College and Southern Virginia University, and for many years worked with W&L students and VMI cadets, so I have strong connections with all the educational institutions in our community. I was a co-leader in getting Kendal at Lexington developed-a collaborative project if there ever was one. Running twice for the legislature gave me a dose of humility from getting swamped, a network of contacts throughout Virginian and beyond, and above all an abounding admiration for our people.

2) How long have you lived in Lexington? Should that matter to the voters?

Harvey: I have lived in Lexington since 1992, 16 years. I don't see the value in judging a person by how long they have lived here; I believe their value is in their abilities and desire to serve.

Elrod: I have lived in Lexington for 24 years. My involvement in a wide array of activities and my concern for the well being of the city and the citizens (which I believe I have demonstrated) are more important than the fact that I have lived here 24 years.

Page: I have lived and worked in Lexington for twenty-five years. I have the perspective of watching our community develop over time. Time provides an understanding of our history and our future. I know and respect the citizens of Lexington.

Smith: 10 years. Understanding the needs and issues of the area are important. How long it takes to gain that understanding varies.

Lera: 11 years. It absolutely matters. Voters will look at how the candidate has invested in the community. Expectations in terms of time spent, level of responsibility, and diversity of experience with community based organizations

should be higher as the candidate has lived in our community longer. My wife and I could have lived anywhere and we chose Lexington. We were initially impressed with the environment, the atmosphere, and the people. We later learned of the opportunities to become involved and contribute to the community.

Alexander: I can honestly say something that few candidates over the years have been able to say. I was born and raised in Lexington, when the Stonewall Jackson House was the hospital, Lexington had an African American doctor, the street I grew up on housed teachers, other professionals, and hard working families who owned their homes and were so particular, some would not only sweep their sidewalks but the street out front. I have lived in Lexington all of my life except for the 4 years I attended college and all the summers my parents sent me away to visit my older siblings. I didn't understand then, but now as a parent myself it has become quite evident that they sent me away to make sure I had constructive things to do! I'd be the first to say we should not try to live in the past but in order to look ahead with progress and growth we need to look back to understand the past. I can only hope and trust that will matter to the voters.

Cox: 21 years-best years of my life so far, so good that I want to give back to this city that has given so much to me and my family.

3) Is the city spending too much or too little on something? What?

Harvey: The city is spending a huge amount on their two schools. They are not spending enough in the planning department, which has increased its workload incredibly over the past 20 years. There needs to be a major overhaul in the department, and at least one more employee added to allow it consistency, efficiency and to anticipate the needs of the city.

Elrod: City Council members are mindful of the obligation we have to be cautious and careful with citizens' money. Our city budget is managed exceptionally well by Mr. Ellestad and Mr. Higgins who are highly competent. I see no evidence of overspending that would cause concern. On the other hand, money needs to be spent at times to make money: we need to think of this as investing. City Council is often reluctant to do this.

Page: I think the city has done a good job of budgeting the resources available. This can be a painful and exacting process. The city manager works with the heads of city departments starting in January of each year to develop a budget. The council holds two public hearings and at least four work sessions in April to consider budget and the appropriations. Much of the city's annual budget is mandated by the state and federal government, but not all of these mandates are fully funded. I anticipate difficulties in the budget in future years. For example, because the state has cut funding for highways, we will need to borrow

money using a bond issue to repair the Nelson Street Bridge. Another example is the state mandate upgrading the level of clean water going into the Maury River. Because of this, we will need an improved water treatment plant. We have a limited tax base of about 2 square miles of land, thirty percent of which is tax exempt. Over 60% percent of the budget is for basic services such as public safety, public works and education. So far, citizens have dealt well with our expenses and city needs. Our recent citizen survey shows that residents say the city of Lexington is a beautiful and safe place to live, and I'd like to keep it that way.

Smith: The City has positioned it's self to spend a lot of money on infrastructure – i.e. Rockbridge County Courthouse, a new elementary school, refurbishment of Downing and the community center, Nelson Street Bridge replacement, sewer and water line replacement. I would like to see the City spend more money on improving the “walkability” of the City (i.e. sidewalks, traffic flow improvements, traffic calming and traffic limiting enhancements).

Lera: Proposed capital spending over the next five years for the refurbishment of our schools, the courthouse complex, and the as yet unquantified jail contribution as well as improvements to streets and utilities exceeds our annual expense budget. We must continue to keep a tight rein on spending for operations and prioritize capital projects as they can be funded. Teacher salaries need to be increased. We're spending too little to attract and retain the professionals that we need to insure that our youth are motivated and prepared to face increasingly complex challenges. Teaching in Lexington at current salary levels amounts to a charitable contribution, in addition to a job.

Alexander: For the most part, I think the city works hard to strike a balance on spending by using sound judgement as to how to spend the taxpayers money. There is always room for improvement in anything we do and the city government is no different. As you know the state budget cuts will likely affect the localities and our city budget will feel that strain. At some point in the near future I hope the city will see the need to invest more in its youth. It may take partnering with the public schools, W&L, VMI and other programs and resources, whatever it takes, but an additional investment in our youth as a preventive measure now will mean less funding needed down the road for social services and other related maintenance programs.

Cox: It would be easy to say, “everything's perfect as it is,” even easier to list what's wrong. In fact, being on the outside of City Council, I don't know enough to say. I believe that teaching our children is a top priority; we can never pay our teachers enough; we have to maintain our infrastructure, and make sure our technological services are the best they can be in order to grow in today's economy. AND we have to keep taxes as reasonable as possible. I have long thought that the city's management has done well with what it has to work with, and that our family has received much for the tax

dollars we've paid: those are two traditions worth keeping in this tradition-loving town.

4) What is one small thing you would like to change in the city?

Harvey: I would make all of the signage in the city consistent.

Elrod: Lexington is a friendly town, an unusually pleasant place to live. But periodically, people get angry over differences of opinion and no longer speak to one another. In a community this size, that is very unfortunate and something I would like to change.

Page: If I were to suggest a small change for Lexington, I would like to see better signage for tourists visiting our historic downtown area.

Smith: Improve the Cities relationship with the fire and rescue squads.

Lera: The council chooses where it invests its time and energy. I see too much reaction and not enough anticipation and planning. Change happens. What is crucial is how we deal with it. We must anticipate where we can and manage when presented with the unforeseen. We don't have to endure change. Delaying action until presented with limited alternatives and choosing the least "distasteful" is not leadership. Council's job is to work on the big picture and not sweat the small stuff.

Alexander: As I've already mentioned, I would like to see more attention given to the youth of the community. It seems the younger children have various opportunities but once they become teenagers, Lexington lacks places to go and things to do. If we had a one-stop place for them to go some evenings and weekends for music, dancing, games, refreshments, fitness, other recreation to keep them occupied, and I know they don't want to hear this part but even homework help, SOL preparation and tutoring should be included. We need to keep them safe and off the streets as best we can.

Cox: Get a few more businesses starting up, headquartered downtown.

5) If you could wave a magic wand, and change anything at all in town, what would you do?

Harvey: I would rub a genie's lamp and ask for more job opportunities in the area such as soft industries and research labs.

Elrod: Because I am interested in and concerned with downtown development and the ramifications for our business owners, I would love to see the R.E. Lee Building rehabilitated to a first rate hotel. A hotel of this sort would lead to a larger number of people in the downtown area both night and day. A first rate hotel would serve our business owners well, would create jobs, and would increase the number of tourists. I want people to know that economic develop is important to me , and that I believe in and respect

individual property rights. Resolving our differences with the Fire Department would also be terrific. Among other matters, I would also like to enhance awareness of our need to reduce our carbon footprint and provide ways we can do that. Providing curb side recycling and safer walking and biking routes are examples. I hope that collaboration among the City, the County, and Buena Vista is enhanced and that among the City, VMI, and W&L it can be also.

Page: My magic wand would create a new downtown, midsized, quality hotel with its own restaurant and parking. This would provide vitality and customers for the downtown merchants, as well as additional tax revenue. I would also like to bury all the remaining utilities lines underground and perhaps create a wireless communications community.

Smith: Provide affordable housing for moderate and low income individuals and families.

Lera: My response to this question will be amplified in the question about "new business" down the list. At the conceptual level, I'd magically institutionalize "collaboration": close and effective collaboration among entities with differing objectives so that we can create benefits to the entire community in the areas where we agree: city and county, city and universities, city and hospital, regional business promotion agencies (see below), and our community based organizations with similar missions and objectives. I've seen it work and, when it does, it is effective and inspiring. I've also seen a failure to collaborate and the waste in time, energy, and resources is a shame. At the tangible level, we'd have a public transportation system serving Lexington and the main Rockbridge county roads. I'm not talking about a big-city subway or rail system. I see some basic level of scheduled public transportation at the least on Route 11 from Lowe's and Wal-Mart down Jefferson and Main to the southern end of the by-pass, plus another route on Route 60 from Kerr's Creek to Buena Vistas with transfers between these two lines at the corners on Nelson at Jefferson and Main. We have a lot of people, including the elderly and the disabled, who have a hard time getting around, especially with today's gas prices. I'm on the RATS service expansion committee and we are starting to look into the possibility of developing a scheduled fixed-route service. I think a partnership among the three governments and RATS should pursue this service.

Alexander: More open land would magically appear to allow us to build a new Waddell Elementary School as well as enough room to bring in some clean industry to give our hard working citizens some better paying job opportunities. If the magic wand is really good to me, there will be more room for a bowling alley, skating rink, and hopefully attract some popular retail clothing stores. I could really go on and on but let's develop a site for family fun and a gathering place for connecting our Lexington, Buena Vista and Rockbridge County community. My magic wand would have something for everyone!

Cox: Get even more businesses starting up,

headquartered downtown. Have the Courthouse renovated by tomorrow, and the old bank building rehabbed with full occupancy. Develop public transportation centered on and shuttling people into the downtown hub. All of that will draw people into our terrific city center, increasing the sense of vibrancy and encouraging prosperity. Fortunately, I see signs that this is already beginning to happen.

6) What is the smartest thing the city government has done in the last four years?

Harvey: I am not sure in this occurred within the last four years, but changing the voting day for city offices to the November elections increased participation by a large percentage.

Elrod: Making a commitment, albeit costly, to make improvements to Lylburn Downing School and Community Center and to rebuild or rehabilitate Waddell School are two very sound decisions. More recently, we are beginning curb side recycling and have established a Go Green Lexington Committee to deal with the myriad issues related to sustainability.

Page: The smartest thing the city government has done is to maintain a stable management team. This team includes the city manager, the heads of city departments, and the superintendent of schools. The cooperation between these groups and the city council contribute to a well run city that is a great place to live. Based on per capita spending and test scores, a recent survey of state school systems has identified the Lexington school system as one of the most efficient in the state of Virginia.

Smith: At present we are having difficulties with the final implementation of our City Recycling Program; however I am excited to see the City taking this initiative to help sustain our environment. My hope is that all resident will embrace and support this program.

Lera: I'm going to answer this two ways. First, I am enthusiastic about finally addressing mandatory recycling. It is long overdue. Second, the smartest thing is probably something that never came to our attention. Somewhere along the line, our city manager or one of his bright, experienced department heads saw a problem and fixed it. We didn't hear about it because the downside was avoided before it became a crisis. This gets back to my comments on anticipating and managing change.

Alexander: I think the effort made to obtain the Courtyard Square is the smartest thing in recent years. This insures the land will be available for public use but we also need to make sure we incorporate it more often into downtown activities as a central gathering place.

Cox: Fix the water main that broke in September so quickly. I mention that because the city seems to keep up with the day-to-day problems, from plowing streets to picking up trash, to such a degree most of us take the efforts for granted. We shouldn't. Still, not having to worry (so much)

about day-to-day operations frees us up to look creatively at where we're headed, from a beautified Randolph Street to renovated schools to improving affordable housing and growing our business community.

7) What's the dumbest?

Harvey: The city did not research the deed to the site where Waddell School is located, nor perform a survey for the park at Jordan's Point.

Elrod: I think the City's endorsement of the County's response to the Request for Proposals from the Museum of the Confederacy offering them occupancy of our Courthouse free of charge and with tax exemption status demonstrated a lack of respect for our African American community. Fortunately we have had a good outcome in regard to the "Old Courthouse." It has been sold and will be rehabilitated according to the Secretary of Interior Standards. In addition the open and honest expressions of disappointment by members of the African American community created an awareness of those feelings.

Page: Being an incumbent, I don't always agree with every decision of the council, but once the vote has carried, I accept the decision and work to implement it.

Smith: It has been difficult to see the amount of time and resources that have been consumed dealing with rescue squad and fire department issues. My hope is that we can get beyond the issues of the past, allow the volunteers the opportunity to provide the services we desperately need and deal with other important initiatives.

Lera: I play a lot of bridge. At the bridge table, "dumb" is when the action at the table tells me what card I should play next and I choose to ignore the signals and play the wrong card. By the same token, making a decision without consulting subject matter experts and the experiences of similar communities as well as soliciting and listening carefully to citizen input is "dumb." We are so fortunate in the resources that live and work in our community, and I'm not referring only to professors at W&L and VMI. No matter what the subject, I am continually amazed at the experts that live among us. We need to tap that expertise regularly and seriously. My mantra is "Vote for Bob. He asks questions and listens to the answers."

Alexander: I won't go so far as to say it was the dumbest thing but the most disappointing thing for me was the decision council made to proceed with the Museum of the Confederacy. I think council needs to decide for themselves if that was their dumbest moment.

Cox: Re-timing all the downtown lights so that no one can get across by foot or car without waiting at every corner. We don't have to copy northern Virginia on everything (and some would say, "anything").

8) What should be done with the Jordan's Point dam?

Harvey: The dam at Jordan's Point should be made

safer, however that needs to be done.

Elrod: Three options of handling the dam have been presented. In a nut shell, one is to leave it as it is; a second is to let Restoration Systems LLC of North Carolina manage and fund all steps of removal of the dam in an environmentally friendly way and take environmental mitigation credits that they sell to others; and the third recommended by Recreation, Engineering, and Planning a group out of Colorado, would be to partially remove the dam and create a gradual drop in the river and create a “water park.” The estimated cost to the city is approximately 800,000. This is a great deal of money in light of the fact that we have major expenses related to our schools, the Community Center, a parking garage, the water distribution system, and possibly a new jail. I see the Recreation, Engineering and Planning option as an investment. A water park would bring more tourists to the area (and we need to promote this beautiful part of the country that provides great recreational opportunities) thus bringing in more business and would give our community another summer recreational opportunity. Given the cost of gas, people likely continue to find ways to enjoy leisure opportunities close to home.

Page: This has been a difficult issue considering the various concerns of local citizens. We have held several public hearings on this question. The city has invested taxpayer money to investigate possibilities. There will have to be a multi-jurisdictional solution including the city, county and the state. I do not, at this time, support the idea of the city creating a water park at Jordan’s Point. I am concerned about the safety problem and also about the possible harm to adjacent land owners.

Smith: Nothing!

Lera: I’m no hydrologist. There was a presentation by an expert hydrologist to the Lexington Rotary Club on this question. David Woody, our Director of Public Works, belongs to that club and heard that presentation. He told me that he found the idea worthy of consideration. The gentleman laid out an option that purports to be cost effective, has a minor impact on the riverscape, and solves the root problem. I don't know if that is the only such solution or the best solution. My point is we need to invest the time and energy into finding out.

Alexander: From all I’ve read, it looks like the dam would need to be completely removed or at least partially removed to make it safe. I would not be immediately opposed to a natural water park but would like to do more research. From what I’ve seen of other natural water park locations they have been able to maintain the natural surroundings of the waterway and that would be important to me. I’d have to know more about the safety, long term effects to the physical characteristics of the river, etc. to make a sound decision about the proposed waterpark.

Cox: As with the city’s finances, I’m not yet on intimate terms with the issue. The question for me is how to maximize

Jordan's Point as an asset for our city. I rather like ideas about developing a water-park there.

9) What is the ideal number of tourists for the town, and what step(s) can be taken to achieve that goal?

Harvey: We need 60,000 tourists per year. We need to ask for across-the-board, consistent evening hours from the businesses downtown, readable signage and improved walkability on the main blocks of the downtown areas.

Elrod: I don't know if there is an ideal number. At times it appears that there are too many tourists and that our shops cater to tourists more than locals. To me we should continue to promote tourism by capitalizing on our scenic area and most beautiful city in Virginia while being mindful of the desires of local citizens. Where would our shops and restaurants be without tourists!

Page: Tourism is a major industry for our area; we need to cultivate it and refine it. We show off our area not only through our capable visitor's center personnel, brochures, and web site, but in the way we treat visitors. Last summer while at the visitor center, I overheard an out of state visitor talk about spending the remainder of the day walking around the "village" and watching the "village people". I quickly went outside so the tourist family could see a "village" person. One of the attractions of our small town is the friendliness of the people. I do not know how many tourists we can accommodate, but having too many would be a nice problem. The number of tourists ebbs and flows with special college weekends, horse center activities and athletic events.

Smith: Enough to allow every downtown merchant to operate at a profit. Continued support to the Regional Tourism Board and our Chamber of Commerce.

Lera: The number required to insure our lodging properties, our restaurants, our attractions, our shops, and our service organizations prosper for their owners, provide sufficient employment opportunities to our residents, and DON'T overburden our infrastructure (streets, traffic, parking, public safety, public works, trash removal). Doug didn't ask, but number is not the only factor. Their interests matched against what we offer and the will to spend money to support the investment that our community makes are equally important. According to data shared by Jean Clark (Regional Tourism), tourism is the world's largest market and heritage/historical tourism is the fastest growing segment of that market. That's right up our alley. For steps, see the answer to the next question.

Alexander: The experts have the numbers but what I do know is this: Just as the citizens of Lexington seek more to do, the tourists also seek more to do. Just in the last few weeks, I've had conversations with tourists seeking something to do in the evenings after eating at the restaurants. The city may want to consider giving more attention to attracting more diverse activities, recreation, etc. in order to give tourists and

residents a variety of fun and exciting things to do.

Cox: Enough so that all our hotels and B&Bs achieve at least 90% occupancy. Let's start by getting ready for the Civil War sesquicentennial, but let's also realize that may produce a bump that won't last unless we widen our appeal beyond our historical heritage. What else do we offer? Start with tremendous natural beauty and abundant outdoor resources; continue with marvelous cultural resources, and keep on going.

10) What, if anything, should the city do to bring new businesses to town?

Harvey: I would like to see tax incentives offered to attract new businesses to the downtown area.

Elrod: We have had a director of the Rockbridge Partnership for many years. In my opinion the city should be more aggressive in making sure that the director is aggressive in coaxing new businesses to the area, and he should be held accountable for doing so. The city itself could provide incentives to new businesses where appropriate.

Page: To encourage new businesses in town, we need to maintain what we already have. The town has good relations with W&L, VMI and our local hospital these are our major employers. We have a safe, attractive town with great schools and good emergency services. The Rockbridge Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, and the Tourism Board are working to promote existing businesses and attract new ones. This is an area where there is room for improvement. The city council has moved money from the Lexington Downtown Development Association to the Chamber of Commerce to support downtown businesses. We can all help by shopping first at our downtown businesses.

Smith: I think the key to downtown development is attracting a hospitality developer to create a hotel that would attract visitors and act as a "motivator" for new business development.

Lera: Jean Clark (Regional Tourism), Sammy Moore (Chamber of Commerce), and Mike Webb (Rockbridge Partnership) have offices within a stone's throw of each other. Stand at the intersection of Washington and Randolph and you can see all three. They work together on issues of mutual impact. They have three separate boards of directors. The city can drive the collaboration among those three entities by influencing appointments to their boards and by allocating financial support. The city can and should insist on cohesive objectives among the three. This applies to a lot more than "new businesses." Beyond that, we need to scrutinize our ordinances and codes to insure they really serve the public expectation and don't create unnecessary barriers to entry or success. We need to appoint individuals to commissions and boards who follow the mandated processes and don't make decisions based on personal or personality preference. We need to enforce our ordinances to insure all businesses are playing by the rules (level playing field). Doug didn't ask but

“new businesses” has to be viewed in the context of our existing businesses. Our existing businesses currently pay business property taxes, buy business licenses, and collect sales tax. We have an equal if not greater obligation to them. They are our bread and butter.

Alexander: I see the high rents in the downtown buildings as a huge stumbling block for attracting new businesses. Businesses are not going to make “New York” profits in Lexington to pay the exorbitant “New York” rents that I hear the owners of the buildings are charging their retail tenants. Reasonable rents will help prevent empty storefronts. Attracting businesses will involve making the city attractive to a newcomer. Of course, a new business brings a family along with the business. They're looking for the same things we'd look for if we were relocating a family. Does Lexington have what it takes? We truly need to ask ourselves that question to recruit and attract new businesses.

Cox: I'm glad you finally asked. Let's look to the future by (tackling all these almost at once): (1) making sure our technological resources are more than sufficient for our global economy; (2) developing our work force to be no less capable, using the remarkable educational resources we have in unparalleled abundance; which also means (4) making sure that our public education is top-of-the-line; (5) committing to being as “green” as we can possibly be, both because it's environmentally right and also good business; (6) spreading the word that Lexington is open for business, especially business that is consistent with our small-town, history-appreciating, nature-loving heritage-which is itself (with our people) a terrific asset.

11) What, if anything, needs improvement in the city's emergency services?

Harvey: We need to heed the priorities of the 2007 Analysis of Fire-Rescue Services, performed by System Planning Corporation. Out of the 79 recommendations that came from that study, the first one states that “the county and cities should ... create a regional Department of Emergency Fire/rescue Services” I believe in cooperation, compromise and shared services with the local governments.

Elrod: Fire and rescue and our lifesaving services need improvement, largely with respect to administrative matters. I think we need to move toward a regional approach and to work with both Buena Vista and the County more effectively. This could be a very difficult thing to do, but we should try.

Page: We have skilled and dedicated emergency and fire crews. We are stretched because our city based crews are answering 60—70% of calls from outside the city limits. We need a joint city-county solution to meet the needs of the first responders and the citizens.

Smith: We need to consider more regional coordination of emergency services. I think a lot of the past

issues and future plans could be improved by creating a department level position that manages emergency services and reports to the City Manager.

Lera: Elements of this issue are in litigation. Candidates for council stating positions independent of the negotiations that are underway would not promote a “collaborative” environment. It will be better for all of us if this issue is resolved before the new city council is seated in January.

Alexander: Services have greatly improved over the years. Response times used to be an issue but as far as I know from my experiences, that is no longer a problem. When people are happy with their jobs and they have the tools and equipment necessary to perform in the best possible work environment, they will give 110%.

Cox: Make sure we have full collaboration among these services within the city, and with other local services (county, BV, and beyond).

12) Why should I vote for you instead of your opponent?

Harvey: I ask for your vote based on my experience, the fact that I am independent of local universities, I am a small business owner and understand the working population here. I have the flexibility to properly fill the duties of Mayor, and I am committed to serving the needs of the citizens of Lexington.

Elrod: 1: I know how City Council works, and learning this takes time. I have been on City Council since 2003.

2. I have held leadership positions in a wide array of organizations in the area which gives me a good understanding of our city.

3. It is always my intention to be straightforward and clear about what I am doing and why I am doing it, with respect to addressing or voting on an issue. I don't talk in circles or try to be circumspect. You will always be able to tell what my positions are on various issues if I speak to those issues.

4. I will vote in a manner consistent with what I believe is right and best for the city as a whole. I will not change positions under pressure from interested parties. When people disagree with me, I will continue to be civil to them, and hope that they will do likewise.

5. I have given a great deal of time to the city as a member of City Council and will continue to work hard to help maintain the high quality of life we currently enjoy, enhance it, and make sure all of our citizens have that opportunity.

6. I am committed to working for you and want to be the mayor of Lexington. I will take a proactive approach in making our city an even better place to live and work.

Page: Our biggest concerns over the next few years will be: supporting downtown businesses, building new schools, and replacing aging infrastructure. I seek to use my knowledge and experience to find answers to problems by working with citizens to find common ground. I try to listen

to people's concerns and then find a solution that represents the middle ground, something everyone can live with.

Smith: I volunteered (ran unopposed) for this position four years ago. I have enjoyed the experience and feel I have made a major contribution to the City of Lexington and I stand ready to continue serving, however if the voters wish to give another candidate a turn, I am sure I will find some else to fill my time!

Lera: There are five people running for three seats on the Council. You get to vote for three. So a vote for me isn't a vote against anybody else. But you should make one of your three votes a vote for me. I have the time, energy, record for community involvement, small business experience in this community, corporate budget and financial background, university work experience (staff, not faculty), and leadership experience to serve. I have a record for acting deliberately and decisively. I can and will recruit fellow citizens with the right blend of expertise and experience to fill our appointed boards and commissions. I'm retired. I own no property anywhere except my home. I have no current or past financial connection to the three largest employers in town (Washington & Lee University, The Virginia Military Institute, and Carilion Stonewall Jackson Hospital). In short, I am involved and unconflicted. And, as I've said twice above, I will ask questions and listen to the answers.

Alexander: I have had either direct or indirect contact with every department in the city and a working relationship with many of them. Because of my experience on the school board, I am informed about the budget process, how decisions are made, who to call/who to see to direct citizens to the right person or department to aid in responding to their needs. I either know a little of the history behind city matters or was a part of the history, as I've been around here so long! I was in the school system in the late 50's during segregation and in the 60's to experience integration. I was around when the town became a city, when the schools consolidated in the early 90's and when Main Street was a two-way thoroughfare, there were two anchor department stores downtown and downtown was where almost all of our needs came from. There were some great things about the past, some not so great but I feel I can provide a perspective and visualization about things that few others can provide.

Cox: I've run before for public office; this is not the same sort of competitive race (fortunately). Candidates don't really "run" so much as "stand" for city council, each offering what he or she can. So let me put it this way. My highest priority is to sustain and enhance the remarkable quality of life which Lexington enjoys. The most important means of doing so, right now, is to sustain and improve the business climate in Lexington, both supporting those we now have and also seeking enterprises that will contribute to our unique ethos. That strategy depends upon providing an environment which includes an excellent workforce, which we are especially capable of providing because of the truly outstanding depth

of educational resources we have here.

Those are glittering generalities that need to be brought down to earth; and that happens through creating, say, Kendal at Lexington. Kendal came to provide housing and care that was not otherwise available in our region, both for our own residents and those who moved here. It serves the whole community through the Borden Center for skilled nursing. It pays good wages for more than 130 full-time jobs. It also retains and expands the patronage that its residents offer to businesses, organizations, and cultural activities. And I was a part of that. Now the opportunities are different. We can become the home for new businesses that are part of the increasingly global economy, like a consultant company a young alumnus dreams of opening here to tap our intellectual resources. We can cooperate with our schools in developing programs to advance the hospitality and health care "industries" that already characterize our area-and these jobs can't be outsourced. I could go on. My point is, after a time of reflection, Lexington has already begun to move into the next stages of its future. I hope to help us do so.