

Joe Bowser
Answers to the People Alliance Questionnaire
2008 County Commission Race

1. As a commissioner, I would have worked with the city and helped them in anyway I could to address this critical issue. I believe this is an issue that we really have to address for today and the future. One specific thing I would have done is to encourage the city to have adopted policies sooner to protect this vital resource for the people. It had become obvious to me (several years ago) that we were not getting the rains necessary to replenish our water; therefore, I would have keep a watchful eye on the lakes and acted sooner to end waste and non vital uses. Lastly, since our lake dried to the point it did, I would have encouraged the city to consider dredging in preparations for future droughts. We should not let money get in the way of such an effort even if it meant a penny more on the tax rate.

2. I believe a Bio Facility that may be dangerous to people should only be located in areas that are totally remote. Our community is too dense to have any facility located here to study the impact of dangerous viruses and diseases. Until our public officials prove to the people there is no danger from this, we should stand against it.

3. --For children to be ready for and succeed in school, Durham must address the economic and social conditions of our children. I would work with parents and caretakers to improve this area.

--For a healthy environment, we must reduce waste and pollution, provide better housing and social outlets and reduce poverty.

--We must include a larger portion of our people in the activities of our community, and show all citizens that we care about them and want them to be a part of their community. We should encourage all citizens to apply for service to boards and appoint them whether they are connected or not.

--Our housing is one of the most expensive in the state, and at the same time the population here has one of the lowest incomes and highest poverty rates. We have little or no control over the cost of housing here, but government can influence salaries and hiring to help close the huge gap between paychecks and the cost of housing.

--Our biggest challenge to a prosperous economy is getting our citizens into our better paying jobs. I would meet with and simply ask employers to give our people a chance at better paying jobs-especially our citizens with a College or Technical Education.

--To make our citizens healthy, we need to address a multitude of issues such as economics, life styles, health care providers and affordable health care. I would seek better funding from the State and Federal Governments to assist us in meeting this goal.

--Durham must address the gang problem, high school dropout, Judicial System and illegal guns on the streets in order to champion citizen's safety. I would begin to address this problem by meeting with known gang members and high school dropouts in order to get and understanding of why this is happening, along with meeting with judicial personnel to encourage stricter punishment-where warranted.

--Durham must do a better job enforcing housing codes-especially rental properties. I would use my influence as a commissioner to get the various agencies to do a better job on enforcement.

4. The issues in question 3 apply to all who live in our community. If you live here you are a citizen of Durham County whether temporary or permanent: therefore, all challenges in question 3 apply. As for me, one policy covers all of us.

5. I believe that our City and County Governments are working well together now. As with any two or more groups of people working together, you are going to have disagreements. When discord does occur, I believe our officials quickly reason with each other so that the people's business can continue. At present, I do favor merger of law enforcement. The obstacle is convincing the city to give up the Police Department. The Sheriff is a State Mandated position so it can not be dissolved.

6. We should have agreements with our two hospitals which guarantee treatment of these citizens. We need a plan in place that tracks our most mentally ill to be sure they are staying on their medications. We also need to start advocating a return to our previous state supported Mental Health System.

7. I do not favor either. I think they both can be regressive and hurt the neediest citizens among us. I feel that revenues should be raised through higher property taxes- which guarantee that those who can pay more pay more. We must remember that every penny of property tax increase brings in over 2 million dollars in revenue.

8. I do support increase in mass transit and favors rail. I believe we should have had our trains up and running by now using existing rail lines. I think the current rental car tax and registration vehicle tax will support what we need to do.

9. I do support incentives to lure companies to our community. I do believe that the jobs these companies bring to the area should go to our people first. What is the benefit to us if the jobs do not? These companies pay taxes (most of the time county only), but we have to provide services to them that offset a large portion of taxes paid. If our people were able to bring the majority of the pay checks into our community, we would get a big financial benefit. It would increase our tax base through higher property ownership and through a larger sales tax return. It also will enhance the lives of our people which will reduce the need for public and private assistance. Poverty will go down and household income will go up. Less number of children will go to school hungry and will need free or reduced lunches at school. I will support a policy that requires a company to honor such a policy if they receive tax incentives to come here. We have a large number of our citizens working in temporary jobs (that they will never become permanent in), sales jobs and other unskilled jobs that do not match their training and education. Many of our brightest people-especially the young-leave here for employment that matches their training.

10. Making sure land is preserved for business development and balancing land use between business and residential. I would address this by supporting present land use policies.