

Resident-led redevelopment

Sen. Tim Kaine visits Southwood Mobile Home Park

By Catie Ratliff

Sen. Tim Kaine visited Southwood Mobile Home Park to tour the redevelopment site and meet with residents and Habitat for Humanity on April 21.

Located just south of Charlottesville, the Southwood community is home to more than 1,500 people, and spans over 100 acres. After experiencing extreme sewage problems and pressures from law enforcement, Southwood's previous owner sold the property to Habitat for Humanity of Greater Charlottesville in 2007.

Since the purchase, Habitat has worked in collaboration with residents to redevelop the area with minimal displacement. By moving in phases, residents have been able to stay in their homes during the development.

Amid the ongoing construction, the neighborhood continues to thrive. The renovated Boys & Girls Club sits at the heart of the community, and multiple residents run businesses from their trailers and in the green area surrounding the mobile home park. Many families have lived at Southwood for decades; even temporarily relocating residents outside of the park would disrupt their lives and the community.

"It's almost never the same people who come back, who got displaced," Kaine said while touring Phase I of the construction. The senator praised the redevelopment process at Southwood: "The model here is in this sizable project, to do it in phases, where you never have to displace anyone."

Housing has been a major focus of Kaine's political agenda since the beginning of his career. As a former fair housing attorney,



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Sen. Tim Kaine spoke with development leaders at Southwood Mobile Home Park.

Kaine has decades of experience in the field, and is a longtime champion of affordable housing. At Southwood, the senator was able to see direct results of his housing policies and hard-won federal funding.

During his visit, Kaine spoke with residents and Habitat for Humanity leaders in Spanish and English. One Southwood resident, a leader in the development, met with Kaine at the entryway to her nearly completed new home. Tearfully, she spoke about how the project has allowed her and her family the opportunity to obtain their dreams of homeownership.

"The most impressive thing is talking to the residents about the way they have tried to

design this and then work with the county officials to make it happen," Kaine said. "Again and again they were talking about 'sueños': You have enabled us to achieve our dreams."

Habitat for Humanity's work at Southwood is remarkable for its model of redevelopment. Instead of a traditional path, which presents a plan to the city with minimal community input, Southwood's residents have been deeply involved in their neighborhood's improvement since the beginning. The resident-led model of redevelopment demonstrates the potential of non-traditional housing projects.

Unlike a majority of affordable housing projects, Habitat for Humanity is focusing on

constructing houses rather than apartments at Southwood. This has allowed residents to select the design of their homes, and provides an accessible pathway to homeownership.

Kaine said it was this unique emphasis on homeownership that drove his visit as he works on another housing bill in the Senate. There are a multitude of state and federally subsidized apartment programs, but a lack of affordable housing efforts that provide a road to ownership.

Locally, rising home prices and a major lack of affordable housing has created a housing crisis. While the city and county have taken steps to improve the situation, a lack of appropriations continues to undermine efforts. Despite the pressing need for affordable housing and resources for lower income residents, projects like the Pathways Community Resource Helpline have run out of funding (see p. 11).

Beyond Charlottesville, housing is a major issue in Virginia and the United States. "As I was traveling around Virginia 10 years ago, housing would be in the top 10 issues, but not the top five," Kaine said. "As I travel around Virginia now, housing is almost always in the top three."

"I think what's [going to] be an example about this project for others is this resident-led design," Kaine said. "And the fact that the county officials were willing ... to go with that, and learn and do it."

Although Southwood's circumstances are unique, Kaine believes the neighborhood highlights the merit and importance of community driven and responsive redevelopment. "I think other counties and cities can do the same thing." ☺

"Again and again they were talking about 'sueños': You have enabled us to achieve our dreams."

SEN. TIM KAINE

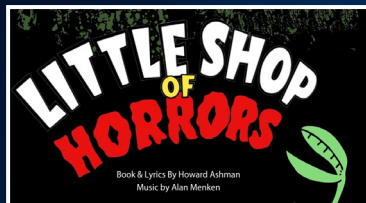
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Looking forward

Candidates defeated in the June primary prepare for the future

By Catie Ratliff
reporter@c-ville.com

Results of the June 2023 primary elections have been finalized. And while the winners are preparing for the November 7 general election, the defeated candidates are thinking about next steps.

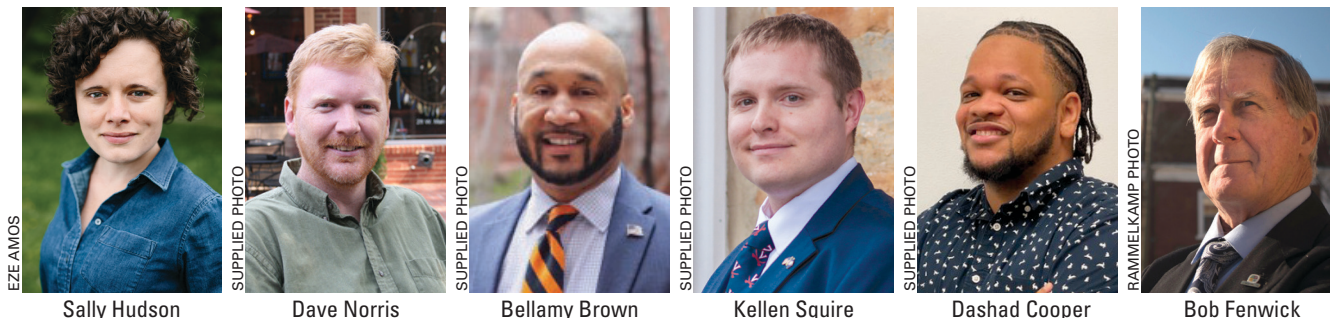
The most competitive primary race was between state Sen. Creigh Deeds and House of Delegates Rep. Sally Hudson for the newly redrawn Senate District 11. Hudson, who lost by only 519 votes to the longtime incumbent, says she remains optimistic about Virginia's future.

"Though we came up short in our election, I'm thrilled by the results statewide," Hudson says. "The first fair maps in Virginia history made competitive elections possible across the commonwealth, and a new wave of Virginia leaders is now headed to the Senate. We'll all be better served by the diverse range of perspectives they're bringing to Richmond."

Hudson will leave office at the end of her current term, but she's not bowing out of Charlottesville politics. "I'm looking forward to finishing out my term as delegate and then finding my next call to service," she says. "There's no shortage of good work to be done, and our community is blessed with energetic leaders digging in on every front."

In the House of Delegates District 54 race, newcomer Katrina Callsen came out ahead of former Charlottesville mayor Dave Norris and former Police Civilian Oversight Board chair Bellamy Brown.

While he believes there is still work to be done, Norris is returning to retirement fol-



lowing his defeat in the primary. "I came out of political retirement to run for office in large part because my family, and count-

less other families both locally and statewide, have been devastated by the abject failures of Virginia's mental health system, and I wanted to be part of fixing that," he says. "I am happily now re-retired from politics but hopefully my candidacy helped to shed at least a little light on the need for a dramatic overhaul of that seriously broken system."

Unlike Norris, Brown is not leaving Charlottesville politics following the June 20 election. On top of campaigning in other key Virginia races this November, he's already looking toward the 2025 primary elections, when he plans to run again.

"I think the Black community is still not fully represented, so I want to continue to amplify that work," he says. "I'm gonna do that work, even if I'm not in the General Assembly at this point, and that's to continue to emphasize public safety and mitigating against gun violence, to do the best that we can to find areas to work on advancing women's reproductive rights, and championing school funding and supporting our teachers."

In District 55, residents of Albemarle, Louisa, and Fluvanna elected Amy Laufer over Kellen Squire. After a contentious campaign, Squire does not plan to make another run.

"My plan was only to run, at max, until the next redistricting cycle, and then get out of the way for the next generation," says Squire. "I gave it a shot—the most individual donations in primary history, never lied, never went negative—and thanks to the folks who stood with us we did better in the face of weaponized disinformation than anyone could've expected."

Squire also experienced some personal hardships during the campaign, including a cancer diagnosis. "I spent a good chunk of time [in] April discussing with both the local party and state party in Richmond that I might have to bow out and endorse my opponent after my cancer diagnosis because of the very real risk I might need to get lymph nodes taken out and start on chemotherapy," he says.

Now that the election is over, Squire is celebrating both his campaign and being cancer free. "I have no regrets and no heartburn at all," he says. "I appreciate everyone's support, particularly the elected officials and activists who reached out after the election. I think the future belongs to folks like Natalie Oschrin, Mike Pruitt, Jerrod Smith, and other up-and-comers like them."

In the city, incumbents Michael Payne and Mayor Lloyd Snook retained their seats on council. Competition for the third City Council seat was fierce, with Orschrin beating Dashad Cooper and Bob Fenwick. Neither Cooper nor Fenwick responded to a request for comment by press time. ☎

By the numbers

Democrats turned out in droves for the primaries, with several close races.

State Senate District 11

Creigh Deeds 50.97 percent
Sally Hudson 49.03 percent

House of Delegates District 54

Katrina Callsen 46.92 percent
Dave Norris 33.90 percent
Bellamy Brown 19.18 percent

House of Delegates District 55

Amy Laufer 69.70 percent
Kellen Squire 30.30 percent

Charlottesville City Council

Natalie Oschrin 26.42 percent
Michael Payne 25.29 percent
Lloyd Snook 23.16 percent
Dashad Cooper 15.35 percent
Bob Fenwick 9.78 percent

"The first fair maps in Virginia history made competitive elections possible across the commonwealth, and a new wave of Virginia leaders is now headed to the Senate. We'll all be better served by the diverse range of perspectives they're bringing to Richmond." REP SALLY HUDSON

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NEWS



*Leaving
through*
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IN BRIEF

Keyes found guilty

After a three-day trial, and a few hours of deliberation, a Charlottesville jury found Tadashi Keyes guilty on September 28 of first degree murder and use of a firearm in the commission of a felony. The victim, 36-year-old Eldridge Smith, died on January 28, 2023, after being shot in his vehicle. Smith was a member of B.U.C.K. Squad, a local gun violence interruption group, and a motive for the shooting was not made clear by either the defense or prosecution. Keyes’ sentencing is scheduled for January 24, 2024, with a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Open school board seat

Applications for the Albemarle County School Board Rio Magisterial District seat are open through Friday, October 13. The vacancy is the result of Katrina Callsen’s resignation to focus on her likely election to the Virginia House of Delegates. Interviews of applicants will be conducted at a special school board public meeting later this month, with a meeting on the appointment set for November 9.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Voting deadlines

Election day is Tuesday, November 7, and several deadlines are approaching. Virginia residents have until October 16 to register to vote or update an existing registration. Same-day voter registration is available through November 7, but will require the use of a provisional ballot. For those looking to vote by mail, the deadline to request a ballot is October 27. More information about the election can be found at elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/calendars-schedules/upcoming-elections.html

No curfew

Market Street Park to remain open 24/7



EZE AMOS

Since the 11pm curfew was lifted, many tents have been pitched in Market Street Park.

By **Catie Ratliff**
reporter@c-ville.com

Tents popped up in Market Street Park last week after City Manager Sam Sanders lifted an 11pm curfew, a move he made in response to allegations of police misconduct and discrimination against the city’s unhoused Black population. At a September 28 press conference, Charlottesville Police Chief Michael Kochis said the allegations were not accurate, and the police department’s investigation had been resolved.

Prior to Sanders lifting the curfew, officers were often called to speak with people setting up tents and staying in the park after hours. It was during these calls that it was alleged that officers were instructing only unhoused

people of color to leave the park, and that a Black unhoused man was kicked by police.

“One of the officers kicked the young man who was sitting here, his name was Key Marcus,” said Deidre Gilmore at the September 18 City Council meeting. “He was trying to wake him up, but instead of gently touching or just maybe using a nightstick, he decided to kick him.”

Gilmore’s concerns were echoed by other advocates during public comment at the council meeting. Though no formal complaints were filed against the CPD, Kochis consulted with the commonwealth’s attorney and opened an administrative investigation into the interactions.

“The City of Charlottesville takes these allegations seriously, and Chief Kochis and

I will remain focused on maintaining positive interactions with all of our officers,” said Sanders on September 21, when he announced that the park would be open 24/7. “I want the city to be a catalyst for change in addressing housing insecurity and homelessness, which is why I am assembling my team to build a long-term strategy.”

The investigation lasted a week, after which the department released body camera footage of two specific incidents.

The first video shows the September 12 arrest of Roscoe Boxley, an unhoused Black man who was staying in the park. When told by officers he would need to leave before 11pm, Boxley set up a chair on the

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“We don’t want to be in the park. It just so happened to be the space of safety.” ROSCOE BOXLEY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

walkway to protest, and said he would not leave unless arrested.

“After 11pm, when the park closed, the officer advised [Boxley] that he could avoid being arrested if he would just leave the park like everyone else was,” says Kochis. “The individual refused to leave the park at that time. He was arrested without incident.”

In addition to trespassing, Boxley was served with a felony warrant for probation violation.

“As soon as I was awakened, I made up my mind at that point that I was going to protest,” says Boxley. “I had already made a sign.”

Footage from September 16 shows officers waking up people sleeping in the park and telling them to leave. Kochis says the officers noticed that a man they had just spoken to had gone back to sleep. “Officers attempted to wake him up again, but received no response. At this point, one of the officers touched the heel of the person’s foot with his own foot to wake him up. He woke up, he eventually packed his stuff, and left the park.”

After a review of the investigation, Kochis concluded that allegations of police violence and discrimination against unhoused people at the park were “unfounded and simply did not occur.”

“Responding to calls involving the unhoused are complex and multifaceted,” says Kochis. “As such, I have ordered the review of our training protocols as they relate to the handling of calls for service involving the unhoused.”

Despite the investigation’s findings, some remain disappointed in the police response. “No matter what the police do, they never find anything wrong,” says Gilmore. “I know what a kick is. You could have touched him with your nightstick. You don’t put your feet on your dog.”

“When we spoke at City Council ... I was just going by what I heard,” says Darryl Jones. “He did get kicked from what I saw in that video. And that’s what I didn’t like, where they tried to dress it up and say he lightly tapped him. I don’t care, you shouldn’t have put your foot down there.”

Boxley no longer lives in the park, as part of a court order, but he says the unhoused people pitching tents in the park are only a “symptom” of a larger problem.

“We don’t want to be in the park. It just so happened to be the space of safety,” Boxley says. “Nobody wants to see a bunch of racist people taking pictures because they miss that statue. We don’t want to be nobody’s circus act. This is not a village, this is some people hav[ing] a hard time trying to get attention. They[re] trying to get some help.”

The city has recently received numerous messages about the conditions in Market Street Park, resources for the unhoused, and safety concerns. And after a CPD request for information following a stabbing in the park, city councilors and Sand-



EZE AMOS

Charlotteville Police Chief Michael Kochis expressed frustration with the city’s limited resources for the unhoused.

ers have received hundreds of emails calling for the reinstatement of the park’s curfew or immediate action on the homelessness crisis.

Reverend Alex Joyner, pastor at First United Methodist Church, has witnessed the expanding homelessness crisis firsthand. While he knows there is no simple solution, he is optimistic about expanding resources to meet the growing need. “It’s such a complex problem that involves affordable housing and involves mental health and involves access to services,” he says. “Enforcing the curfew might move the problem, but it doesn’t come to the ultimate solution.”

Sanders explained his decision to open Market Street Park at the October 2 City Council meeting. “I do not do knee-jerk reactions. I strive to solve problems, not just identify them and talk about them at the surface,” he said. “I did not decide to lift the closing hours of Market Street Park under duress or without regard for our police department.”

Sanders, who acknowledges the complexity of helping Charlotteville’s unhoused population, outlined the current state of an action plan, including immediate items of determining logistics for expanding overnight shelter availability. “We are in conversation with PACEM [People and Congregations Engaged in Ministry] to see if it’s possible to open the shelter early,” he said.

The city seems to be taking action to help the unhoused population, but the situation and police response to calls involving homeless individuals remains complex. “When we are called, it’s typically because multiple systems have failed these communities,” says Kochis. “We’re not always best suited to deal with those, but we have to answer the call.”

For now, Market Street Park remains open around the clock. ©

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