

**Kemp Woods Civic League  
City Council Open Forum  
Responses submitted by Scott Matheson  
April 25, 2010**

1. The Greenbrier/Indian River area of Chesapeake is a unique district in terms of demographics and housing. An abundance of rental units and apartments has significant, and negative impact on voter turnout; clearly many renters are not vested long-term and don't participate in the political process. Conversely, a political powerhouse has developed in southern Chesapeake, where single-family residences dominate and rental units are few. Are you committed to working "at-large" and to focusing on the infrastructure of this aging district despite inherent political apathy and historically low voter turnout? How does Greenbrier/Indian River fit into your priorities?

***Response: My campaign has been largely focused on economic development—bringing more and better jobs to our City. I see the Greenbrier/Indian River area as a vital asset for our City and for the entire Hampton Roads region. Greenbrier is the largest business district in all of Hampton roads. Greenbrier offers more than 18 million square feet of commercial space and supports more than 53,000 daytime jobs. While voter apathy is a concern across the City—especially in the May elections—I don't believe voter turnout should be a factor in setting priorities for the City at large.***

2. Chesapeake charges Substantial fees to residents such as storm water, recycle and trash disposal are mandatory, yet they are not federally tax deductible. Homeowners would benefit and the city would save thousands on billing and collections if they were folded into the tax rate. Would you consider this? Why or why not?

***Response: I am generally a proponent of consolidating service billings. Consolidation often helps reduce costs to the City and our citizens. However, our waste disposal system is the #1 most expensive system in the entire country. Plus, our storm water fees have nearly tripled since inception, and are scheduled to increase annually, whether warranted or not. It would be an interesting exercise to see what our real estate tax rate would be with all these fees and surcharges rolled in, but we may find that the "consolidated" real estate tax rate would make us an unattractive option for businesses and families considering relocation.***

3. Regulations on developer funded proffers are highly political, complicated, and severely restrictive (i.e. school proffers). What is your position on proffers in general and will you support/initiate an official, transparent, public review and policy modification?

***Response: First, I support transparency for all public policies. Like business management, I believe public management should be a dynamic process that continually works to maximize human and financial resources and should promote innovation and service excellence. As part of this dynamic process, I believe public policy should be continuously reviewed. While the existing proffer policy may have been effective upon inception, I believe the concept is antiquated and should be modernized to meet the current market demands in order to keep our City competitive.***

4. Do you consider the recurring, annual stream of city revenue into the school lock-box adequate to meet Chesapeake school's growing technology and capital infrastructure needs? If you consider existing funding adequate, how would explain the poor condition and age of numerous school facilities (i.e. Crestwood Middle, Indian River Middle, Great Bridge Primary)? If you consider funding inadequate, will you initiate discussions and review options to increase or identify a new, recurrent revenue stream?

***Response: I support the lock-box concept. It is a great way to provide capital for school improvements without creating additional tax burden on our citizens. With that said, I also believe it's time for us to start thinking outside the bureaucratic box and look for new ways of generating revenue for our City. One idea of generating revenue for our schools is to employ Revenue Generation Specialists (RGS's). These associates would be responsible for creating, organizing and managing ongoing fundraising events for our schools and to establish and foster long-term corporate sponsor relationships.***

***Other ideas for generating revenue...***

***We are literally missing the boat here in Chesapeake. Each year, hundreds of yachts pass through our waterways. Why not make Chesapeake a charming port of call offering services to these high-net-worth individuals?***

***I also believe events such as the Jubilee should be revenue generating for our City. For example, Norfolk's Festevents produces an average of \$20 million per year for Norfolk businesses, with nearly \$4 million per year returning to the City in taxes, parking, etc.***

5. Everyone realizes there needs to be balance between taxes and supporting services but no one wants to feel an imbalance between assessments and tax rates. With everyone concerned about our falling home values, what is your position on balancing what we are assessed with the tax rate?

***Response: It's important to keep our real estate tax rate competitive to our regional neighbors. Families and businesses that are considering relocation will consider the cost of living as a primary factor. With that said, I also believe it's important for government to live within its means. From 2006-2008, our City enjoyed historic revenue growth. Some reports indicate budget surpluses of \$260+ million—and that was after real estate tax rate cuts. Yet, today we're unable to fully fund critical programs like public safety and education. If we had done a better job of saving and paying down debt during those prosperous times, we would be better prepared for the current recession.***

6. What is your position on growth and development for Chesapeake? How will you balance those needs while maintaining concern over our resources and natural beauty?

***Response: In my opinion, growth should not be discouraged. We need "responsible" growth in Chesapeake in order to expand the tax base so that we're able to fund critical programs. In areas of the City where growth could be accommodated, I believe we should offer families a short term real estate tax credit when meeting certain parameters. For example, according to our Planning & Development department, Deep Creek Middle is at 49% capacity. Why not offer families with middle-school-aged children a tax credit when purchasing an existing home in the Deep Creek Middle school zone? This would encourage "renewal" in areas of the City without having to expand infrastructure and create overcrowded school environments or threaten our natural areas. Finally, if a proposed expansion would create an impossible burden for our infrastructure or negatively impact our natural areas, as a member of City Council, I would not hesitate to vote "no."***

7. What is your position and plan on maintaining and/or upgrading our critical infrastructure?

***Response: In this uniquely difficult economy, funding for infrastructure maintenance/upgrades has been severely impacted. If I am privileged to serve on City Council, I will first look at the projects that are backed by state funding—these are the projects that have the best chance of advancing. I am also a proponent of private/public partnerships. The Jordan Bridge is a good example of a successful partnership, and I would look for additional opportunities of leveraging these relationships.***

8. Many other localities operate their school boards on a ward or borough system with some at large seats so that all areas of their city are represented. What are your feelings on these types of boards and why shouldn't Chesapeake be equally represented?

***Response: I am a proponent of the at-large system as it encourages elected officials to adopt a much broader view for all the citizens of Chesapeake, not just the citizens of their ward/borough.***

9. An additional High School for Chesapeake has been a topic of concern for many parents in Chesapeake. However, the funds to build the new high school need to be allocated by the City Council first. Do you support allocating the funds for a new High School even if it means raising taxes? Please elaborate.

***Response: According to the Planning & Development Department, our high school capacities currently range from 75-132%—which would normally indicate that a new High School might be warranted. However, our middle school capacities are only 49-89%— indicating a drop in future high school student population. Given the current economic environment and the data provided, I would hesitate to create any additional tax burden for our citizens. With that said, I also believe it's time for us to start thinking outside the bureaucratic box and look for new ways of generating revenue for our City (please refer to question 4 for ideas).***

***In closing, thanks to the Kemp Woods Civic League for this opportunity to participate in this innovative forum. If you believe your government should: be limited yet responsive, fiscally accountable, protect individual liberty, promote personal responsibility, work to create jobs, protect our education and public safety systems, then please vote for me, Scott Matheson, on Tuesday, May 4th!***