

Open Work Session

County Council Interviews with Republican Central Committee Nominees for District 2 Seat June 18, 2019

Ms. Julie Brewington came before Council and said she has known all of them for many years. She said she has been involved in this community for well over a decade in terms of community involvement trying to help the way she sees best, and political involvement as well. She said, as Council well knows, she ran for County Council At-Large last year, and lost to Mr. McCain. She said she did not intend to be there today, and, actually, it was not her intention to apply for this position after last year. She said she had a lot of people approach her and ask her to do so, and it gave her pause for thought, but still was a little bit reluctant. She said she then took a look at the voting in District 2, and the votes she got were pretty impressive. She said she felt, if they were to honor the citizens the best way they could, look at continuity of the Council, and someone who could be reelected, she felt compelled to offer up her services. She said she will serve if the County chooses her, and she will happily dedicate herself to do the best for this County. She said she thinks they all know her well enough to understand her positions, and she certainly has respect and admiration for all of them who have chosen to offer themselves to the public. She said there are not many people who know better than herself that this is a difficult thing, so she greatly admires their dedication to the County. She said she believes everybody is there for the right reason, and so is she. She said, if they choose to have her join them, she will happily serve, but, if not, that is fine as well. Mr. Cannon thanked her for putting her name forward.

Mr. Hastings said he looked up Ms. Brewington's address, and then asked if she is still at the same address she had before, or is this a different one, to which Ms. Brewington responded, she has moved to Harkin Wharf Road in Eden, which is her primary address, and is also recorded at the Board of Elections. Mr. Hastings said that is across from Pirate's Wharf, to which Ms. Brewington responded, she is in between Green Hill and the Yacht Club, so she has beautiful sunsets there. She said she is renovating the property, and it is her full-time property. She said she is going through some transitions in life, and will be selling the other property.

Mr. Hastings asked, if chosen, what are her top three priorities, to which Ms. Brewington responded, her main concern is to make sure this County is affordable for the residents who live here. She said they want the best quality of life, and they want the best education they can offer, but they also need to make sure they are not taxing people out of this community. She said number two is economic development, which is something that is a big concern for her. She said it has personally touched her, and it has touched a lot of people because there are very limited opportunities on the Shore, and she would like to investigate how they can bring more industry here, and better jobs. She said third is quality of life. She said the things that make this County so beautiful and enjoyable, the natural resources they have here, protecting their waterways, and so forth, are important to her since she lives right on the river. She said those would be her three top priorities.

Mr. McCain said Council has a list of questions, so these are not personal questions or anything. He clarified, they compiled a list, and they are just randomly asking the questions that are on the list. He then asked if she has ever shown herself to be an independent-minded, nonpartisan, fact-based decision maker and leader within their community, to which Ms. Brewington responded, she thinks the answer to that is a resounding yes. She said, as they well know, she serves on the Central Committee for the Republican Party in Wicomico County, and she is in her second term. She said she does not always get

along with her Party for many reasons because she feels that the right thing is the right thing, and she is not afraid to, as she is sure they will know, communicate her thought processes on those things.

Mr. Davis asked how she will bring a unique perspective to this Body, to which Ms. Brewington responded, she thinks she has had a lot of years of experience, and she thinks she is the most qualified candidate they have to choose from. She said she has lived and was raised on the Eastern Shore, has worked in business here, and has worked in politics on a grassroots level, and in an official capacity. She said she has interacted with all the Councilmembers on many different occasions. She said she knows the issues of the County, and she knows a tremendous amount of people in this County who are free to speak to her because she is the most open person, and they can tell her anything, and she would welcome that. She said she feels that her uniqueness is that she has probably the most experience of anyone they will speak to.

Mr. Holloway said the County's Charter is a document that spells out the powers, duties and structures of Government, and the rights of citizens. He then asked how familiar she is with the County Charter, to which Ms. Brewington responded, she is familiar inasmuch that there have been some recent changes. She said she tried to familiarize herself on this, and she certainly looked up the Charter that was applicable to this position. She said it is a rather large document, so, as issues arise, she will know how to reference the document, look at it, and understand how it applies to whatever the subject may be.

Mr. Cannon said most people are very familiar with the issues Countywide, and, of course, it is always in the paper. He said, as much as they would like to keep it out of the paper, they cannot always help that. He said he did not know if Ms. Brewington was familiar with any issues, or if there were any specific items in reference to District 2. He said Mr. Kilmer was an excellent representative because he was always talking to everyone in his District, so he did not know if Ms. Brewington was familiar with any issues in District 2 specifically that she thinks maybe will need to be brought to Council's attention, to which Ms. Brewington responded, she is not specifically aware of any particular main issues. She said she has spent time in Sharptown, and spent time in all of District 2 when she ran for Office, and she lives in a very rural area there, so there are only a couple of farmers she has talked to. She said it would be her intent and great desire to make sure she attends all events in District 2 and get to know what concerns people, address it to the best of her ability, be very active in that District, and make sure people know that she is open and approachable to bring up any concerns they may have.

Mr. Hastings said more recently there has been a lot of news coverage about the difference between the Executive and Legislative Branches, and what their roles are. Ms. Brewington said she is old enough to remember when there was not a County Executive, and this Body took care of everything. She said that is kind of her preferred, but it is what it is. She said she certainly understands the roles, and, for the layman, she would liken it to the Governor and Legislative Body in the State of Maryland, and Council is the Legislative Body. She said she would like to see better relationships in those areas, but she does not know what she can add. She said she feels she has good relationships with all of Council, and she feels like she has a good relationship with Mr. Culver, so that is all she really has to add to that.

Mr. McCain asked why she wants to be on the County Council, and does she have an agenda she would like to share, to which Ms. Brewington responded, as she stated when she first sat down, it really was not her intent. She said she wanted to do it last year, and she has sought public office before. She said the only way she really can explain it, and some of them may understand because they find themselves in public service also, but it must be in her DNA. She said her uncle was Homer White, who was a Delegate and Senator Democrat in the State. She said her dad was a World War II veteran, so there is

service to the State, and, actually, she has relatives that were involved in the Constitution of the State of Maryland. She said she did not know any of this going into this, but she just felt a call to be the voice of people, and, when she looks back, she understands she is wired for it. She said that is the only real explanation she can give them, that she wants to help.

Mr. Cannon asked what her position is on education, to which Ms. Brewington responded, she thinks they need the best education they can offer. She said her concern is that they see an expanding cost to that without a great deal of accountability. She said she sees expansions to programs that are involving preschool, and, while the intent, she feels, is very good, and she wishes they could do everything, she has a lot of concerns about going over maintenance of effort and making this County less affordable. She said the key would be a balance somehow that there is accountability to the money they are spending so they can offer the best. She said they have to do the best they can for all children in this County because it is their responsibility, and she truly believes that. She said some kids do not have the advantages of others, and that is just a fact, but how they do it that is responsible to the people paying the tab is also extremely important. She said, while the best of intentions are the best of intentions, any thought to increasing stress on a family is something that really, really needs to give pause for thought. Mr. Cannon asked her to clarify what she means by "increasing stress on a family," to which Ms. Brewington responded, if they are accommodating these extra costs by increasing taxes on local residents. Mr. Cannon said they are not raising any taxes.

Mr. Holloway said the person selected must reside in Councilmanic District 2. He then asked if she is a full-time resident of District 2, and to please explain how she meets this qualification, to which Ms. Brewington responded, as explained earlier, she moved to Harkin Wharf Road as a result of the divorce, and that is her permanent residence.

Ms. Brewington said she wants to reiterate that the reason she is there is she believes she is the one person who will be able to be reelected, and she thinks that is important to Council for continuity. She said she also believes, if they are looking at the integrity of Marc Kilmer and his position, she is very closely aligned, certainly, with his economic beliefs. She said, if they look at the numbers in District 2, it made her realize she had to call and come to see Council to talk to them about this because the numbers speak for themselves.

Mr. Joe Collins came before Council. Mr. Cannon asked Mr. Collins to give Council a brief bio, and told him they have some prepared questions, and some they may want to ask off the cuff. Mr. Collins said he came to the Shore and Wicomico County in 1991, and moved to Mardela in 1998. He said his first job was flying for a corporation here in Wicomico County, and was kind of his first flying job out of college after the military. He said he lived in the Northwood Industrial Park in a trailer making \$1,000 a month for a local company. He said he met a really wonderful young lady, and they dated for a long time and decided to get married and settle down and have a family. He said he worked on his craft of aviation all these years, but 9/11 took him through a furlough that took him working in Puerto Rico and Denver, Colorado, and then he ended up coming back to the major airline he works for based in Washington, DC. He said, through a bankruptcy process, they lost their retirement, and he became involved in their Pilot's Association. He said that is another Board he serves on currently, which is the Allied Pilots Association where he is a Board Member, and there are 600 pilots in DC who he is responsible for. He said that is one of the things that he does. He said, moving back home, he knows some of them were on Council back when he wanted to get involved with political experience, and understand more about what was happening. He said each job he has had here in the County, be it the Redistricting Committee, the Central Committee, or the Board of Elections, each have had a certain kind of set of operational

requirements and rules to follow, and he has tried to do that. He said he would say, in retrospect, his viewpoint of Governance has grown over the years, and to Govern means to find a way forward being considerate of both sides and many viewpoints, and then finding the best way forward for those they are charged with representing. He said that is a view that maybe he did not always understand fully until the Governor appointed him to the Board of Elections position, and understanding budgets and what an unfunded mandate is, and things of that nature, and really coming to understand what all that means for the taxpayer, and for local businesses large and small.

Mr. McCain said Council has several questions, and there is no particular order to these or anything, and they are not personal questions of each of Council, but they just compiled these together, and they are random, but they are each going to ask him some of these questions. He then asked, if he is chosen to be the new Council person, what would be his top three priorities, to which Mr. Collins responded, the first thing that comes into his mind is to represent his District, and all the citizens of Wicomico County. He said he would comply with the US Constitution, the State Constitution, and the County Charter. He said, if they are asking about Legislative priorities, or things that are important to him, the people who have no voice, and education would be important to him, and agriculture is important to him. He said he lives rural, and always has his entire life, and that is something that is important to him. He said, again, clean water, and good schools, but that is off the top of his head.

Mr. Davis asked Mr. Collins how he has shown himself to be an independent minded, nonpartisan, fact-based decision maker and leader within the community, to which Mr. Collins responded, his work on the Board of Elections for which he would invite Council to speak with Ms. Sharon Morris or Ms. Katrina Purnell, and he thinks they would be able to tell Council. He added, his work on the Redistricting Committee whereby he thinks just about every vote was 100 percent in unison, just like very, very many votes at the Board of Elections. He said, working across the aisle, and being able to find a way forward that everyone agrees on he thinks has real value for the community.

Mr. Holloway asked Mr. Collins how he would bring a unique perspective to this Body as the Council Legislative Branch. Mr. Holloway clarified, what would he offer different than some of the other Council people, or what would his approach be, to which Mr. Collins responded, again, he is employed, essentially, outside of the County, and he makes his living in the air, so he is exposed to a lot of different people from a lot of different communities. He said he is in very good, experienced company, and he has observed decisions that have been made that have taken all concerned into consideration. He said that is a tough question, and he hopes he, or whoever the choice may be, will represent the people of his district as well as Mr. Marc Kilmer has, at least in his experience in talking with the people he represented. He said that would be job one, but, again, as someone who is always considerate of agriculture, and that is important to him, but he is in very good company, and hopes that his job would be to get along and learn.

Mr. Cannon said the County Charter established priorities, and is sort of the document they have to follow that defines duties between the Legislative Branch, and he was just curious how familiar Mr. Collins is with it, and whether he has had the opportunity to be that familiar with the Charter, to which Mr. Collins responded, over the weekend he read through the County Charter. He said he also read Hebron, Sharptown, and Mardela's Charters because those are on the west side, and people who are important to him, so he tried to familiarize himself with all of those. He said Section 802 was interesting, which is the one that deals with it taking five votes to fund something where there is not a bid process, so he found that interesting because he was not aware of that prior to actually combing through the

Charter and seeing that. He said, again, with each job he has had, and especially his career, there are a set of rules to follow, and he is duty and honor bound to follow those rules.

Mr. Hastings said there are certainly Countywide problems that need to be resolved, but there are also problems specific to District 2. He then asked if Mr. Collins can name some of the concerns that have been recently discussed in District 2, to which Mr. Collins responded, probably the most recent is there have been some concerns about sludge and its composition makeup. He said, again, there are many farmers that use that material, and there are farmers who do not. He said it is his understanding that currently the County cannot Legislate looking backwards, but they can look at things going forward. He said, on the west side, specifically, they have had flooding issues, and he understands there are landfill issues, and nursing homes out on the west side that need to be considered, and these are all things that would be important to him. He said he would be remiss if he did not mention Barren Creek Road.

Mr. McCain said the person who is selected, obviously, has to reside in District 2. He clarified, they have asked this question of each candidate. He then asked if Mr. Collins is a full-time resident of District 2, and, if not, can he explain how he meets this qualification, to which Mr. Collins responded, he lives on Taylor's Trail in Mardela Springs, MD. He said he built a home in a field starting in 1998, and only recently just finished, but he has been there the whole time, and never left. Mr. Holloway asked him if he plans on staying, to which Mr. Collins responded, yes sir, he plans on staying.

Mr. Davis asked Mr. Collins to explain the differences between the Executive and Legislative Branches of Government, to which Mr. Collins responded, they have an Executive form of Government. He said, as he recalls from his reading, Council can actually vote to end that. He said he believes there is something in the Charter. Mr. Cannon clarified, Council can vote to put that in a referendum, but Mr. Collins is right. Mr. Collins said the money is here, and the Executive Power rests with the Executive.

Mr. Holloway asked why he wants to be on the County Council, and if he has an agenda he would like to share. He said he thinks Mr. Collins already answered that earlier about some of the issues, to which Mr. Collins responded, he has no agenda other than to serve his community, which is important to him, and, frankly, because he was asked. He said he knows they all have a very hard decision, and there have been four very well-qualified people. He said he will respect the decision this Body makes, and he is sure it is going to be the right one for the District, and for the people of Wicomico County. Mr. Holloway then asked if he will run for reelection if he is appointed this time, to which Mr. Collins responded, he is wired to say yes, of course, but that will ultimately be up to how well he serves his constituency.

Mr. Cannon said it seems like the biggest issues that always come before Council always seem to revolve around land use. He said Mr. Collins touched briefly on the fact that there is a 300 million gallon tank of sludge, and that is land use based on the fact that the people who own that property have the right to do what they want with the property, but there is also the balance about the rights of the people who live next door. He said those are always the most controversial issues, so he just wonders how Mr. Collins sees the lay of the land when it comes to agricultural, property rights, zoning issues, septic systems, and things like that, to which Mr. Collins responded, he would seek his peers on Council, and look at applicable State and County laws, and then hopefully make a successful decision among them all.

Mr. Cannon asked where Mr. Collins stands with education. He said Imagine 2022 is being put out there with pre-K, and a direction as far as where the Superintendent wants to go over the next few years, and he does not know if Mr. Collins has had a chance for any input on that, to which Mr. Collins responded,

he would need to familiarize himself with that more, but he will tell them that he is a fan of keeping Mardela in Mardela.

Mr. Holloway said Mr. Kilmer resigned, but he spent a lot of time servicing his constituents, and traveling around not just necessarily his District, but on the west side where Mr. Davis is too, such as the fire departments. He said, to be somebody who was not from here, because Mr. Kilmer did not grow up here, he became accepted pretty rapidly, and had a lot of folks who thought a lot of him. He then asked if Mr. Collins would be willing to step up and spend that kind of dedicated time like Mr. Kilmer did, to which Mr. Collins responded, of course. He said he has friends in all the west side communities from Sharptown to Mardela, to Nanticoke and Bivalve, and Hebron as well. He said he went to church for many, many years at Athol Baptist, and now he goes to a church in Hebron. He said he has friends in many places throughout the County. Mr. Cannon asked if Mr. Collins feels like he would have the time, to which Mr. Collins responded, yes sir, absolutely. He said he would make the time because that is what the job entails, and that is what he agreed to sign up for.

Mr. Hastings asked if Mr. Collins is able to be flexible with his current job, to which Mr. Collins responded, that is a great question, and is an important issue. He said his schedule is dictated to him a month in advance. He said there are some points where he has some flexibility, but it is not always guaranteed flexibility, so that is an issue whereby he needs to plan it out. He said usually he has to start submitting a scheduling bid around the 10th of the month, so he really wants to have something set for the coming month. He said he was able to successfully do that around elections times for the Board of Elections, and there have been other times where he has the ability for Board of Elections meetings to telepresence, but he does not think they can do that here, nor would he want to. Mr. Holloway said the Council meetings are set years in advance, to which Mr. Collins responded, and he will tell them, as an experiment, he actually was able to bid this month successfully to be able to be there. He said he, essentially, overlaid Mr. Kilmer's schedule onto his own, and he was able to successfully bid that schedule.

Mr. Holloway asked if he has spent some time with Mr. Kilmer talking about the issues of his District and the west side, to which Mr. Collins responded, absolutely, and he could go into greater detail. He said he considered calling key folks in each of the communities, but he really did not want to be perceived as someone who is really trying to drive and politic to get this job. He said it has nothing to do with not having a desire to serve, but the method in which he seeks to represent his constituents, which would be, again, with fairness and outreach to all communities, and ensuring everyone feels they have a voice.

Mr. Collins said he is honored that he has even been considered for this position. He said he would ask Mr. McCain, or anyone else, that he hopes he is judged by his body of work that he holds, and he is here before Council today. He said Ms. Sharon Morris once said Government must be experienced to be understood, and, certainly, working on the Board of Elections has taught him that no truer words were spoken. He said it truly means reaching out and finding common ground, and finding a way forward.

Mr. Cannon said Council appreciates Mr. Collins taking the time, and they appreciate him offering to be in this position. He then congratulated him on being one of the chosen four. There was no further discussion.

Signatures on next page

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June 18, 2019




John T. Cannon, President



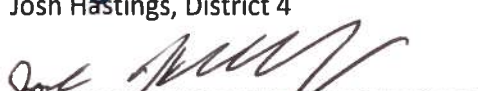
Larry W. Dodd, Vice President, District 3




Ernest A. Davis, District 1



Josh Hastings, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5



William R. McCain, At-Large



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator