

2016 Questionnaire for Suffolk Mayor and City Council Candidates
For the Chesapeake Bay Group of the Sierra Club

Candidate's Name: *Brian C. Bass*

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District: *Holy Neck*

Please answer the following questions, expanding your responses as much as desired.
Return to Marjorie Leach-Parker, email: mleachparker@yahoo.com by September 18, 2016.

If any questions, you are welcome to contact me by email or by phone at 757-581-6365.
Thank you for your participation.

Global Climate Change

1. The Sierra Club rates climate change as a top priority, and encourages cities, towns, and counties to adopt measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) to avoid its most severe impacts. As we all have observed, climate changes include sea level rise, more severe storms, longer droughts, melting of ice caps, dying of coral reefs, and beetle infestation destroying huge areas of forests.

The Union of Concerned Scientists states that the 12 warmest years on record have occurred since 1998, and every one of the past 35 years has been warmer than the 20th century average. The National Ocean Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and NASA reported that the year 2015 was the hottest on record in 136 years of record keeping.

http://www.mercurynews.com/science/ci_29408618/2015-hottest-year-record

An important step to reduce GHG emissions is by first establishing a base line inventory. Several Virginia localities are working with organizations such as ICLEI to set up their inventory and action plans to reduce emissions, good for the earth and good for cutting energy costs. ICLEI is an international organization which helps local governments implement their commitments to sustainability, providing training, consultations and local design.

The state has the Virginia Municipal League's Green Government Challenge; other neighboring localities are participating on a yearly basis. Participation is a voluntary way to map out a plan of action.

Are you aware of the Virginia Municipal League's Green Government Challenge?

Yes, the Virginia Municipal League's Go Green Virginia initiative (GoGreenVa) recognizes that communities need to take innovative steps to reduce energy usage and promote sustainability. Most importantly, members of local governments are urged to participate in a friendly competition known as the Green Government Challenge. The "Challenge" is designed to encourage implementation of specific environmental policies and practical actions that not only reduce carbon emissions, but can save local governments money.

2. We are witnessing a pronounced sea level rise in the Hampton Roads area, second only in the US to New Orleans. There is an important effort underway in Hampton Roads to adapt to sea level rise with major capital investments. Unfortunately, adaptation cannot keep up with rising seas unless we begin to reduce carbon pollution significantly. A number of cities across our nation, large and small, such as San Diego, CA, and Burlington, VT, are pledging to transition to 100% renewable energy by or before 2050.

Will you support the city in developing a plan to move to 100% renewable energy by 2050, using programs like the Local Governments for Sustainability and the Compact of mayors?

Yes, I have attached a paper that I wrote while a student attending Ashford University majoring in Environmental Studies about ways government can help encourage and support alternative energy, while explaining how and where each would work the best.



Alternative_Energy_
Resource.docx

<http://www.iclei.org/>

<https://www.compactofmayors.org/>

Water, Wetlands, Land Use

3. The Chesapeake Bay is still sick, and needs a passing grade of 70% out of 100%, calculated by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) to represent a Bay coming back to health. In recent years we have seen fish consumption advisories, due to toxic contamination; a huge summer “dead zone” with low oxygen levels; pollution from sewage overflows and agricultural runoff; and heavy sediment levels resulting in loss of important underwater grasses.

In 2012, the Bay’s health went up 4 points to 32%, showing that advocacy brings good results. For example, after implementing regulations that limit catching female crabs, there has been an increase in the crab population. However, in 2014, the number remained at 32%, rated a D+.

The EPA and the Commonwealth of Virginia have a plan of action to finally restore the Bay, with new limits on phosphorous nitrogen and sediment loadings, which make up the total maximum daily loads (TMDLs). Each locality must do its part to comply in order for the Bay to recover, for the fisheries to recover, and for the citizens to enjoy the waters, without fear of incurring an illness.

As an elected official, will you support and continue to comply with the new regulations, to include storm water regulations, which will bring the Bay back to sustainable health?

Yes, "The Chesapeake and its watershed are one large system, and you have to look at problems on that level," says Ann Swanson, executive director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission, a tri-state legislative body. "If you're managing striped bass, you have to look at the juvenile blue crabs that they eat. And if you care about blue crabs, you'd be crazy if you didn't look at the state of sea grasses" and so on. It's on this ecosystem basis that the

three states, the district and the federal government set new goals this summer for the restoration of the bay. Like many bays and seas around the world, the Chesapeake has been overwhelmed by the activities of humans along its shores. Fishing, channel dredging, clear-cutting, and industrial pollution all played a role. The most severe factor has been nutrient pollution - a deluge of sewage, livestock waste, and fertilizer run-off from cities, suburban homes, and agriculture. The nutrients trigger massive algae blooms and can create huge "dead zones" of oxygen-less water. Fish, crabs, and other organisms must abandon such areas or perish. The algae also snuff out sea grasses - the habitat of blue crabs and other creatures - by blocking out sunlight. Last year, the Chesapeake gained 4,600 acres of sea grasses, but they remain at about one-tenth of their historical peak of 600,000 acres. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation has been planting stands of the grasses with some success, but cloudy brown water limits recovery. In closing there are paths that can be taken to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay, but the planning and cost is one that must be taken to ensure the vitality of this great estuary (Woodard, 2000).

Woodard, C. (2000, August 31). Saving the Chesapeake. *Christian Science Monitor*. p. 13.

4. We received a sobering lesson with hurricane Katrina that devastated New Orleans in August of 2005 and hurricane Sandy in 2012. Science predicts more severe weather patterns, as climate change worsens. Wetlands are vital in protecting our city during severe storm events, yet we are losing our natural wetlands to development.

The City's Wetlands Board has jurisdiction for non-vegetated wetlands that lie between mean low water and mean high water, and for vegetated wetlands, from mean low water to an elevation one and one-half times the mean tide range.

<http://www.suffolkva.us/pcd/wetlands/wetlands-board/>

Wetlands protect us from storm surges, in addition to their other important functions. Hardened shorelines, made with rip rap and bulkheads do the opposite. Residents who live adjacent to waterways and developers who may wish to build near wetlands can benefit from creating living shorelines. The costs of creating a living shoreline are less and the results are more attractive and more in keeping with nature. Made from oyster shells, sand, marsh grasses, or other materials, they prevent erosion and provide good habitat for wildlife and marine life.

Will you support efforts to ensure wetlands are protected?

What suggestions do you have on retaining our wetlands in Hampton Roads?

Yes, the main focus should be protection. Where protection is not a viable option replacement or buy back of wetlands can have a positive impact that offsets the destruction of wetlands.

5. The state requires a 100-foot buffer adjacent to the Bay and its tributaries for any new construction, yet development is continually allowed, encroaching into this important buffer, using loopholes in the law. One loophole, called "intensely developed areas" or IDAs, would further eliminate natural shoreline protection. As sea levels rise and the land in Hampton Roads continues

to subside, this loss of elevation of the land will allow for inundation of our coasts, cutting into the buffers.

Will you strictly enforce a 100-foot buffer?

Will you support regulations to require some buildings to be placed back even further from the buffer area?

Will you oppose development plans that would eliminate or severely diminish the natural buffers?

Each site is different and requires investigation on the impact to the shoreline and tributaries. Some structures could be closer and some farther away, depending on an impact study that makes this determination. If the study shows severe damage occurs, then I would oppose development to that area.

Natural Gas – Pipelines

6. The latest federal report on measures being taken to ensure the safety of natural gas pipelines across the United States raises serious concerns. Catastrophic, and fatal, failures such as the [2010 explosion of a Pacific Gas & Electric gas transmission line in San Bruno, California](#) (CA) can happen.

Please explain your position on proposed pipeline

I will refer back to my paper I shared with you earlier about alternative energy. There are many other ways we can supply power that do not have such a negative impact on so many ecosystems.

Clean Water Resources

7. Clean water in Suffolk supports commercial and recreational fisheries, tourism, and residents' quality of life. The Chesapeake Bay Blueprint (also known as the BAY TMDLs) is a multi-state legal program, with a goal to turn around the poor health of the waterways. In order to bring back health to Suffolk's waterways, more improvements are needed to reduce nutrients, sediments and other pollution. Suffolk must create and follow an action plan, to be incrementally updated every two years.

Other localities have supported efforts by the state legislature to fund local storm water improvement projects, which in part help localities meet their Chesapeake Bay TMDL goals.

How and to what degree would you advocate for such financial resources?

Will you support Suffolk's action plan? Please include details.

Will you work to maintain fisheries in the city, and if needed put a hold on land disturbances that would compromise these fisheries?

I would push for better use of the stormwater funds the City collects to address ways to meet the TMDL goal and the action plan. The action plan is something I would like

to be personally involved with to ensure compliance with the Department of Environmental Quality and the Environmental Protections Agency.

With proper monitoring, some land disturbance may initially have a negative impact. The long term benefit outweighs the negative with the goal to maintain and exceed fishery populations. However, if disturbance has an overall negative impact disturbance would not be permitted.

Tree Cover

8. The role trees play in storm water management and urban flooding abatement is of particular value. Trees enhance water quality at a fraction of the cost of storm water infrastructure. Trees remove pollutants, including suspended solids and phosphorus runoff. Studies show that people find that trees in central business districts make these spaces more pleasant, and people are generally healthier and happier with regular access to more natural landscaping in urban environments.

Are you in favor of a tree ordinance, which would prevent developers from clear-cutting building sides, now the common practice?

Are you in favor of increasing the tree canopy in Suffolk with programs such as Tree City USA, or a similar program?

From a “save the tree” perspective yes, but understand that a developer has to submit a comprehensive plan that addresses replacing a percentage of the vegetation per the stormwater development planning and the planning and zoning department ordinances.

Tree canopy is good where applicable, but not in places they have a negative impact on the property owner. For example, the maintenance on trees is expensive yearly and long term. Trees can block the view of businesses and as trees grow they can cause extensive property damage (ex. cracked and eroded roads, driveways, parking lots and sidewalks)

Air Quality

9. Automobile emissions account for about 50% of air pollution in our area. Some ways to reduce emissions are stricter vehicle inspections, creating safe pedestrian walkways and bikeways, and building light rail systems as an alternative to widening existing roadways.

A third crossing over the Hampton Roads harbor has recently been discussed and appears to be in the plans.

As plans continue, do you support light rail/commuter rail as well as freight rail to provide a connection with the Peninsula?

I do support the idea, but I want to see a comprehensive plan that shows the regional impact. From cost to build the infrastructure to the savings/advantage versus other means (ex. Superhighway/beltway for Hampton Roads)

General

10. What environmental issue is of greatest concern to you? What do you recommend to address the problem?

My greatest concern is the impact of population growth on the environment. I recommend using technology to simulate the growth to provide insight on which area will be most affected by the growth and how to manage the growth with minimal impact on the environment.

11. What actions have you taken in support of environmental protection?

My passion is to promote, sustain, and protect the environment. My degree has been a resource that I have used in multiple ways to help protect and enhance the environment. I would love to discuss this in depth when we meet.