



**Prince William
Conservation Alliance**

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**Questions for Prince William County
Supervisor Candidates in 2015**

With responses published for community leaders throughout your district

Please respond to these seven questions and send responses to Prince William Conservation Alliance at alliance@pwconserve.org by September 24. Thank you.

Candidate Name: Rick Smith District: Chairman
Campaign Website: www.ricksmithforchair.com Party Affiliation: Dem

1. What changes, if any, would you make to the current 10 acre minimum in the rural area?

At the present time, I wouldn't make any significant changes to the 10 acre minimum in rural areas. If changes were suggested, my support would require some very strict guidelines. First, they would have to be for the purpose of bringing in businesses that could demonstrate real potential for creating high-paying jobs in Prince William County, not building more homes. Second, the environmental impacts and affect on the character of the surrounding community would have to be as minimally invasive as possible. Any decisions in this regard would require open, honest and transparent discussions with all stake holders having a seat at the table.

2. Would you support Prince William County funding for a Purchase of Development Rights to encourage commercial agriculture and preserve open space in the Rural Area?

Growing up in Prince William County and spending as much time as I have in the rural areas of our community have given me a deep appreciation for our unique character, particularly in contrast to competing jurisdictions to our north. I would certainly support the County's participation in PDR opportunities. This would have to be on a case-by-case basis, of course, considering our current funding challenges. But PDRs are definitely a useful tool in maintaining and preserving our important open spaces.

3. How would you increase commercial agricultural operations in the Rural Area, including wineries and breweries, to preserve open space?

I'd approach this in two ways. First, we have to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance reflect the importance of supporting commercial agricultural operations and that any modifications made to them reflect this as a priority. Secondly, we need to do more to not only improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our local government in working with businesses at the transactional level (i.e. permits, inspections, signage) but also actively court those interested in establishing wineries and breweries in Northern Virginia. This is a business sector with great potential, and Prince William is a perfect place for them if local government is prepared to work with them to create a value proposition that exceeds that of competing jurisdictions.

4. As the county population increases, how will you increase the acreage of public parkland for ballfields and for passive recreational activities?

Parks and recreation are a quality of life issue, and ensuring that they are available in sufficient quantity has to be a priority in land use decisions that involve adding additional housing. That, unfortunately, hasn't been the case in recent years, and the current Board has created deficits in many infrastructure areas including open space when approving new housing developments. If elected, I'll fight to ensure that any new developments approved address these needs and reduce these deficits instead of exacerbating them.

5. VRE has proposed to increase the number of trains running throughout the day, and also to extend its tracks to Gainesville/Haymarket. Which of those two options is your top priority?

This has to be looked at from the standpoint of both commuter needs and environmental impact. Any extension of VRE to the Gainesville/Haymarket area would have to be done with minimal impact on the environment and current open space. I'd also need to see real data on likely increases in ridership and potential economic growth vis-a-vis adding additional trains throughout the day before choosing new lines over expanding current capacity. There is absolutely no doubt that we need additional investment in public transportation. But it has to be done in the right way.

6. Do you support the proposed Bi-County Parkway? The Bi-County Parkway is a 10-mile highway segment of the 45-mile long corridor that would connect I-95 in Prince William County to the back of Dulles Airport in Loudoun County.

While I certainly believe that we need better transportation options in Prince William County, I don't subscribe to the notion that we can simply pave our way to prosperity. The Bi-County Parkway has gone through several iterations and may continue to do so until one emerges that meets the needs of our residents, now and in the future. For now, I'm taking a wait and see approach. But any support on my part would require assurances that it will, in fact, bring high-paying jobs to our community, improve traffic flow as opposed to creating more congestion and be as minimally invasive to homeowners and open space as possible.

7. In the update of the Economic Development Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, would you consider it a higher priority to improve rail and bus transit capacity in order to attract businesses to Prince William, or would you prefer to rezone acreage to permit more development?

Demonstrating a commitment to greater investment in public transportation must be a critical component to our economic development plan, and I would certainly prioritize this over rezoning for further development. In general, I believe we should prioritize redevelopment of existing areas throughout the County over developing new ones. There are numerous areas on the eastern end of Prince William as well as the Rt. 28 corridor that are prime candidates for mixed-use zoning. I fully support the notion of walkable communities along with better public transportation to get cars off our roads. Looking to the future of Prince William, this is exactly the type of design that the next generation is looking for in terms of living and working, and our County has to start now if we hope to remain a desirable destination in the future.