



October 2022
A supplement to

The News Reporter



ELECTION 2022

VOTE



Your guide to know the candidates



Early voting begins today; here's where and when you can vote

By **JOSEPH WILLIAMS**
josephwilliams@nrcolumbus.com

Today is the first day of one-stop early voting for the general election. Beginning today, Columbus County voters will have an early opportunity to cast their ballots for races from sheriff to school board until Sunday, Nov. 5.

Election Day is Nov. 8.

The deadline to register to vote on Election Day was Oct. 14. However, during the early voting period (from Oct. 20 to Nov. 5), citizens can register and vote at the same time in a “one-stop” process at one of the five available polling places open, listed below.

Where you can vote early

You will have five sites available to vote at during one-stop early voting. The early voting locations are as follows:

- Columbus County Board of Elections, located at 2586 James B. White Highway, N., Building B, Whiteville. The office entrance faces Inman Lake Road;
- Chadbourn Municipal Annex, located at 208 E. 1st Ave., Chadbourn;
- Tabor City Courthouse, located at 110 W. 4th St., Tabor City;
- Ransom Event Center, located at 2696 General Howe Rd., Riegelwood; and
- Fair Bluff Fire and Rescue Department, located at 152 Main St., Fair Bluff.

When you can vote early

The dates and times you can cast early ballots are:

- Thursday, Oct. 20, to Friday, Oct. 21 (8 a.m.–7:30 p.m.)
- There will be no early voting on Saturday, Oct. 22.
- Sunday, Oct. 23 (1 p.m.–5 p.m.)
- Monday, Oct. 24, to Friday, Oct. 28 (8 a.m.–7:30 p.m.)
- There will be no early voting on Saturday, Oct. 29, or Sunday, Oct. 30.
- Monday, Oct. 31, to Friday, Nov. 4 (8 a.m.–7:30 p.m.)
- Saturday, Nov. 5 (8 a.m.–3 p.m.)

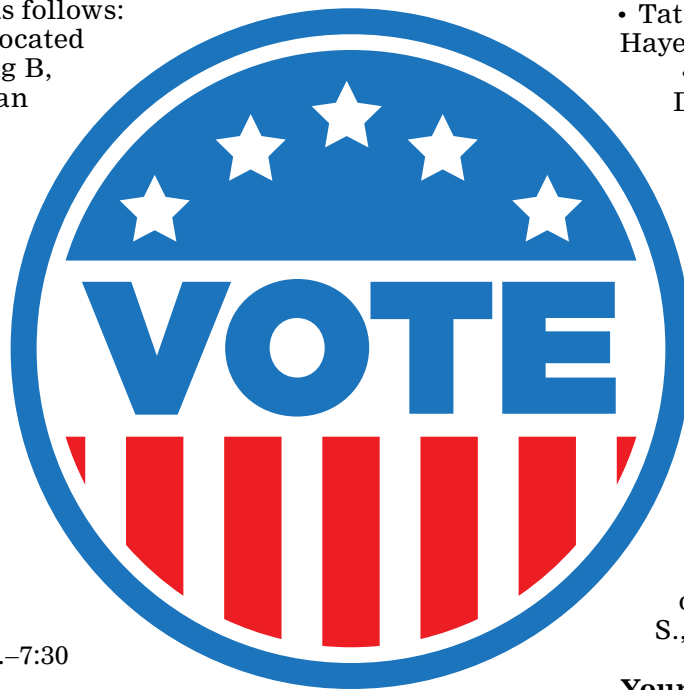
Election Day

If you plan to vote on Election Day, please arrive at your designated polling place on Nov. 8 between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. All polling places open in Columbus County on Election Day are listed as follows:

- Bogue Precinct, Hallsboro Fire Department, located at 753 Hallsboro Rd., S., Hallsboro;
- Bolton Precinct, Bolton Fire Department, located at 225 9th St., Bolton;
- Bug Hill Precinct, Guideway Elementary Cafeteria, located at 11570 Swamp Fox Hwy., E., Tabor City;
- Cerro Gordo Precinct, Cerro Gordo Town Hall, located at 84 Cherry St., Cerro Gordo;
- Chadbourn Precinct, Chadbourn Municipal Annex, located 208 E. 1st Ave., Chadbourn;
- Cherry Bluff Precinct, Fair Bluff Fire and Rescue Department, lo-

cated at 152 Main St., Fair Bluff;

- Lees SE Precinct, Old Dock Community Building, located at 12820 New Britton Hwy., E., Nakina;
- Nakina Precinct, Nakina Bug Hill Senior Center, located at 11300 Seven Creeks Hwy., Nakina;
- North Lees Precinct, Pleasant Plains Baptist Church, located at 61 Pleasant Plains Church Rd., Whiteville;
- NW Whiteville Precinct, North Whiteville Fire Department, 747 Peacock Rd., Whiteville;
- Ransom Precinct, Ransom Event Center, 2696 General Howe Hwy., Riegelwood;
- South Whiteville Precinct, Abundant Life Church, 5384 James B. White Hwy., S., Whiteville;
- South Williams Precinct, Tabor City Courthouse, located at 110 W. 4th St., Tabor City;
- Tatum Precinct, WOW Lodge 1088, located at 6847 Hayes Lennon Hwy., Evergreen;
- Waccamaw Precinct, Lake Waccamaw Fire Department, located at 203 Flemington Dr., Lake Waccamaw
- Welches Creek Precinct, Welches Creek Fire Department, located at 45 Millie-Christine Rd., Whiteville;
- West Whiteville Precinct, American Legion Post 137, located at 76 Legion Dr., Whiteville;
- Whiteville 1 Precinct, Whiteville Rescue Unit Building, located at 106 Flowers Pridgen Dr., Whiteville;
- Whiteville 2 Precinct, Vineland Station Depot, located at 701 E. Main St., Whiteville;
- Williams 1 Precinct, Beaverdam Original Freewill Baptist Church, located at 2665 Beaverdam Rd., Chadbourn; and
- Williams 2 Precinct, Lebanon United Methodist Church, located at 9237 James B. White Hwy., S., Whiteville.



Your sample ballot, your precinct location

To access the ballot you'll see in the voting booth, go to www.ncsbe.gov/voting/sample-ballot.

Click the “Launch the Voter Search” button and then fill out the required information. Once completed, click the “Search” button.

You'll then be directed to another page. There may be people who share a similar name with yours. Find your full legal name and make sure that your city, state and zipcode correspond with your place of residence.

Click on the hyperlinked name in blue that corresponds with your personal information. You will be brought to a new page.

In addition to your sample ballot, on this page you can also find your designated voting precinct. About midway down the page is the “Your voting locations” section. There, you can find your precinct name, name of the organization hosting the polling as well as its address.

Immediately below that section is one titled “Your sample ballot.” Find the column to the right that reads “Your Sample Ballot(s).” You should see a hyperlinked letter followed by a series of numbers — for instance, B0001.

By clicking that hyperlink, you will be brought to a webpage that will show you your ballot for the election.

Local contested races

Columbus County Board of Commissioners District 1

Barbara Roseboro Featherson (DEM)
Randy Williams (REP)

Columbus County Board of Commissioners District 7

Scott S. Floyd (REP)
Edward Squires (DEM)

Columbus County Sheriff

Jody Greene (REP)
Jason Soles (DEM)

Columbus County Schools Board of Education District 2

Ronnie Strickland
Timothy Lance

Columbus County Schools Board of Education District 3

William Irvin Enzor III
Frankye Boone

Columbus County Schools Board of Education District 4

Chris Worley
Donterius Rich

Whiteville City Schools Board of Education At-Large District

R. Byron Fisher
Ernest (Ernie) Gaskins
Elgin Tremayne Collier

Whiteville City Schools Board of Education District 1

Anna Hall Richardson
Phyllis W. Haynes

Whiteville City Schools Board of Education District 2

David Flowers
Jason Wayne Elleby



Columbus County Board of Commissioners District 1 Featherson faces Williams in District 1 Board of Commissioners race

By **JOSEPH WILLIAMS**
josephwilliams@nrcolumbus.com

As there were no Republicans to file for the District 1 primary, Barbara Roseboro Featherson was virtually guaranteed to win this seat on the Columbus County Board of Commissioners after she beat both incumbent Jerome McMillian and fellow challenger Marcus Norfleet in the May Democratic primary.

The sole remaining Democrat's apparent path to victory was complicated when Randy Williams, a Republican, received the requisite number of signatures to qualify as a write-in candi-

date. The Columbus County Board of Elections approved his candidacy at its Aug. 15 meeting.

In April, when Featherson was running for the primary, she told *The News Reporter* that one of the duties of a county commissioner entails seeking solutions "that benefit everyone in the county." To achieve that end, if elected, the retired federal employee said she plans to familiarize herself with the various county departments and seek further training on how to fulfill her duties.

After Williams secured his write-in candidacy, he told *The News Reporter* in August that he believed that

"work is the key to success." If elected to the position, Williams, who said he has overseen multi-million dollar construction projects, said one of his priorities as commissioner would be to "bring opportunity to Columbus County" so that residents can "make a good living."

Here are the submitted responses to *The News Reporter's* candidate survey for the Columbus County Board of Commissioners District 1 seat. Answers were edited for brevity and clarity.



Contributed photo
Barbara Rose Featherson
(DEM)

What is your age?:
70

How long have you lived in Columbus County?:
Since birth.

Please list your immediate family members (optional):
Spouse, Jimmy; sons, Ryan and Jimmy Jr.

Please describe your education:
Graduate of West Columbus High School and Southeastern Business College

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or

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appointed office?

Commissioner appointee at Department of Aging Advisory Council and Southeastern Community Action Partnership.

What is your current occupation?:

I am retired.

Please describe your professional experience:

My professional experience consists of interviewing, researching, writing special determinations, determining benefit entitlement, awarding benefits, writing employee performance reviews, etc. These are skills I gained during years of employment with Social Security Administration.

Why are you running for office?:

I felt compelled to run when I saw the social disparities during the pandemic. Rather than accepting a hopeless spirit, I opted to get involved with the hope of improving and/or empowering communities.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

I am a tax-paying, voting resident of legal age with no

felony convictions. I am interested in serving.

How would you incentivize people to either stay or move here?

That would be a collective decision of the board. However, I do feel our best course of action is to court the Generation X and Millennial generations of the county by introducing them early to courses that build life skills — skills that they can further improve upon free of charge at the local college.

I would incentivize those that stay and/or become business owners or find meaningful employment in the county for a predetermined time frame. Those that agree, perhaps can receive some sort of pay to stay or some other meaningful reward with hopes they will stay on after the established time.

What is your vision for housing in Columbus County?

The county's newly established guidelines on planned developments should eliminate some issues of concern.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

I believe high-speed internet is still one of the most

critical issues of the county, so I will continue to push for that as well as the safety and advancement of our children.



Staff file photo

Randy Williams
(REP)

What is your age?:
55

How long have you lived in Columbus County?:
Total of 25 years

Please list your immediate family members (optional):
NA

Please describe your edu-

cation:

High school and many technical classes in highway infrastructure.

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

No.

What is your current occupation?:

Safety, EEO consultant and recruiter.

Please describe your professional experience:

38 years in infrastructure in North Carolina and South Carolina county, state and federal aid projects.

Why are you running for office?:

To achieve economic development for growth and to improve the lives of our citizens, especially for our youth and seniors.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

My experience in infrastructure gives me an advantage to assist with growth and economic development for the citizens of Columbus County.

How would you incentivize people to either stay or move here?

Again, economic development and employment opportunities will always be the key to population growth and the county's financial success to care for its citizens.

What is your vision for housing in Columbus County?

Affordable housing is a major issue due to poor economic growth and employment opportunities currently in the county. Overdevelopment could be monitored to achieve growth by having employment opportunities, which creates positions in which individuals drive to our county for employment and return home to neighboring counties or across the S.C. line at the end of the day — which is the opposite of what's happening daily or weekly at this time among our residents.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

Health issues are a concern to many citizens. We need several county parks in strategic locations to provide outside activities and safe areas for our citizens to enjoy life. All is possible with the Lord's help. These goals are achievable if we work together to improve the lives of our children.

Columbus County Board of Commissioners District 7 Floyd and Squires square off for District 7 Board of Commissioners seat

By JOSEPH WILLIAMS
josephwilliams@nrcolumbus.com

Scott S. Floyd and Edward Squires are facing off at the ballot box this November to see who'll take Charles T. McDowell's District 7 seat on the Columbus County Board of Commissioners.

McDowell, the Democrat-turned-unaffiliated commissioner, decided not to run for re-election after he completes

his third term on the board. Explaining his decision to *The News Reporter* in April 2021, McDowell said that while he enjoyed his stint of public service, "I feel as if I want to spend more time with my family."

Floyd and Squires are now seeking their first term on the board.

In May, Floyd, a Republican, beat out two former county

commissioners — Michael Richardson and Ronald Gore — in their party's primary to face Squires, a Democrat, who went unchallenged for his party's primary.

Floyd is a retired state highway patrolman and currently works with the Columbus County Sheriff's office as a bailiff.

In the lead-up to the primaries, Floyd told *The News*

Reporter in April that a commissioner ought to "make local decisions that will best represent the constituents." Based on conversations with voters, he believes exploring a "long-term plan to extend public (county) water" is something that members of the district he hopes to represent are interested in.

Squires — who has worked as a real estate broker, small

business owner and teacher — said in April that, in his estimation, a county commissioner ought to be able to "listen to others' opinions," "collaborate with others" and "make informed decisions." And one of those decisions he hopes to make, based on his conversations with constituents from the district he hopes to win, is the expansion

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of internet access.

Here are the submitted responses to *The News Reporter's* candidate survey for the Columbus County Board of Commissioners District 7 seat. Answers were edited for brevity and clarity.



Contributed photo

**Scott S. Floyd
(REP)**

What is your age?:
52

How long have you lived in Columbus County?:
52 years

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Lori S. Floyd (wife) Ashlin Floyd (daughter)

Please describe your education:

Graduated from Whiteville High School 1989. Graduated from the 104th North Carolina State Highway Patrol Academy.

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

No

What is your current occupation?:

Retired (North Carolina State Highway Patrol) and currently employed with the Sheriff's Office as a bailiff at the courthouse.

Please describe your professional experience:

I began my career in 1992 with the N.C. Department of Corrections before being accepted by the N.C. State Highway Patrol in 2001. I worked with the Highway Patrol until I retired in 2020 with 30 years of credited service. I'm currently employed with the Columbus County Sheriff's Office as a bailiff.

Why are you running for office?:

I am running for office because I have been in the public servant work my entire career. If elected this will be another way that I can serve the citizens of our great county and make a positive impact.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

I've been a citizen of this county my entire life, but I base my qualifications on my morals. I will always do what is right and I will be fair and impartial on every issue I am faced with.

How would you incentivize people to either stay or move here?

I would tell people about all the wonderful little towns we have here. I would tell them about our awesome schools and our college we have in the county. I would tell them there are many good paying jobs here in this county now that are available and that our county is working hard on bringing more industries and career opportunities to our citizens.

What is your vision for housing in Columbus County?

I believe that there should be very strict regulations on where developers build large housing developments. I also believe the citizens should be able to vote or voice their thoughts before commissioners allow these developers to move into the communities. However, I know there is a housing shortage in our county. Once a location is approved for a development we should

encourage builders to build homes that low- to middle-income buyers can afford.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

If elected I would look into the water and sewer issues in our county. I would also look closer into the fire and rescue issues our county has been dealing with lately. I would also like to develop a policy and funding priorities that support recovery and resilience from flood events to better prepare for, respond to and recover from flood events.



Contributed photo

**Edward Alan Squires Jr.
(DEM)**

What is your age?:
50

How long have you lived in Columbus County?:
Over six years

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Phalandra Squires, Takira Clemmons, Tallia Scott, Alisha Squires, Edward Squires III

Please describe your education:

Former education: associate in education (Haywood Community), bachelor's in education (WSSU), master's in education (NC A&T). Hold the following licenses: North Carolina Real Estate Broker, Health, Life, & Medicare. Challenge High Point Board

Training (Chamber of Commerce).

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

High Point Planning & Zoning Board and the Housing Authority Board.

What is your current occupation?:

I have an office to assist individuals with Obamacare, Medicare, life and retirement plans.

Please describe your professional experience:

United States Marine Corps Reserve (eight years), real estate broker, business owner (employed over 30 employees), department head with High Point Housing Authority, department head with a Department of Labor Grant (Bennett College), school teacher (teacher of the year, 2019-2020) and director of an early education program.

Why are you running for office?:

I could start with my education, professional experiences and positions held but none of that is important to why I am running for office. I moved here over six years ago after marrying a resident of Columbus County and believe we have some great people and a great location. I want to work with our other elected officials, local government, local non-profits and faith-based organizations to ensure our children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc. have a great future. I believe God has provided me with the necessary tools through education, experiences and empathy for others to make a difference in the county. I do not claim to have all the answers but will do what is necessary to find the needful answers. I love to see people improve their quality of life and reach their personal goals. Therefore, as a county commissioner I believe it would be my responsibility to maintain budgets, improve ordinances and regulations, etc. that will assist our residents to accomplish their

dreams.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

I believe county commissioners should have a working knowledge of the various departments within the county. This knowledge can be obtained from volunteering on various city and county committees, positions held within the county, attending meetings, etc. I believe I am qualified because of the appointed public and volunteer board positions I have held. These positions contributed to me obtaining the working knowledge of the various departments of local government and how to collaborate with individuals. In addition, I am qualified because I believe I am called to serve. Over the past two and one-half decades I have assisted families to improve their way of life. From working with the housing authority, to managing an early education program, to owning a real estate business, to teaching school and now assisting with insurance has provided me the privilege to serve families. Lastly, I am qualified because of a willingness to acquire the necessary knowledge to do what is best for our county and residents.

How would you incentivize people to either stay or move here?

Before providing any type of incentives for residents I would propose we conduct a study for and of residents. This study would be completed by our current high school juniors/seniors, Southeastern Community College students, etc. to obtain information on what areas of improvement are needed to maintain your residence in Columbus County. Another study conducted will be on individuals who moved their permanent residence to Columbus County to identify why they chose to make our county their home. These are just two studies I believe we need to have because providing incentives without knowing the strengths and weaknesses of our county can

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be counterproductive.

Lastly, I would identify similar counties in our state or other states that had a recent increase in population over the past five to 10 years. Once identified we as commissioners could meet with the elected officials and department heads for incentives, if any, they used to increase their population.

What is your vision for

housing in Columbus County?

Residential development can be a challenging subject; however, it is necessary for the continued growth of any county. I envision having new residential development within our county. Our county can create a community housing department to develop first-time home buying classes while partnering with North Carolina Housing Finance Agency and USDA Rural Development to provide funding for down payment. It is important we partner

with nonprofit and for-profit companies to potentially offer in-kind contributions for development. With new development it is important we preserve the natural beauty of our rural areas while providing new housing. This can be completed by contracting with agencies who specialize in rural development. In addition to new development, I envision partnering with owners of dilapidated homes in order to rehab the home for resale. The funds for rehabilitation can be provided by grants or low interest loans and repaid

once the home is sold to a homeowner.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

When a new commissioner is elected there are a lot of concerns or priorities that can be addressed. However, my first priority will be to review our county budget per department. I believe it is important as a county commissioner to know and understand our financial situation. After reviewing the budget with the appropriate individuals I would propose a conflict of interest policy. The

proposed policy would address the conflict of interest that a county commissioner, or any elected individual who is employed by the local municipality, could have. As an elected individual it can be difficult to vote without bias for funding or any regulation changes that directly or indirectly impact the department where he or she is employed. The policy would state if an individual is elected then he or she would have to resign from their current employment with the local municipality.

Columbus County Sheriff

Soles seeks to keep recently suspended Sheriff Greene out of office

By JOSEPH WILLIAMS
josephwilliams@nrcolumbus.com

In what very well might be the most closely watched local race of this election season, Jason Soles is hoping to keep recently suspended Jody Greene out of the top law enforcement officer position of the county as Columbus County Sheriff.

On Sept. 28, WECT reported on a 2019 recorded conversation between Greene and then-interim Sheriff Soles in which Greene can be heard making racist comments and threatening to fire Black employees. On Oct. 4, Columbus County Senior Resident Superior Court Judge Douglas Sasser suspended Greene from office following a petition filed by District Attorney Jon David. A hearing and final determination on Greene's removal is scheduled for 10 a.m. on Oct. 24 in the Columbus County Courthouse.

This isn't Greene's first brush with controversy. In 2018, with a thin electoral majority over Lewis Hatcher, the previous sheriff, Greene narrowly clinched a victory at the polls to become the county's

first Republican sheriff in modern history. He then later survived challenges about whether or not he resided in the county when the North Carolina State Board of Elections ruled that Greene did in fact live in Columbus County in 2019.

Having withstood challenges in the past, Greene, in spite of having been recently suspended from the office he is currently seeking re-election to, is gearing up to secure what he hopes will be his second term as sheriff.

Greene retired from the N.C. Highway Patrol following work earlier in his career for Chadbourn Police Department and Columbus County Sheriff's Office.

Greene did not submit any responses to our candidate survey.

Soles, Greene's Democratic challenger, previously worked for the Whiteville Police Department before later joining the county sheriff's office — ultimately becoming a captain under Hatcher, also a Democrat. Soles left the service after the state board of elections certified Greene as sheriff.

Here are the submitted re-

sponses to *The News Reporter's* candidate survey for the position of Columbus County Sheriff. Answers were edited for brevity and clarity.



Contributed photo

**Jason Soles
(DEM)**

What is your age?:
43

How long have you lived in Columbus County?
My entire life.

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Candidate did not answer this question.

Please describe your education.

Diploma, Whiteville High School, 1997; Basic Law Enforcement Training, Southeastern Community College, 2001; Associate Degree in Criminal Justice, Southeastern Community College, 2018; Advanced Professional Law Enforcement Certification, NC Sheriff's Training and Standards, 2018.

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

No.

What is your current occupation?

Employed by Pridgen Woodwork and Auxiliary Police Officer with Whiteville Police Department.

Please describe your professional experience.

I have been a public servant who has dedicated my entire career to the citizens of Columbus County for over two decades. I have served in many capacities of emergency services including fire, EMS, and law enforcement.

Why are you running for office?

First, I have a passion for helping others as well as making Columbus County a safe place to live and raise a family. I want to work diligently to reduce the crime rate for many reasons. Most importantly, to ensure the safety of the citizens of the county. Additionally, a reduction in the crime rate may help convince more industries to select Columbus County as their home, which would result in more jobs in the area. If elected, I will be transparent, accessible, responsive and actively involved in the community. I will carry out my duties with diligence, integrity, moral ethics and respect for all citizens of Columbus County. Our nation is built on the strength of our citizens and we need to work together to make our community a safer place.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

A sheriff should be ambitious, communicative, confident, humble, inquisitive, passionate, proactive and

SHERIFF

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reliable. Most importantly, the sheriff should have integrity and moral ethics. I have those traits and many more. I have dedicated my entire career to serving and protecting the citizens of Columbus County. I have a passion for helping others as well as making our county a safe place to live, work and learn. As a former employee of the sheriff's office, I have served in many capacities, including detention officer, patrol deputy, traffic enforcement officer, criminal investigator, homicide investigator, captain of criminal investigations and serving on the sheriff's command staff, member of the SWAT team, dive team, and honor guard. I have experience managing personnel and preparing and maintaining a budget. I will

lead with dignity, pride and respect. I will be accessible to everyone and I assure the community will actively see and hear from me. The safety and wellbeing of each person in this county will be my top priority.

How will you establish trust across the county?

First, we cannot adequately serve our communities if we do not understand their perceptions. I will meet with local leaders and the citizens of the communities and listen to their concerns and then act on them. I plan to create a Public Relations Coordinators position. This position is very important so that we can coordinate events and interact with the public in a more positive way. I will reestablish the Sheriff's Office Citizens Academy so that we can train volunteers to come and vol-

unteer inside of our agency but most importantly so that we can teach various aspects of why and how we operate. I also have plans to establish a citizens review board.

How will you address drugs in the county?

Drugs are a problem everywhere, not just here in Columbus County. Drug overdoses have reached a historic high. My administration will take a very aggressive approach towards drug dealers but be professional in doing so. We will partner with our local, state and federal agencies to utilize resources that we currently do not have. Education and collaboration are two of the most important steps to combating drugs. We need to expand the role of law enforcement in schools and in the community to increase drug awareness at an earlier age.

Working with local churches, civic leaders, business owners and community members to create programs to occupy our youth will be crucial in preventing drug use at a young age. This is crucial for the health promotion of our youth and for their future.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

One of the biggest challenges for this county is putting more deputies on the streets to work while saving the taxpayers' money. Columbus County is a large county with over 900 square miles of territory. It is nearly impossible to provide adequate and safe coverage with only five to six deputies working at a time. This number could be even less at times if an officer is tied up with transports or other duties. While the demand for law en-

forcement officers is at an all time high, there aren't many people interested in going into this profession nowadays. Retention of qualified officers and remaining competitive with surrounding agencies is a must.



Contributed photo

Jody Greene (REP), who is also running for Columbus County Sheriff, did not turn in a candidate survey.

Columbus County Schools Board of Education District 2 Strickland and Lance vie for District 2 seat on county board of education

By JOSEPH WILLIAMS
josephwilliams@nrcolumbus.com

Rev. Timothy Lance is hoping to unseat the current chair of the Columbus County Board of Education, Ronnie Strickland, from his District 2 seat.

School board races are non-partisan. Columbus County Board of Education candidates must reside in the district they seek to represent, but are elected countywide.

"A person of integrity" was how Lance, pastor of Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church and a retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. chaplain, described himself to *The News Reporter* in July. He said then that his religious background has taught him to be "genuinely concerned for the well-being of all people" — and he hopes to put that principle into prac-

tice on the school board, if elected.

"I honestly feel like God sent me here," said the Georgetown, S.C. native.

Strickland, who is hoping for a second term on the board, said in July that "running a school system is like a business." As the national operations director for a "multimillion" business affiliated with Cardinal Health, "that background, that experience" is an asset he believes he brings to the table.

"I feel like we've gotten started on some things," Strickland said, and he wants "to continue the positive momentum we have."

Here are the submitted responses to *The News Reporter's* candidate survey for the Columbus County Schools District 2 seat. Answers were edited for brevity and clarity.



Contributed photo

Ronnie Strickland

What is your age?:
54

How long have you lived in Columbus County?:
20 years, most recently. I

left for college in 1986 and returned home in 2003.

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Mary Donna Strickland, wife; Cole and Cade Strickland, sons

Please describe your education:

I have a doctorate degree in pharmacy from Campbell University School of Pharmacy, graduated in 1992.

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

Current Chairperson of the Columbus County Schools Board of Education. Served on that board since 2018

What is your current occupation?:

I am the national operations director of the Remote Pharmacy Services Division for Cardinal Health.

Please describe your professional experience:

I currently work as the leader of the business mentioned above. In that role, I am responsible for a \$30 million business that operates in all 50 states. I manage about 200 employees across the United States with a total payroll over \$18 million. Additionally, I am responsible for quality and medication safety.

Why are you running for office?:

I want to continue the recent improvements that we have seen in the county education system. Honestly, I've

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seen growth and development of our students and schools over the past four years; however, there is room for much more growth. I want to help guide that growth and development. Additionally, we've seen great strides in our career and technical education programs (CTE) and I want to see continued growth in those areas. We all realize that a four year college degree is not for all of our students and expansion of our current CTE offerings is sorely needed. I feel that a solid public education is essential for the growth of our county in industry and economic development. In fact, in my opinion, it is the most important step that we can take to improve those areas and return Columbus County to a "growth status." In fact, it is that thought process and goal that led to my campaign slogan, "Focused on our future". The education system here in the county has been and will continue to be the cornerstone of our future.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

Sadly, education systems have to be run very similarly to a business. There are budgets that we must meet, and we must make sure that all fund allocation is done according to state law. Just as important as the financial side is the human resource side. With experience of managing about 200 employees across the country, I feel that I can contribute to the overall well-being and satisfaction of our employees. My thought process is based on the axiom that "a happy employee is a productive employee." I realize that teachers are sorely underpaid across the country and we can only do what we can do within the constraints of state law and pay bands. However, we can certainly do things to give our employees more job satisfaction. Experience and understanding of the items listed above are all vital qualifications of being an effective board member. Additionally, the last four years

have certainly improved my qualifications. We have managed our system through a cyberattack, two major school construction projects and a global pandemic. These "trials by fire" are qualifiers.

How would you ensure students stay safe while at school?

We have already started a project to improve our school safety. We have allocated about \$2 million for an upgrade to our school doors and monitoring systems. Additionally, in coordination with the sheriff's department, we have scheduled an active shooter drill at one of our schools in December. Other actions taken over the last four years include having student resource officers at every school, adding counselors to our schools, adding metal detectors at each of our schools, evaluation of placement of these metal detectors and, in the two new schools, we've added specialty glass at the main entrances that the staff can see outside, but people outside cannot see inside the building.

How do you plan to increase school grades and overall student success?

This is a very complex question, and you have to dive into the data. The past two years of the pandemic have caused tremendous learning loss to our students due to missed classroom instruction. In addition to the lost instruction time due to "virtual school," chronic absenteeism has also increased since our return to face-to-face instruction. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing more than 10% of school days for excused and unexcused reasons. Prior to the pandemic, about 11% of students had chronic absenteeism. Since we have returned to school, that percentage has increased to about 21%. So, there must be a multi-pronged approach for improvement: one, make sure that our teachers are able to provide some individualized instruction and tutoring; two, ensure that our teachers have the tools that they need for effective instruction; three,

improve parental involvement to ensure that students are maximizing their time in school.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

As mentioned above, continued development of our career and technical education (CTE) programs. We are currently leveraging our relationship with Southeastern Community College to provide training/programs/internships for our students in trades/skilled labor. I want to continue working on expansion into additional areas.

I want to continue to operate with a balanced budget and grow our fund balance (savings account) to a point where we have a balance of two years of operating expenses.

I want to continue our efforts at upgrading our schools, be that new facilities where required or improvements to our existing facilities, such as the following: a new pre-kindergarten to eighth grade school in the eastern part of the county, a new gym/auditorium at Williams Township, stay on top of anticipated community growth in the Nakina/Guideway area so that we can be prepared for student growth in that area, continued work at West Columbus High School (we already have a new gym floor, bleachers, front windows and blinds and the parking lots have been paved) and high-speed internet access to our students.



Contributed photo

Rev. Timothy A. Lance

What is your age?:

61

How long have you lived in Columbus County?:

16 years

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Priscilla Lance, spouse

Please describe your education:

B.S. in business administration from South Carolina State University; teacher certification in middle grade business from Fayetteville State University; master's of divinity from Shaw University; Ph.D. in human services from Walden University

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

Appointed by the governor to the board of trustees for Southeastern Community College, 2 years

What is your current occupation?:

Pastor of Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church

Please describe your professional experience:

28 years active/reserves service in the U.S. Army as a logistician (12 years) and chaplain (16 years), attained the rank of lieutenant colonel; 22 years as teacher/counselor in the public school system and 25 years pastoral leadership

Why are you running for office?:

I am running for the Columbus County Schools Board of Education for an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process that impacts the education of our children. I desire to engage as a team member in improving the quality of education and ensure truth, justice, equity, diversity and inclusion is afforded to all staff and students.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

I am qualified for this position because of my 22 years in various positions in the public

school system. In addition, I've held various leadership positions in the U.S. Army as a unit commander and command chaplain for the southeast region, which covered 13 states.

How would you ensure students stay safe while at school?

We would ensure all school doors remained locked. Place security cameras at various locations on school campuses and at every entrance door to the school building. In addition, school resource officers would be on duty at every school.

How do you plan to increase school grades and overall student success?

To improve student performance and school grades, we would conduct regular "parent empowerment forums" to keep parents informed and engage them in the education of their children. We would also promote more after-school programs using evidence-based curriculums that are fun and engaging for students. I believe it still takes a village to raise a child. Therefore, we would seek to engage all community stakeholders, including faith-based organizations and nonprofits, in the educational process of our children. We would work together with those organizations to improve the social-emotional well being of each individual student.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

Another issue that I would address would be bullying. Bullying not only affects the child being bullied, but it also impacts every fiber of our society. Bullying can have a negative effect on the lives of individuals for a lifetime. To address this issue, we must ensure all administrators and school personnel receive training to arm them with the knowledge and skills to identify bullies and bullying and take necessary actions to eradicate bullying from our system.

Columbus County Board of Education District 3

Boone faces Enzor in District 3 county school board race

By JOSEPH WILLIAMS
josephwilliams@nrcolumbus.com

With Jerome McMillian having dropped out of the race, there are now just two contenders for the District 3 seat on the Columbus County Board of Education: Frankye Boone and William Irvin Enzor III.

School board races are non-partisan. Columbus County Board of Education candidates must reside in the district they seek to represent, but are elected countywide.

After Monte Herring, who previously held the seat, died in September 2021, the county school board appointed former superintendent Dan Strickland in November to fill the position. Strickland is not running for election, however, as the county board of commissioners appointed him to a seat on the Southeastern Community College Board of Trustees in July.

Out of respect for Herring, Boone told *The News Reporter* in July that she refrained from running for the seat while the late board member was still serving. The former teacher said if elected, “as a woman and a mother” she thinks she would “bring a different point of view to an all-male board.” Boone serves on the Board of Health at the Columbus County Health Department.

Boone isn’t the only candidate who has previously expressed interest in this seat — Enzor sought appointment to Herring’s seat last year.

As a vice president of Truist Bank, Enzor told *The News Reporter* in July that his experience with risk management has endowed him with “good, sound decision-making skills” that he believes would be an asset to the school system.

Expressing confidence about his candidacy, “I feel like I’m in my element,” he told *The News Reporter* in July.

After challenger Barbara Roseboro Featherson bested McMillian in the Democratic primary for the District 1 seat on the Columbus County Board of Commissioners in May, the ousted incumbent then jumped into the race for the District 3 seat on the county school board.

Since then, McMillian has joined the Republican Party and, weeks after joining the county school board race, dropped out of the competition.

Due to a technicality, however, McMillian’s name will remain on the ballot. McMillian has endorsed Enzor for the District 3 seat.

Here are the submitted responses to *The News Reporter’s* candidate survey for the Columbus County Schools District 3 seat. Answers were edited for brevity and clarity.



Contributed photo

Frankye Boone

What is your age?:
49

How long have you lived

in Columbus County?:
All my life, 49 years

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Husband, Demond Newkirk; daughters, Raven Boone and Jordan Newkirk; parents, the late Franklin Boone and Earnestine Boone

Please describe your education:

Proud third generation graduate of Fayetteville State University

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

Columbus County Board of Health Member since 2019, replacing my father who served for over 30 years

What is your current occupation?:

Healthcare consultant, Southeastern Community College instructor, GirlTrek state coach

Please describe your professional experience:

My professional experience ranges from being a former K-12 teacher in Bladen and Columbus county schools to being an entrepreneur with my small marketing business. I have worked in the mental health field as a qualified professional. Currently, I am an instructor at SCC.

Why are you running for office?:

To be the change I want to see in our school district. To bring fresh,

new innovative ideas and boost school district morale. It is my desire to be a voice for our students, faculty, staff, administration and community stakeholders and to build relationships. Through building relationships, we build trust. When we all work together cohesively, everyone will win!

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

I was born into education. Both my parents were teach-

ers; their love of teaching instilled a love of education within me so I became a teacher. I have classroom experience. As a community leader, I am knowledgeable of community resources. As a parent volunteer in the schools, I am privy to the needs of the schools. Also, I have formed relationships with students, teachers, administrators and community stakeholders.

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DISTRICT 3

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My community involvement makes me easily accessible to people throughout the county and I am always ready to listen to others. I am a strong advocate for children and adults. As a mama, I create innovative solutions, offer fresh ideas and analyze data and adapt ways to drive successful outcomes.

How would you ensure students stay safe while at school?

Plan, prepare, and pray. In addition to utilizing safety measures already in place such as locked doors, requiring ID access, metal detectors and student resource officers, I would create a countywide school safety team led by SROs to plan possible scenarios of how our students could be in danger and to prepare safe lock down procedures. Increase training, practice drills and pray our students stay safe.

How do you plan to increase school grades and overall student success?

Work closely with a sample group of educators and administrators to create a five-year strategic plan that focuses on our students, our work and to mobilize talented educators to support students in and out of school. Include parents and the community in the strategic plan while holding ourselves accountable for excellence. Celebrate milestones and growth, while molding a culture of excellence. This may look like retired teachers hosting community after-school programs and family math night at the local Food Lion or early morning study sessions at school, to list a few examples.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you

plan to address?

Bullying would be an issue I would address. First I would model the behavior I wanted to see by staying true to my anti-bullying belief and behavior. I would start teaching about bullying in kindergarten. We could also utilize community resources to reinforce anti-bullying. By creating a culture that supports anti-bullying in the schools and students will thrive.



Contributed photo

William Irvin Enzor III

What is your age?:
52

How long have you lived in Columbus County?:
52 years

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Tiffany Anzel Enzor, wife; Kennedy Enzor, daughter; Bill Enzor, dad; Barbara Haynes Enzor, mom; Karen Enzor Cribb, sister; Kareesa Enzor Pridgen, sister

Please describe your education:

West Columbus High School, 1988; Southeastern Community College (college transfer), 1989; Campbell University (college transfer) 1990; UNCP graduate B.S. business admin/management, 1993; ECU, graduate school obtain-

ing MBA, 2020-present. Leadership Columbus graduate, 2022.

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

SCC business/accounting board, 2022 and also Brunswick Electric Member Cooperation Advisory Board, 2022.

What is your current occupation?:

Client experience coach II, assistant vice president with Truist Bank. I have held many leadership roles in the bank.

Please describe your professional experience:

Contact center ops division manager/site leader responsible for teams in Whiteville; Wilson; Roanoke, V.A. and internally for offshore teammates. Team manager for various specialty divisions within the bank. Corporate Lighthouse committee member, leading community service projects throughout the Truist footprint.

Why are you running for office?:

My goal is to represent District 3 on the Columbus County Board of Education to give back to Columbus County where I may execute on my platform to be an advocate for education, community service and leadership. My experience in each of these three key areas — along with my ability to collaborate with all — will add value and serve to be the strongest voice of the board for students, teachers, administrators and all residents of Columbus County.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

I am a 28 year employee of UCB, BB&T and now Truist. My leadership roles have always included an educational component. I have developed and facilitated in person and

online courses from entry level to senior bank executives. I have a wealth of banking knowledge from operational, strategic, risk, general banking, loan services, risk management and client experience coaching. Also, I teach evening client care business courses at SCC that enables me to execute on my passions: education, community service and leadership. I am the type of instructor that works with students to sharpen their communication skills, resume building and I incorporate mock interviews. My success rate of students gaining employment is very strong.

How would you ensure students stay safe while at school?

Limit visitors to common areas, ensure a Columbus County Sheriff's officer is on campus monitoring each facility. Routine drills to test recently installed door locks with key entry. Look at best practices of universities to include an alert system. Work with county administrators to review reporting footage to ensure no gaps are present. Be present myself at schools to inspect what I, as a parent, would expect to ensure our children, teachers and administrators are completely safe, where they may focus on education within a safe environment.

How do you plan to increase school grades and overall student success?

My goal would be to recommend more school observations including in teacher observations and administrators. As a board member, I would want to see each teacher's overall school performance. Reviewing the data should provide insight needed to pair low-performing schools with those that are performing at or above standards. I

would recommend the board members conduct routine meetings with higher performing schools to gain a better perspective on what is working well. I have always found pairing top performers with others to share best practices an effective way of leading teams. My goal would be to not only meet the standards set by the state but rather that every Columbus County school exceed relative to school performance.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

My focus would be to zone in on three key areas: recruiting teachers, working tirelessly to ensure we achieve the grant/funding for a new school on the eastern end of the county and to continue effective partnerships with SCC. From a recruiting standpoint, I would want to work in parallel with the newly hired diversity coordinator on the leadership team to use my diversity recruiting talents to ensure we have representation from all. For a new school on the eastern end of the county, I would work tirelessly to collaborate with all board members to ensure we submit required grants and work in unison with the county commissioners to make it happen, to ensure all Columbus County schools have state-of-the-art facilities, to ensure all have the same opportunities for educational success. From a SCC perspective, I would continue to network with Dr. Chris English, president of SCC; Dr. Deanne Meadows, superintendent of CCS; and Dr. Marc Whichard, superintendent of Whiteville City Schools, so we can focus on opportunities such as trade, apprenticeships and partnering with universities to gain a pipeline of teachers for all Columbus County schools.



Columbus County Board of Education District 4

Worley faces Rich for District 4 seat on county school board

By **JOSEPH WILLIAMS**
josephwilliams@nrcolumbus.com

Chris Worley was originally slated to run against Wanda Brooks for the District 4 seat on the Columbus County Board of Education, but now finds himself facing off against write-in challenger Donterius Rich.

School board races are non-partisan. Columbus County Board of Education candidates must reside in the district they seek to represent, but are elected countywide.

The current board member holding this seat, Worley T. Edwards, will not be running for re-election. Edwards is a retired teacher, coach and principal and has served on the board for years.

At its July 25 meeting, the Columbus County Board of Elections canceled Wanda Brooks' candidacy, due to the fact that she lives outside of the district she was running for. At the time she registered to run for this seat, however, Brooks did not know what district she lived in because elections staff could not find a map of the electoral districts of the county school board in its offices until after the filing period had ended.

With Brooks' candidacy canceled, it appeared Worley would be unopposed for the seat.

Worley will get a electoral sparring partner after all in Donterius Rich, who collected the requisite number of signatures to qualify as a write-in candidate for the election. The board of elections approved Rich's candidacy at its Aug. 15 meeting.

In July, Worley described himself to *The News Reporter* as a licensed general contrac-

tor of a "small, family-owned" construction business. Worley stressed that a priority of his, if elected, would be encouraging opportunities for students to pursue vocational training.

Worley promised, if elected to the board, "Nobody will outwork me."

Rich said in August that "listening to understand" is key to cultivating a strong "community bond" — and that's what he plans to do with his constituents, if elected. And speaking of fostering a sense of community, Rich said that hiring locally would be a priority of his.

When it comes to this race, Rich — who serves as school custodian, bus monitor and youth minister — said, "I'm in it for everyone."

Here are the submitted responses to *The News Reporter's* candidate survey for the Columbus County Schools District 4 seat. Answers were edited for brevity and clarity.



Contributed photo

Donterius Rich

What is your age?
28

How long have you lived in Columbus County?
All my life

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Necolyia Bell Soles (mother), Kenny Rich (brother) Harmony Mccray (daughter)

Please describe your education:

I graduated from South Columbus High School. Also completed the effective teacher course under Mrs. Barbara Yates.

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?
No.

What is your current occupation?

I'm a special education bus aide as well as a custodian at a high school.

Please describe your professional experience.

I've worked within the school system as a student teacher during my last year of school, a certified substitute teacher.

Why are you running for office?

I'm running for office to be the one understanding ear we've lacked. I am also running to find a way to merge the gap between the school and community. I am hoping to help us work together to enhance the wellbeing of students and teachers. One of my biggest things will always be to treat everyone with love and respect to better our students, parents and staff day by day.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?

I strongly feel I'm well qualified. After being a former student in the Columbus County

Schools System, I know what the students feel and need. Being a former staff member in the same county, I have insight on what the staff needs.

How would you ensure students stay safe while at school?

I will ask that we work together by reaching out to bigger and more advanced counties in order to have a better plan, layout and safety training.

How do you plan to increase school grades and overall student success?

I would ask that we work together in getting more after school programs as well as transportation so the students will have a chance to get the extra help that's deserved.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

I would love to be able to gain more workers, teachers and bus drivers. I would address it by sharing the information needed to grab the attention of the community and surrounding areas.



Contributed photo

Chris Worley

What is your age?
43

How long have you lived in Columbus County?
43 years

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Father and mother, Bill and Sammie Worley; father/mother-in-law, Ben & Renita Whaley; wife, Tera Worley; children, Emily, 16, Lacey, 14, Brady, 10; brother, Jason Worley; brothers-in-law, Chris Boren, Nathan Whaley; sisters-in-law, Deanna Worley, Rachel Boren, Crystal Whaley.

Please describe your education:

South Columbus High School, 1997. Licensed general contractor.

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?
No.

What is your current occupation?
General contractor.

Please describe your professional experience:

For 25 years, I have advanced my leadership skills by leading crews on the job-site. Between the ages of 21 to 30, my position in the company transitioned from a crew leader to licensed general contractor to project manager, and eventually into my present role of vice president of Bill Worley and Sons G.C. Inc.

Why are you running for office?

To make a difference. Despite all the negative things

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in this world, I want to be a positive voice for students and staff members of CCS. In the past few years, I was given the opportunity to coach talented 13- to 14-year-old girls from all over Columbus County and 9- to 10-year-old boys in the South Columbus area. I found joy in seeing the players grow in skill and maturity both on and off the field. I have been inspired by the parents and community support given to these teams, and my vision is to assist in that cohesiveness throughout all of CCS.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?

I have served as president of the Williams Township Educational Foundation (WTEF)

and as an active member of the advisory board for Williams Township School. While serving on the WTEF, the team as a whole worked hard to raise funds for projects such as sports equipment, classroom equipment, supplies and many building needs. In my role as president, I have advocated for staff and community involvement to reach goals. As an appointed advisory board member, I have worked with the principal and staff to discuss the needs and achievements of the students at Williams Township School. I am determined to use the skills and successes I have learned from these organizations for the betterment of all students and schools.

As a proud product of our school system, I am dedicated to working hard at promoting

the development of every student in CCS. I am devoted to being a voice for the teachers and support staff. I am committed to seeing CCS become the best school district in our great state.

How would you ensure students stay safe while at school?

In recent years a lot has been done for student safety such as key card locks and more resource officers, but there is always more we can do. If elected I will always push for sheriff and state law enforcement to be involved in our schools, through proactive and reactive measures. I feel like we also need more counselors in our schools. These counselors also need the most up-to-date training in mental health. Traffic safety as well as

general grounds maintenance is also a concern of mine.

How do you plan to increase school grades and overall student success?

I have done extensive research and study on the school report cards. We all read the headlines and are alarmed at these grades, but we have had growth in many areas. I will advocate for us as a system to look in depth to where we have growth and build on what we are good at. We must engage students and teachers in the areas they are good at. Once you build a student or teacher up in these areas, it will spill over into them doing better in areas that they are weak at. Another way to achieve this goal is through collaboration with other school systems that have similar demographics.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

Getting back to the basics! I believe that we can meet the required standards for our students and staff while using proven techniques that work for Columbus County. I am a big proponent of prior planning, but I believe our whole educational system tries to fix a problem by just adding more busy work to our kids and staff instead of fixing the problem.

Although I know this is a complex undertaking that I cannot fix on my own, I know that we have a great staff that can make it happen. On a final but important note, I will advocate for community involvement in every school and staff appreciation!

Whiteville City Schools Board of Education At-Large District Fisher, Gaskins and Collier in three-way race for At-Large city school board seat

By JOSEPH WILLIAMS
josephwilliams@nrcolumbus.com

Three candidates are squaring off for the At-Large District seat up for grabs on the Whiteville City Schools Board of Education.

School board races are non-partisan.

Choosing to step down after two terms, Board Member Coleman Barbour will vacate this seat after the November election. In July, Barbour told *The News Reporter* that when he was first elected to the board eight years ago, he believed then that "Two terms was enough for me."

One of the candidates seeking to fill this role is Ernie Gaskins, a former teacher, counselor and principal. He told *The News Reporter* in July he hopes to be an advocate for "all communities" repre-

sented by the school system.

Byron Fisher, a self-described farmer by trade, hopes to open-mindedly collaborate with his colleagues — because "no one has all the answers" and "more heads are better than one," he told *The News Reporter* in July.

Elgin Tremayne Collier, who is also running for this seat, did not submit a candidate survey.

Here are the submitted responses to *The News Reporter's* candidate survey for the Whiteville City Schools At-Large District seat. Answers were edited for brevity and clarity.



Contributed photo

R. Byron Fisher

What is your age?:
48

How long have you lived in Whiteville?:
48 years

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Georganna Fisher, wife; Haleigh Fisher, daughter; William Fisher, son

Please describe your education:

Graduate of Whiteville High School, '92; certified GAP training through North Carolina State University, as well as trade certifications concerning R&B Fisher Farms

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

No

What is your current occupation?:

Owner/operator of R&B Fisher Farms

Please describe your pro-

fessional experience:

Born and raised into R&B Fisher Farms. Took on leadership roles within said business soon after turning 16 years old

Why are you running for office?:

After graduating from WHS, I carried a piece of it with me. At my age, I feel I have the ability to advocate for the changes that I feel are needed. Whiteville City Schools carries a lot of pride and I am running to ensure that the pride in question maintains its value and prominence in our community. I am very passionate about athletics and plan to be active in them. The pride, mentioned above, ties strongly into our athletic program. Athletics ties the community into the



AT-LARGE

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school system. I would also like to advocate for stronger education concerning trades. Giving students the knowledge of how to change their oil, plug a tire, patch their roofs, etc., are priceless skills that can not only make them more self-sufficient, but offer them a different career path, if it be their choice. Also I would like to add that, being a father myself, it brings me peace knowing that if my daughter were to have a flat tire, she would know how to change it or whether or not she would be getting gouged on pricing by someone who thinks she does not know any different. Things of this nature define my purpose in running.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

As stated earlier, I graduated from Whiteville City Schools and have lived well within the district my entire life. I feel that the position I am hoping to be elected to can, and should be, held by anyone deemed competent. Those that know me and are confident enough in me to vote for me and know that I am competent and care strongly for the environment their children exist in.

How would you ensure students stay safe while at school?:

I would advocate for additional student resource officers. Having more personnel on hand offers greater opportunity for safety in our schools. I also would like to see

veterans be given the chance to serve in these positions.

How do you plan to increase school grades and overall student success?

I feel that the issue lies in engagement. A lot of kids feel lost in classrooms. I think that strengthening our trade programs would offer different paths for students. At the very least, these class periods would be something fun for kids to do for a short time everyday, giving them an opportunity to perform hands-on activities.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

I would like to see term limits applied to school board members. I personally feel that no board member should serve longer than 12 years. This can allow for new ideas and cohesion. I also would like to see the uniform policy be reviewed. A proposed amendment concerning these issues can possibly go a long way.



Contributed photo

Ernest Gaskins

What is your age?:

68

How long have you lived in Whiteville?:

Off and on during my lifetime

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

My family has called Whiteville home since the early 1900s.

Please describe your education:

1968-1971, Whiteville High School; 1971-1977, B.S., M.S., NC A&T State University; 2010-2012, Ph.D. Spirit of Truth

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

None

What is your current occupation?:

Retired, health care consultant with United, Humana, Blue Cross insurance companies

Please describe your professional experience:

25 years of Hall of Fame member International Homes; 10 years with Whiteville City Schools as teacher, counselor and assistant principal; 6 years as vice president of Take Charge Juvenile program; and two years with Maryland National Park and Planning.

Why are you running for office?:

All children deserve an opportunity for a quality education. I think, in order to help

them to achieve their goal, we must have a school board that is fair to all stakeholders and reflects the population that the board serves. Our children will no doubt become the future leaders of our county. We must be fair and give all an equal opportunity.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

Experience. Lifetime working with students in several capacities: 25 years with International Homes, working with college students; 10 years as teacher, counselor and principal with Whiteville City Schools; six year working with adjudicated youth with Maryland courts and three years youth in community center with MNPP-C. Working with other staff members of these agencies has given me knowledge and understanding of teamwork, very important in the decision-making process.

How would you ensure students stay safe while at school?

Working with other board members, law enforcement and using data when available that has been proven in other school districts. Number one priority.

How do you plan to increase school grades and overall student success?

More parental involvement in their child's behavior and education process, more involvement with community programs with good education activities. Parents' buy-in is the key. Increase teacher pay. Teachers feel better, will teach better and kids will learn bet-

ter. Parents and kids must have the same objective.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

Make sure budget spending is fair for all. Making sure students are well-rounded is very important. More diversity with staff; if unavailable, bring in more diversity from outside to speak and motivate our kids. Also, looking into how charter school enrollment affects our schools.



File photo

Elgin Tremayne Collier, who is also running for the Whiteville City Schools At-Large District, did not turn in a candidate survey.



Whiteville City Schools Board of Education District 1 Haynes hopes for upset in District 1 city school board race against Richardson

By JOSEPH WILLIAMS
josephwilliams@nrcolumbus.com

Phyllis Haynes is challenging incumbent Anna Richardson for the District 1 seat on the Whiteville City Schools Board of Education.

School board races are non-partisan.

Richardson, an educator who has taught classes from middle school to higher education, was first elected to the board after beating incumbent Carlton Prince in 2018. In 2021, she was unanimously elected by her fellow board members to serve as chair. Richardson told *The News Reporter* in July that she has “a really good sense of what students need” and hopes to continue to meet those needs, if reelected.

Haynes, however, told *The News Reporter* in July that she’s heard from some students that they “don’t see an opportunity” to grow and be successful. As a business owner for over 15 years, she said she understands the work that it takes to align your mission statement with your practice. “We have to get in the trenches and help our students develop,” Haynes said.

Here are the submitted responses to *The News Reporter’s* candidate survey for the Whiteville City Schools District 1 seat. Answers were edited for brevity and clarity.



Contributed photo

Anna Richardson

What is your age?:
43

How long have you lived in Whiteville?:

I am a native of Whiteville and have lived here my entire life.

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

I am the daughter of Jerry and Suzanne Hall and the mother of Riles, age 13, and Porter Grace, age 10.

Please describe your education:

I hold a B.A. in English from East Carolina University and an M.A. in English education from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

I am currently serving as Chairperson on the Whiteville City Schools Board of Education.

What is your current occupation?:

I am an English instructor at Southeastern Community College.

Please describe your professional experience:

I started my teaching career in 2002 and taught both middle school and high school English for 11 years. I then served as a curriculum and instructional coach before coming to SCC in 2015.

Why are you running for office?:

First and foremost, I love serving my community. As a school board member, I have an opportunity to share my talent and expertise to benefit our students. I am also able to represent different groups in the community and guarantee that all stakeholders have a voice in making educational decisions. In addition, I am able to influence the district budget and ensure that WCS is a strong steward of taxpayer money. Finally, I believe in quality public education, as I am a product of WCS. I want to continue the strong legacy of empowering all students to reach their maximum potential for lifelong learning and productive citizenship.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

I am the most qualified candidate because I can offer a unique perspective to the issues at hand. As a parent of children who attend schools in our district, I am deeply invested in the education they, as well as their peers, receive. In order to make fair and informed decisions, it is vital to analyze issues through a parental lens. Secondly, I am an experienced educator. Currently, I teach English at Southeastern Community College, and I have 13 years ex-

perience in the public school system, nine of those at Whiteville High School. I understand the instructional needs of today’s students, who are vastly different from students of the past. Finally, I am an active community member who wants to see my hometown and our school system thrive. I want to serve my community and ensure that Whiteville is a great place to live, work and learn.

How would you ensure students stay safe while at school?

In the past year, we have implemented multiple measures to improve safety on our campuses. We have installed updated security fencing and camera systems. In addition, all exterior doors have been retrofitted with camera/speaker system/electronic locks for total building security. We also introduced nuisance abatement for properties with repeated code violations and police service calls, resulting in forfeiture of properties in proximity to schools. Finally, school resource officers are now in each school building all day. There is always room to improve school security, but we are taking significant steps to ensure the safety of all students.

How do you plan to increase school grades and overall student success?

The vast majority of North Carolina schools experienced dips in their performance grades due to learning loss during the pandemic. Key strategies to address low-performing status include: data tracking in professional learning communities, strategic planning for intervention and enrichment, supplemental

instructional opportunities outside of the school day and a focus on strengthening Tier I instruction for all students.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

Learning loss from the pandemic is the most significant issue we are facing right now. To ensure small class sizes, Whiteville City Schools has used ESSER funds to hire for positions. We are also focusing on targeted remediation in small groups, as well as after-school tutoring via our 21st Century Community Learning Centers. There is no quick or easy way to address learning loss, but we are already seeing improvement in some areas.



Contributed photo

Phyllis W. Haynes

What is your age?
69

How long have you lived in Whiteville?:
Twelve years total

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Husband, daughter, son-in-



DISTRICT 1

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law, son

Please describe your education:

Business administration, Albertus Magnus College, New Haven, Conn.; business management, University of the District of Columbia, Washington, D.C.; banking and finance, Southeastern Community College; Charleston High School graduate, Charleston, Miss.; small business academy certification

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

No

What is your current occupation?:

Entrepreneur, business

owner, specialty food consumer packaged goods

Please describe your professional experience:

My experience includes office administration in banking and nonprofits; program coordinator (interim director) Network for Public Education and parent leadership training. Founder and president of a specialty food business, over 15 years in product development, day-to-day operations, marketing and budgeting.

Why are you running for office?:

As a mother of two I spent time working and volunteering in the schools. I became my son's advocate to make sure he received the specialized teaching he needed for his education. Because of this experience, I advocate for parent

involvement for all children.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

My experiences and skills will be an asset to the board. Decision-making requires analyzing, problem solving, negotiating and compromising as well as the ability to work with diverse groups and as a team member. I will seek to bring new and different approaches in planning curriculums, staff selections and seek resources and funding for more programs to ensure an equitable education for all students in North Carolina, which is a critical concern.

How would you ensure students stay safe while at school?

Physical violence has become a way for some individuals to express rights, dislikes

and problems and students are often the targets. Students expect a certain level of comfort and a sense of protection in a school environment. To maintain and restore that confidence it is the responsibility of parents, teachers and students to work together.

Improving safety precautions in building security and cameras, as well as training security staff are all necessary. In addition, address the issues around violence against other students and teachers. Enforce a zero-tolerance policy with consequences for bullying and racial attacks. Unfortunately, there is no one solution to this problem.

How do you plan to increase school grades and overall student success?

A district strategy is needed to increase support in resource-

es and additional trained staff to assist in the classrooms to meet the individual needs of all students. I would like to see partnerships and resources established for the under-achieving students to reduce chronic absenteeism and the number of short- and long-term suspensions, especially for students of color.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

I believe there is a gap in the way parents receive communication from the schools. Information should be readily available for the parents and community for their support. As public servants we need to be transparent and accountable. I think a revised recruitment plan is necessary as the need for diversity continues.

Whiteville City Schools Board of Education District 2 Elleby challenges Flowers for his District 2 city school board seat

By JOSEPH WILLIAMS
josephwilliams@nrcolumbus.com

Two men — Jason Wayne Elleby and the incumbent, Rev. David Flowers — are running for the District 2 seat on the Whiteville City Schools Board of Education.

School board races are non-partisan.

Elleby, a financial service representative, told *The News Reporter* in July that he has spent “most of my life working for the community” and serving on the city school board would be another way to “pay it forward.” If elected, Elleby said that his “honesty, integrity and faith” would guide his decisions on the board.

Another man who understands the value of faith is Flowers, pastor of Central Missionary Baptist Church and the man to beat for the Dis-

trict 2 seat. Flowers told *The News Reporter* in July that he hopes “to continue what we’ve started” because “there’s more work to be done.”

Here are the submitted responses to *The News Reporter’s* candidate survey for the Whiteville City Schools District 2 seat. Answers were edited for brevity and clarity.



Staff photo by Justin Smith

Rev. David A. Flowers

What is your age?

74

How long have you lived in Whiteville?

Since 1970

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Margie Flowers, Monique Flowers and David Flowers Jr.

Please describe your education:

Associate Degree from Southeastern CC; Bachelor of Arts, Shaw University and Master's in Divinity from Morehouse School of Religion.

Have you held or do you currently hold elected or appointed office?

I have over 25 years as a member of the Whiteville City Board of Education.

What is your current occupation?:

Retiree from Southeastern Community College and pastor of Central Baptist Missionary Church.

Please describe your professional experience:

Worked with an educational program (Upward Bound) for 22 years serving high school students.

Why are you running for office?:

I have a passion for children and their future success. My background as a pastor also enables me to serve all children and their families in a professional, understanding and caring manner.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

Because of my extensive experience as a board member and my understanding of policy changes has prepared me to hold this position.

How would you ensure

DISTRICT 2

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students stay safe while at school?

I support the current safety procedures and drills that are now in place with SROs at every school. Also, the security entrance into buildings only allowed through permission granted by office staff.

How do you plan to increase school grades and overall student success?

As a whole, we have to continue to inspect what we expect the children to do. This entails assessing where problems or deficiencies are, and then approach them with strategies that will improve performances.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

As a whole, we have to continue to inspect what we expect the children to do. This entails assessing where problems or deficiencies are, and then approach them with strategies that will improve performances.



Contributed photo

Jason Wayne Elleby

What is your age?

33

How long have you lived in Whiteville?

Seven years

Please list your immediate family members (optional):

Heather And Bobby Brown, parents; Valerie King-Mclean, aunt/mom; Dwayne King, Deanna King, Victoria King and Lee Hemingway, siblings; Ramel Elleby and Matthew Davis, sons

Please describe your education:

South Columbus High School, Shaw University.

Have you held or do you

currently hold elected or appointed office?

No, I don't hold nor have I held a seat.

What is your current occupation?:

Financial services representative at the State Employees Credit Union

Please describe your professional experience:

I have 10+ years in the financial industry; I also worked for the Columbus County Department of Social Services Child Support and was a part of *The News Reporter's* "15 Under 40" 2018 Class.

Why are you running for office?:

I'm running because I believe all students deserve a high quality education and teachers deserve respect and the best instructional resources, I can be the liaison to build trust for family, community and school.

Why are you qualified to hold this position?:

I'm not running for a seat with a goal of achieving a political agenda. My goals are to listen, research and

use my experiences as a leader, a community member and a father to govern in a way that will unite and support students, faculty, and the residents of Whiteville City Schools.

How would you ensure students stay safe while at school?

Invest in training and education for students and staff, establish an ID entrance policy, encourage students to be proactive, communicate the importance of security, travel in groups, stay aware of your surroundings, and report suspicious activity

How do you plan to increase school grades and overall student success?

Through accountability and targeted interventions.

- Increase data reactivity. It is not just collecting results but providing teachers with the time and resources to plan, assess and reteach students.
- Sponsoring programs like

Talent Search and 21st century learning to see how they can help bridge the gap. (Check if your county has these or similar remedial programs).

- SIT team plans need to be followed with fidelity and include targets that are research proven to impact student growth. Reinforce board support of AIG programming and rigor for proficient students. Dedication to growing that demographic to prevent regression.

- Evaluating the protocols surrounding observations to ensure teachers receive quality feedback followed by adequate support to enact changes.

- Increase access to pedagogical and curricular support for staff.

What is another issue or policy proposal that you plan to address?

Making sure we are recruiting highly qualified teachers and making sure they have a clear path of getting national board certified.



IRVIN ENZOR

#ENZOR3FORDISTRICT3

I Appreciate Your Vote!

★ BOARD OF EDUCATION DISTRICT 3 ★

Education ★ Community Service ★ Leadership

- ★ Grew up local (Columbus County Resident 52 Years)
- ★ Married (Tiffany 25 years, daughter Kennedy)
- ★ West Columbus High School Graduate - 1988
- ★ SCC (College transfer 1988-1989)
- ★ Campbell University (College transfer 1989-1990)
- ★ UNCP (BS Undergraduate Degree 1993)
- ★ ECU (MBA Graduate Student 2020-Present)
- ★ Leadership Columbus (Graduate 2022)
- ★ UCB, BB&T, Truist AVP (27.5 years)
- ★ SCC Workforce Development Evening Instructor (5 years)

Paid for by the committee to elect Irvin Enzor

