

Introduction of Kelly & Candidate: I'm Kelly Epperson with W.P.A.Q. 740 AM and I am sitting here with _____Name_____ who is running for the _____Ward_____ City Commissioner Seat in the upcoming Mount Airy Municipal Election.

Preamble: This interview is brought to you by Mount Airy Downtown, Inc. (MAD). MAD, Inc. is a 501(C)3 non-profit whose mission is to foster and stimulate economic growth and development within the City of Mount Airy's historic downtown area (specifically the defined municipal service district) through a variety of strategies and activities. MAD, Inc. is an award winning North Carolina Main Street organization committed to historic preservation-based community revitalization. The MAD, Inc. Board of Directors represents downtown property owners, business owners, residents and civic leaders. The following questions will address downtown development issues that will affect the growth of the district in the coming years. Each of the nine candidates for City Council has been invited to participate and will have an equal amount of time to answer the questions. The purpose of these interviews is to educate downtown stakeholders on the upcoming election, and to encourage the citizens of Mount Airy to vote in the City Municipal Primary on October 8th, as well as the City Municipal Election on November 5th. More information on the upcoming election can be found through the Surry County Board of Elections.

With this in mind, please respond to the following five questions...

1. The Spencer's economic development project obviously looms large and there have been many criticisms about how the city has handled this complex project. As a potential future city commissioner, you will need to decide how best to move forward. The city owns the property and the buildings that will be left after the selective demolition of unsound structures occurs this fall.

[FYI: A 65-unit apartment development is underway and scheduled to be completed by January 2020. There are plans for an event center that will open in the third quarter of 2020. This private sector investment totals approximately \$9 million to date. Private investment in the downtown district in the last six years totals approximately \$15.6 million with much of that investment occurring on the west side of Main Street. Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding has been negotiated between the City and the Piedmont Triad Regional Council for a culinary school on the Spencer's property. According to the City of Mount Airy Finance Department's updated Spencer's report given to Mount Airy Downtown on September 16th, the actual to date expenditures total approximately \$1.6 million. Total revenues realized from the Spencer's property are \$172,499. The Board of Commissioners has approved purchase orders/future expenditures totaling \$1.8 million. Of the total actual and allocated funds of \$3.5 million, the City of Mount Airy engineering staff estimates that approximately \$740,000 was for infrastructure work that the City could have done regardless of the Spencer's project. The net public investment inside of the Spencer's property right-of-way is approximately \$2.6 million.]

What specific steps do you think the city should now take to maximize the public benefit from this property, and how do you see those action steps affecting the downtown district?

2. Among the money spent on the Spencer's project, about \$740,000 wasn't spent on the actual Spencer's property. Three quarters of a million dollars paid for much-needed repairs and replacements of decades-old sewers, water lines and storm water drainage under and around Willow and Oak Street — essential infrastructure improvements needed to support existing properties whether the city bought Spencer's or not. The water lines and sewers in downtown Mount Airy are some of the oldest in the city with many areas dating back to 1905, and they are failing. Will you put repair, replacement and rehabilitation of the downtown sewer and water systems at the top of your priorities for capital improvements and if so, how should the city pay for it?

3. In 2013, Mount Airy joined the North Carolina Main Street Program and Mount Airy Downtown, Inc. was formed to manage the Main Street Four Point Approach to downtown revitalization: Organization, Economic Vitality, Design, and Promotion. In the last six years, we have seen significant growth downtown with 57 facades redone, 27 building rehabilitations, 15 public improvement projects, 68 net gain full time jobs, 45 net gain part time jobs, 27 net gain businesses, 14 business expansions, 23 housing units created, and over \$3.2 million in public investment with \$15.6 million in private investment downtown. MAD's work and goals are based on downtown economic development strategies that encourage historic preservation-based downtown revitalization. As a city commissioner, what would be your top priorities and goals for downtown over the next four years? How will those priorities support continued growth in the downtown district, which accounts for the largest concentration of property value in Mount Airy?

4. The following list of initiatives has been drawn from downtown needs and priorities identified by MAD, the North Carolina Main Street Center, and several studies that have been undertaken in recent years with tons of data, lots of maps, and many pages of citizen input (ex. Vision Mount Airy Land Use Plan, 2004 West Side Development Master Plan, 2008 Study on Spencer's Mill Complex, 2015 Study on Hotel/Convention Center Feasibility, 2015 Mount Airy Comprehensive Plan, and the Mount Airy TDA Study: Strategic Direction 2020).

Please simply react to each item on the list with either a

“thumbs up” (meaning yes, I support this initiative),

“question mark” (meaning I might support this initiative if provided more information or on a modified basis), or

“thumbs down” (meaning no, I do not support this initiative).

- a. Take stock of city property and other assets that potentially could be monetized (sold or leased).
- b. Identify infrastructure improvement needs, and implement a plan to update aging and failing infrastructure.
- c. Work with the Tourism Development Authority and other community partners to support a wayfinding plan providing updated signage for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

- d. Undertake a more detailed market analysis to better understand our retail trade area and identify growth opportunities that could be targeted.
 - e. Develop a better, more comprehensive parking plan to address the chronic shortage of downtown parking.
 - f. Work with the community college and the public schools to promote and provide vocational and trade education and training.
 - g. Provide greater support for a permanent farmers market.
 - h. Update streetscapes, including burying overhead powerlines.
 - i. Develop public spaces, including pocket parks and a town commons.
 - j. Continue greenway connections or expansions through the downtown area.
 - k. Continue to support festivals and other events sponsored by non-profit civic organizations.
5. In closing, please briefly elaborate on any of these topics and provide a closing comment (150 words or less and less than one minute).