

# City of Falls Church Candidates for City Council and School Board Questionnaire Responses

*Questions Prepared by  
The Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society*



September 28, 2023

**The Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society**  
(VPIS) is a non-partisan 501(c)(3) organization that encourages civic engagement  
and participation in the democratic process

**VPIS City of Falls Church Local Candidate Questionnaire**

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## VPIS City of Falls Church Local Candidate Questionnaire

**Candidate: Erin Flynn**

**Address:** 222 Little Falls Street

**Years Lived in the City of Falls Church:** 2.5 years; I've regularly visited family here for 10+ years

**Career fields / or occupations:** Law; I'm an attorney and supervisor at the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, where I've worked since 2010

**Educational achievement:** J.D., *summa cum laude*, University of Pennsylvania Law School; B.A., Yale



**City Boards or Commissions served:** N/A

**In what organizations have you been active that helped prepare you for office?**

VPIS (Board Member before stepping down b/c of my candidacy); Dulin Preschool, Mt. Daniel Elem. Sch. (classroom volunteer); DOJ – in addition to my legal work, I'm involved in hiring and supervision and helped craft our Division's flexible work options policy and expand its mentoring program; The Legal Aid Society of NYC.

**Campaign Website or Facebook Page (if any):** [www.flynnforfallschurch.com](http://www.flynnforfallschurch.com)

### 1. Why do you want to serve, or continue to serve, on the Council?

I want to make sure City policy responds to community concerns, enjoys strong community support, and embraces that which makes Falls Church unique—its small-town feel, community-mindedness, excellent schools, local businesses, and walkable, tree-lined streets. Residents love Falls Church; many also share specific concerns. These include the current pace of development and the pressure it may place on City infrastructure, services, and schools; increased traffic and speed and pedestrian and cyclist safety; and the loss of mature trees. I'll seek to address these concerns and others, including affordability, fully engage on each issue, and make decisions that move us forward together.

I'll bring to Council fifteen years of government service focused on States and localities. As an attorney, I understand both the constraints and the power of the law. I'm experienced in quickly synthesizing information, identifying core issues, soliciting input, weighing diverse perspectives, reconciling competing interests, and making thoughtful, balanced decisions.

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### 2. What policies are most important to you?

I will prioritize the reliable delivery of City services, including by making sure we have the necessary workforce and infrastructure to attend to basic needs; appropriately scaled development that protects the pedestrian experience and avoids increased traffic on local streets; and preserving the tree canopy and green space, improving stormwater management, and implementing sound environmental policy that responds to the climate crisis.

I will adhere to strong fiscal policies and use the full extent of the Council approval process to respond to changing needs and secure the best possible outcomes for City residents.

### 3. With significant turnover of City staff, how would you approach the challenge of rebuilding and sustaining City services?

I've confronted staffing shortages and budget constraints, all while continuing to meet organizational missions. During staffing shortages, it's important to reprioritize work and streamline processes to make sure essential tasks—especially those related to public safety and basic services—are uninterrupted. It's critical to recognize employees' work, seek to boost morale, and provide open channels of communication. For hiring, both job postings and targeted outreach can increase the applicant pool; internship, apprenticeship, and partnership programs can increase exposure to the City's work. Most importantly, compensation and benefits must be competitive, and employees should have a clear path to increased responsibility. The City also should explore increased workforce housing if vacancies persist.

Last year the City was considerably understaffed; residents noticed the difference. Council should increase its oversight by requiring regular staffing reports. The City can use exit interviews, and seek feedback from candidates who decline a job offer, to help identify areas for improvement.

### 4. Would you support stronger policies to maintain or even increase the number of trees in future development plans?

Yes. Mature trees are integral to reducing air and ground temperature, managing stormwater, combating pollution, supporting wildlife, counteracting urban heat islands, and improving community health. The City has tree-canopy requirements for residential zones; it has no such requirements for business and commercial districts. I'd impose such requirements, as state law permits the City to do, and also explore requiring replacement trees. Separately, City Council hasn't been forceful enough in securing tree coverage and green space in recent developments. Founders Row is a prominent example.

I advocated for a 15% minimum tree canopy in T-zones and sought to preserve mature trees. I also raised concerns regarding the plans for the Park Avenue Great Streets project, which threatens mature trees along Park Avenue unless strong preventative measures are taken. To promote increased walking and biking, the City should preserve mature trees and capitalize on their aesthetic, economic, and environmental value.

### 5. What is your view of the permitted density in Falls Church's single-family neighborhoods?

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Zoning codes provide predictability and help reconcile competing concerns. I don't take altering them lightly, and certainly wouldn't do so before significant public outreach and feedback that demonstrates a broad consensus for doing so. By the end of next year, the City will have 1500 more housing units than in 2020, with another 700 units soon following if One City Center and the senior housing at West Falls and Quinn/Homestretch are built. The City shouldn't invite a possibly bitter missing-middle debate before gauging the effects of recent development on housing availability, demand for City services, and City finances. And it should improve sidewalks, streets, and bike infrastructure before further increasing density.

The City should focus on preserving the over 100 affordable dwelling units at Pearson Square and The Fields that will expire in the next five years. If not, it risks displacing residents and losing important socioeconomic diversity despite other affordable housing efforts.

### **6. Would you support new City investments, or stronger ordinances for new commercial and residential construction, to expand on-site green infrastructure in the City?**

Yes. The City should enact stronger ordinances, subject to state law, and use the Council approval process to reduce impervious surfaces, increase the tree canopy, and address stormwater runoff. It should closely monitor construction projects to minimize adverse effects on local streams and parks. And it should fund green infrastructure as part of the CIP, as well as more modest programs like RainSmart.

Parts of our zoning code provide for low impact design that we should replicate elsewhere. This includes capturing runoff from roof gutters and parking areas via rain barrels, vegetated swales, underground storage containers, or other infiltration- or retention-based systems; pervious paving for parking, patios, and walkways; permeable driveways; and green or living roofs. The City should continue to enlist the help of Boards and Commissions and civic groups in this effort.

### **7. What policies and investments would you support to help the City meet its climate change goals and commitments?**

The City and its residents and businesses must act together to reduce GHG emissions and prepare for more extreme weather. I support the Government Operations Energy Action Plan, as well as the adoption of the Community Energy Plan, and I look forward to completion of the Urban Forest Management Plan. I will work closely with staff, Boards and Commissions, other localities, and civic groups to harness our collective power to meet these goals.

Council can support these plans by making sure their most important elements, and those with the largest return on investment, are timely implemented and funded. This includes funding personnel to handle coordination, advocacy, and public outreach. CIP projects must stay on track, and the City should seek outside funds to help finance solar technology; necessary upgrades; vehicle and fleet optimization; and workforce education. Council must use its approval process to seek sustainable buildings and green infrastructure. The City should seek to incentivize building upgrades and make biking and public transport easier, including through bus rapid transit.

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**Candidate:** Letty Hardi

**Address:** 125 S. Spring St.

**Years Lived in the City of Falls Church:** 20

**Career fields / or occupations:** Director, Capital One  
(project management, financial services, marketing)

**Educational achievement:** Bachelors, Economics &  
Psychology - University of Virginia City

**Boards or Commissions served:** Elected to City  
Council 2016-present



**In what organizations have you been active that helped prepare you for office?** PTAs, Liaison to various City Boards & Commissions, Fairfax Volunteer Solutions, Falls Church Forward

**Campaign Website or Facebook Page (if any):** [www.lettyhardi.org](http://www.lettyhardi.org)  
[www.facebook.com/lettyhardifcc](https://www.facebook.com/lettyhardifcc)

### 1. Why do you want to serve, or continue to serve, on the Council?

I've had the honor of serving for 8 years and I'm running for re-election because I'm committed to a city that is more vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable. I first ran to be a "new voice" representing multiple generations in the city, which drove the priorities I've worked on our behalf: a new high school, library, city hall, parks, sidewalks, traffic calming, big strides in affordable housing, public art, and a more vibrant, walkable city – powered by smart development, new businesses, and financial stewardship, at an even lower tax rate than 13 years ago. I am proud to have had a hand in each of these results. I promised that I'd serve with transparency and thoughtfulness

I bring strong communication, organization, and analytical skills to city policy decisions, do my homework, understand the details, ask questions, host office hours, and write a weekly blog. I believe active citizen engagement is critical and I have seen the results of that pay off. Even if we disagree, I share my thinking on a weekly basis to find common ground and make local government accessible. Eight years later, I am no longer the new voice, yet it is this different season of life that became the resolve to keep building on our accomplishments and to run for re-election. As both my kids and parents/in laws get older, our responsibility to the future is that much clearer to me. With so much opportunity in front of us, we can keep preserving the best of our small town charm while working towards a more sustainable and welcoming community and a high quality of life for all. I am grateful to have met so many of you, listened, and served our community; I hope to earn your vote again this fall and keep us moving forward.

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### 2. What policies are most important to you? What policies may need changing?

**1/ Housing for All** – affordable and diverse housing so all generations, incomes, and backgrounds can call Falls Church home. We've made significant strides with 50% more affordable units coming online in the next 2 years, but still need to preserve what we already have and create more housing options - where seniors can age in place, graduates can afford to return home, families of all kinds can attend our top-notch schools, smaller, starter homes can once again co-exist in neighborhoods, and homeownership can be a reality for more. We already have a healthy queue of redevelopment in our commercial area and because we don't want a multi-acre project on every corner, we have been encouraging adaptive reuse, infill projects, and more diverse housing types, so we can have homes beyond single family homes and apartments.

**2/ Accessibility for All** – walkable, bikeable, and safer streets. Our evolution from a car-centric culture means we need to keep advancing safer and accessible streets, sidewalks, protected bike lanes, and traffic calming. At 2 square miles, we truly can be that 15 minute city for anyone who chooses to live car-free (which helps those aging in place or just want to live more sustainably) which frees up roads for those visiting outside the city or who truly need to drive.

**3/ Sustainable Environment** – protect and maintain our natural environment by expanding our sustainability initiatives: preserve and grow our already high tree canopy, improve resilience to climate change with stormwater infrastructure. Upgrade our existing buildings and develop new green building standards. Our parks and trails are rated one of the top amenities by our residents - let's keep it up.

**4/ Excellent City Services and Schools** - our city has always valued public education and high quality services. FCCPS is a big part of our city's renown and our budget, so we need to continue strong collaboration on financial and capital planning and ensure city services across the board continue to meet residents' and business' needs.

**5/ Fiscal Stewardship** – in recent years, we've made generational investments across the city in a fiscally responsible way: we've grown our tax base, lowered the tax rate 12.5 cents and maintained a triple A bond rating. Yet with high inflation and high cost of living in the region, affordability remains a top concern so we need to keep treating taxpayer dollars as if they were our own with every budget cycle. We should continue to diversify our tax base with smart development and strong local businesses, which means the burden on individual households is smaller. As evident by strong year-over-year growth in local taxes and number of new businesses, our strategy is making a difference.

### 3. With significant turnover of City staff, how would you approach the challenge of rebuilding and sustaining City services?

The City was not immune to the national "great resignation" post-Covid. And while we saw high turnover in certain job families, vacancies have started returning to more normal levels. As the new chair of the Government Operations Committee on City Council since 2021, we have been reviewing vacancy, attrition, and hiring metrics with staff on a regular basis, discussed root

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causes and strategies for improvement and if re-elected, I'll continue that practice. Additionally, we funded a salary benchmarking study to ensure that our salaries were competitive and made adjustments to compensate for wage inflation, which needs to be on a regular cadence City Council has continued to support competitive compensation with increases at mid-year, end of year budget cycles, and at parity to increases in FCCPS. That said, compensation is often only part of the equation for job satisfaction - City Council has also supported additional leadership and training opportunities as investments in our workforce, as I strongly believe a strong workforce is foundational to delivering the high quality of service and capital projects our taxpayers desire.

### **4.. Would you support stronger policies to maintain or even increase the number of trees and green spaces in future development plans?**

Yes, I support strong policies for trees and green spaces. However, according to the city arborist and the best available data, the city's tree canopy coverage has held steadily at 46%, which meets/exceeds the region's goal for tree canopy. That doesn't mean we can't do better. I share the dismay when clearcutting happens in residential redevelopment, yet it is not widely known enough that our tree canopy code is already the strictest as allowed by Virginia (20% canopy in 10 years) despite continued lobbying efforts in Richmond every year. For commercial redevelopment, as the City Council's liaison to the Urban Forestry Commission since 2021, I've encouraged that board to recommend tree canopy and green space % standards for new commercial developments vs rely on negotiations via the Special Exception process. That work is now underway by the UFC. I'm also proud that in my tenure, the City has purchased the Fellows Property, adding 2 acres of open space as a future park, where the master park planning has been underway the past year. We should keep looking for strategic open space acquisitions.

### **5. What is your view of the permitted density in Falls Church's single-family neighborhoods (zones, R1-A and R1-B)?**

Addressing the housing crisis is a responsibility we share with our region, and therefore we shouldn't solve it in isolation. We should look at best practices and strategies that are working elsewhere and identify if and how to apply them to Falls Church. I don't have a preconceived "density per lot" target, but I do believe that increasing housing choices in terms of size and price should be an overarching policy goal. I also believe that what many localities have done to limit the total footprint of any new buildings to the size already allowed for single-family houses, making any changes essentially neutral in terms of impact on stormwater and trees, is a smart way to balance multiple priorities.

### **6. Would you support new City investments, or stronger ordinances for new commercial and residential construction, to expand on-site green infrastructure in the City?**

A common misunderstanding is that commercial redevelopments contribute to stormwater issues. Commercial projects have replaced land with mostly impervious parking lots and older buildings. and we negotiate improvements in stormwater, resulting in less runoff than what was there before. In contrast - on an annual basis, residential redevelopment impacts far more land (as small single family homes are replaced with much bigger homes) than changes in our



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commercial corridor. I'd love to see stronger upfront policy changes for residential redevelopment that slows down the increase of impervious surfaces in our neighborhoods and reduces clear cutting of mature trees. For example, Arlington County has adopted a 3" of stormwater retention requirement for residential redevelopment and I've advocated for our city staff to consider a similar ordinance. While the City Council has funded the "Big 6" gray infrastructure projects underway with bigger and newer storm pipes, I agree that green infrastructure projects that slow down/reduce runoff and improve water quality merit more attention so I would support further investment beyond the first green infrastructure in the Greening of Lincoln project, which is underway.

### **7. What policies and investments would you support to help the City meet its climate change goals and commitments?**

As a Sierra Club-endorsed candidate this year and previously, I believe we have a huge responsibility to meet our climate change goals and therefore, a sustainable city is a core part of my vision. My specific priorities and investments center around reducing energy use and supporting transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources in buildings and transportation (as they are our largest sources of GHGs):

**1/** While municipal buildings/transportation make up only 3% of the city's GHGs, we should look to retrofit other city buildings as renovation/modernization of systems are scheduled and continue the green fleet transition. Our Environmental Sustainability Council (ESC) also has recommendations for us around RECs and PPAs to move the city to more renewable energy which I'd support. For the private sector, while we've set a new high bar of LEED Gold in new commercial buildings, we should also adopt green building standards. We've begun by negotiating electric only appliances in the most recent special exception approval. We can encourage private homeowners to "green" their homes via energy audits, improving energy efficiency, electrifying systems, weatherization, etc.

**2/** On the transportation front, the city has a role in providing infrastructure that make it easier for residents and visitors to be less auto-centric - investing in sidewalks, bikeshare, bike lanes, transit and first/last mile connections, and lowering the barrier for adoption of EVs via ideas like more charging stations - all of which we've increased funding in our budgets, have been in our work plans over the past 6-8 years, and as a result we've delivered on projects like Dual Trails of the W&OD, Capital Bikeshare, new sidewalks, crosswalks, ADA ramps, bus shelters. I also take pride in specifically advocating for sidewalk-specific funding in our operating budgets and efforts to reduce "missing links" in our sidewalk network, which is now a standing item that is funded every year. There remains more to do as the transition from a car-centric 1950s suburb to a more walkable/bikeable city is slow and costly **3/** Improve the city's resilience to climate change - as we are already dealing with the effects of stronger and more frequent extreme weather events due to climate change, continuing to invest in stormwater infrastructure and tree canopy will help the city improve resilience [See above answers for urban forest in #4 and stormwater in #6]

## VPIS City of Falls Church Local Candidate Questionnaire

**Candidate:** Tim Stevens

**Address:** 106 Gresham Pl, Falls Church, VA 22046

**Years Lived in the City of Falls Church:** 32

**Career fields / or occupations:** Telecommunications and owner of small wine shop

**Educational achievement:** B.A. Economics and English - Loyola University Chicago

**City Boards or Commissions served:** Planning Commission (chair), ESC (chair), School Downsize Committee, Stormwater Credit Task Group



**In what organizations have you been active that helped prepare you for office?** In addition to above: VPIS, CBC, Bike Falls Church, Falls Church Climate Action Network, Sierra Club (treasurer state chapter), Congress for the New Urbanism, Strong Towns, Council of Governments Climate Environment and Energy Policy Committee, EDA, EDC, AAB, Docent Supreme Court.

**Campaign Website or Facebook Page** [stevensforfallschurch.com](http://stevensforfallschurch.com)

**1. Why do you want to serve, or continue to serve, on the Council?**

What relevant skills to you bring? For the last 15 years I have been very active in many Falls Church City organizations. I have observed (and worked to help achieve) the steady progress the City has made towards financial security, environmental sustainability, walkability, renovating key buildings (including a fantastic new high school), housing and many other areas. I want to see this progress continue. Being involved with Boards and Commissions (chairing two of them) and other civic organizations (including VPIS) has enabled me to become very familiar with this City and its people. Having owned a small business, I am familiar with the challenges faced by small commercial entities.

**2. What policies are most important to you?**

What policies may need changing? Our policy objective of eliminating most greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and preparing for more extreme weather conditions is important. Other important policies are improving conditions for walking, biking and transit, examining ways to make our City more welcoming - especially in the area of housing for lower income and first time buyers - maintaining the high quality of our schools and public safety, and supporting our business community. Looking for ways to maintain our small-town atmosphere is also important.

**3. With significant turnover of City staff, how would you approach the challenge of rebuilding and sustaining City services?**

Those of us who have been in the City for a few decades can recall the excellent level of public services we enjoyed in past years. We need to methodically work through the issues that are causing less than desired levels of public services and commit to achieving improvement. Compensation and working conditions required by employees are evolving and we need to ensure we are keeping up with those needs. My impression is that our school administrators have met with greater success in addressing the needs of their employees than have the administrators of the general government, and we should learn from their efforts.

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4. **Would you support stronger policies to maintain or even increase the number of trees?**

I supported Annette Mills' efforts to launch the Neighborhood Tree Program (and I helped plant dozens of trees through this program), so I applaud efforts by VPIS to improve our tree canopy. I support working with our state delegation to craft state legislation giving the City more discretion in protecting trees, so that we can maintain, and even improve, on what is one of the highest tree canopy results in the region. I also appreciate the work of our Urban Forestry Commission and would look to them for ongoing advice for protecting our trees. When we had our house constructed in the City, we arranged to save several mature trees, and I would like to see if there are ways to encourage developers and homeowners to do the same.

5. **What is your view of the permitted density in Falls Church's single-family neighborhoods?**

It is important that review of our planning documents and zoning codes occur on an ongoing basis to account for secular changes in society (e.g. increased working and shopping from homes, acceleration in home prices, intergenerational living preferences, etc.) Just as important as updating these documents is having community discussions - before efforts to change codes. Many jurisdictions have had success with improved allowances for accessory dwelling units (e.g., to enable care for an aging parent) in residential zones. I support examining how our codes could be changed to permit more of these units - following community discussions.

6. **Would you support new City investments, or stronger ordinances for new commercial and residential construction, to expand on-site green infrastructure in the City?**

Traditional reliance on channeling stormwater into local waterways via gray infrastructure needs to be reviewed, as considerable environmental damage can result (e.g. increasing sediment levels in the Chesapeake Bay). I prefer regulations aimed at achieving absorption of stormwater on site, through green infrastructure methods. The Planning Commission recently hosted a speaker from Arlington County who shared their experience with green infrastructure projects on public property. We should learn from their experiences what changes can be made here. We need to look for more ways to help homeowners modify their properties to keep more stormwater on site. Credits for stormwater mitigation have not been reviewed since they were originally adopted a decade ago, so I would support such a review. I appreciate the VPIS Rain smart program and would support continuation of this partnership.

7. **What policies and investments would you support to help the City meet its climate change goals and commitments?**

I take inspiration from the work of Dan Sze, who was a leader both here and regionally regarding climate change, and encouragement from the Sierra Club, Virginia Chapter who endorsed my candidacy. City Council is in the process of adopting climate action plans for City government and the broader community. These plans will enumerate many actions that can be taken to reduce emissions, which I will support, and would work to include it in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The greatest opportunities will be in the areas of reduced emissions in buildings, through improved energy efficiency and use of renewable energy, and reduced emissions from transportation, through reduced use of internal combustion vehicles, and greater reliance on transit. Our mixed-use projects have helped make Falls Church more self-reliant, reducing the need to drive elsewhere for daily needs (for example, our per capita emissions are already at the lower end of the scale for the region). I support financial incentives to encourage our residents and businesses to make the changes needed to reduce emissions. I will continue to encourage all new developments to use electric appliances, and to work with our neighboring jurisdictions to ask our state delegation for legislation to enable us to encourage the transition from gas appliances to electric appliances in existing buildings. Reducing emissions will be an all-hands-on-deck effort, requiring all of us to make changes.

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**Candidate:** Justine Underhill

**Address:** 513 Greenwich Street

**Years Lived in the City of Falls Church:** 2 years

**Career fields / or occupations:** Journalist, Documentary Filmmaker, Finance and Economics Reporter

**Educational achievement:** BA in Economics and Theater & Performing Arts, with a minor in Mathematics from Georgetown University

**City Boards or Commissions served:** Housing Commission



**In what organizations have you been active that helped prepare you for office?**

I was previously elected as an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for Dupont Circle in DC, where I negotiated on behalf of my neighborhood over a large development complex.

I am currently volunteering for a number of organizations in Falls Church including Falls Church Forward, where I've hosted community speaking events and potlucks, Bike Falls Church, where I helped organize Bike and Walk Everywhere Weekend, and Falls Church Climate Action Network, where I co-organized Electrify Falls Church to help people learn about solar and electric household items. I am also a member of the Falls Church Chamber of Commerce, and served as a volunteer for the Tinner Hill Music Festival.

**Campaign Website or Facebook Page:** [www.JustineUnderhill.org](http://www.JustineUnderhill.org)

**1. Why do you want to serve, or continue to serve, on the Council?**

I've spent most of my life within a 15 minute drive of Falls Church, but through my career as a journalist I've had the opportunity to live in over a dozen different cities.

My experience in other cities prompted me to explore key things we can do in Falls Church to improve connectivity, community, and overall happiness. Our daily lives are profoundly shaped by urban design, from our streetscapes, to buildings and parks. I am running for City Council to use evidence-based urban design to create a thriving, sustainable Little City.

My work as a journalist has positioned me well for this role— I've honed skills to research the intricate layers and implications of city policies. And my time serving on the Falls Church Housing Commission has given me a solid understanding of the city's housing policies and the challenges that come with them.

**2. What policies are most important to you?**

On City Council, my policy priorities include improving walkable and bikeable areas, with safe routes to school, affordable and diverse housing, broadening our tax base, and environmental programs to ensure we grow sustainably. The Sierra Club has endorsed my candidacy based on the environmental sustainability of my policies.

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My policies are rooted in urban planning, which if we get right, can impact other issues in surprising yet powerful ways:

- **Transportation:** Networks of walking, biking and public transit mean that everyone, including children and seniors, can get around safely. This also boosts independence and reduces congestion and pollution.
- **Public Space:** More pocket parks, outdoor dining, and tree-shaded public spaces can bolster community and improve public safety.
- **Tax base & Housing:** Sustainable, attractive housing along transit corridors, where people can live car-free, has co-benefits of tempering soaring housing costs, lowering overall tax rates, and providing financial support for schools and programs.

### 3. **With significant turnover of City staff, how would you approach the challenge of rebuilding and sustaining City services?**

Addressing the 10% vacancy in city staff is vital. Vacancies not only slow down city goals, but they also place an increased burden on our existing staff. I spoke with staff members to better inform my strategy:

1. **Competitive Compensation:** I'm committed to paying our dedicated employees competitive, market-rate salaries. While departures can stem from various factors (including career advancements outside of what Falls Church can currently provide) proper compensation and benefits remain central.
2. **Technology:** Many of our city processes are manual and labor intensive. Efficient tools can streamline city work, helping staff achieve more with less stress.
3. **Affordability and Proximity:** Ensuring our staff can afford to live in or near Falls Church will reduce commute times, better connect them with our community, and enhance their quality of life.

### 4. **Would you support stronger policies to maintain or even increase the number of trees and green spaces in future development plans?**

I firmly believe in the importance of maintaining and enhancing our tree canopy and green spaces in Falls Church. I'm proud that over the past decade our tree canopy has remained consistent around 46%, according to data from the US Forest Service.

While state laws limit what we can require, I will advocate for increased incentives to encourage tree canopy and greenspaces. Additional housing can impact greenspaces in our city, but thoughtful design can harmonize the two. For instance, integrating features like rain gardens, biophilic designs and green roofs can manage stormwater while simultaneously promoting green infrastructure.

Pedestrian-friendly design also includes bolstering our tree canopy, as trees have the co-benefit of shading hot sidewalks and separating pedestrian space from cars. As we undertake infrastructure upgrades, including repaving streets and sidewalks, I will advocate for tree planters and additional green spaces.

### 5. **What is your view of the permitted density in Falls Church's single-family neighborhoods?**

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Our nation faces an affordable housing crisis, and the effects are particularly pronounced in Falls Church. Many people struggle to pay rent, are unable to afford a home, or are forced to move farther away from job opportunities.

In considering permitted density in our neighborhoods, I am rooted in a balanced approach. I recognize the charm of our neighborhoods and I acknowledge the challenges we face with housing affordability and environmental sustainability.

Increased density, when done thoughtfully, can address housing affordability and sprawl, allowing more people to thrive here without altering our neighborhood character. This can include backyard cottages or integrating multi-family units that blend with existing architecture, giving homeowners flexibility to age in place and renters more options for housing.

I believe in adaptive, forward-thinking policies. Any decisions on density will be collaborative, ensuring ample community input early on and a clear vision for the city's future.

### **6. Would you support new City investments, or stronger ordinances for new commercial and residential construction, to expand on-site green infrastructure in the City?**

I am a strong proponent of adopting comprehensive green building design guidelines, including attention to building orientation to optimize energy consumption, promoting living rooftops which serve both as insulation and green space, emphasizing biophilic designs that bring natural elements into our urban setting, renewable energy integration, as well as stormwater retention plans.

However, my focus isn't just limited to buildings. The environment around these structures plays an equally vital role. Promoting use of non-permeable surfaces, creating more rain gardens on city property and investing in stream restoration projects are additional measures that can have long-term benefits for both the environment and the community.

City Council's work plan for 2024 includes developing Green Building Design Guidelines and I intend to support those efforts.

### **7. What policies and investments would you support to help the City meet its climate change goals and commitments?**

Our regional targets aim for greenhouse gas emissions reduction of 50% by 2030 and 80% by 2050. As of now, the City is not on track to meet the 2030 goals.

Given that transportation ranks among the largest contributors to our greenhouse gas emissions, I would push for investments in walking and biking, as well as EV chargers around the city, especially at multifamily buildings. I will advocate for green building standards and a more robust composting program, similar to Arlington's yard waste and food scraps collection.

We currently have a government operations energy action plan, and an upcoming community plan, both offering significant emission reductions. Many proposed investments, like solar panels and energy-efficient infrastructure, can save the city money in the long-run. As a City Council member, I would be a staunch advocate for implementing our government and community energy action strategies.

## VPIS City of Falls Church Local Candidate Questionnaire

**Candidate:** Jerrod Anderson

**Address:** 137 W Annandale Rd.

**Years Lived in the City of Falls Church:** 7

**Career fields / or occupations:** Health  
Statistician

**Educational achievement:** PhD in economics

**City Boards or Commissions served:** FCCPS  
School Board

**In what organizations have you been active that helped prepare you for office?** FCCPS School Board and the Special Ed Advisory Committee

**Campaign Website or Facebook Page:** : <https://andersonforfcschoolboard.com/>



### 1. Why do you want to serve on the Falls Church School Board?

Our family moved to FCC in 2016 and this is our 6th year in FCCPS. I have served as a room parent, volunteered at sporting events, the HTG games, the book fair, sat on the school board's Special Education Advisory Committee, and, since February 2023, served as a member of the school board. I am running for school board to continue my service to the community. A board member's major duties are setting the budget, strategic planning, and governance and oversight. In carrying out those duties, I will seek to ensure 1) that the schools and school board engage in productive two-way communication with the community, 2) that student's needs are being met, and 3) that the board engages in decision making processes that focus on continuous improvement.

### 2. Do you support expanding the educational school day or adding educational days to the school calendar, and expanding summer programs?

There are a lot of factors that go into creating a school calendar that would seek to extend time in school, most importantly budgeting (limited by the amount of tax the community will support) and workforce availability (which is an issue affecting school districts across the country). Given the overall student outcomes in FCCPS, extending the school day or the school year seem unnecessary and any intervention for students who need extra support should be more targeted, such as individual tutoring or the current summer school program (which is also subject to budget and workforce constraints) FCCPS offers.

### 3. What is your opinion of the school system's Strategic Plan?

The current strategic plan highlights the important core values of FCCPS, e.g. being a student-centered community, academic success, and being responsive and accountable. In ensuring that

## **VPIS City of Falls Church Local Candidate Questionnaire**

those values are realized, the strategic plan lays out five focus areas: IB infused teaching and learning, investing in our people, resource management and continuous improvement, wellness equity and belonging, and communication and engagement. I think these are great areas of focus, but I also recognize that any large organization can only put energy into a few areas. Last year, the schools focused on “investing in our people” by implementing new pay scales in April based on a commissioned compensation study. This year with things settling down from the disruption of Covid-19, FCCPS is focusing on wellness, equity, and belonging to ensure students are getting back into the groove of normalcy. As the schools go through the areas of focus, I think one thing that can always be improved and honed is effective communication and engagement.

### **4. What is your view on placing students with disabilities in the general education classrooms with their peers?**

As a parent with a child with special needs, I have a great appreciation for the education FCCPS provides to the community’s children with special needs. The goal of providing education to children with special needs is to do so in the least restrictive environment. For some students that will be in the general education environment full-time with some accommodations. For others that might look like spending some time in the general education classroom and some time in a special education classroom. For others still, the least restrictive environment might be either home bound or in a self-contained classroom. The important thing is to remain mindful of the child’s needs (in the moment and over time) and to partner with the child’s parents to determine the best education plan for that individual child.

### **5. What is your view of Career Technical Education (CTE) within our school system?**

For such a small school system, I’ve been impressed with the number of courses and opportunities that Meridian High School provides that have hands-on aspects that are relevant to careers after school, from ecological conservation and sports medicine to computer graphics, EMT training, and design (along with a well-appointed fabrication lab). It would be great to offer more CTE courses, but we also have to be mindful that we are a small district. The board should invest funds in where they can be most useful. I think the partnership with the Arlington Career Center is very useful, and where there are difficulties in students enrolling, FCCPS should take advantage of being small to come up with creative solutions where possible.

### **6. How do you view our teacher and staff compensation packages relative to adjoining jurisdictions?**

There is no doubt that most people in the community would want to see our teachers and staff receive higher pay for all the work they do to support our children, and FCCPS and the school board have worked hard to ensure that the compensation for teachers and staff is competitive with surrounding jurisdictions. FCCPS and the school board, based on a commissioned third-party salary study in April, created regionally competitive pay scales for teachers and staff. FCCPS is the only district in the NOVA region to offer parental leave. And staff, including bus drivers and food service workers, receive health insurance and paid-for community college classes. In addition to pay and benefits, FCCPS uses planning ratios (e.g. staff per student) that result in more teachers and staff per student than state standards of quality require. Not only does this



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mean smaller classes on average but also more staff supporting teachers in their work of teaching our children.

### **7. What current programs or actions the Board would you change and how?**

The board has taken on many things in the past year, including a new calendar policy, collective bargaining, and, currently, potential changes to start times and short Wednesdays. The important thing is to ensure that any changes being considered are (to the greatest extent possible) widely communicated and transparently discussed. These aspects of the board's job are always open for improvement, and I think the board has internalized a sense of continuous improvement when it comes to communication. That's something I would continue.

### **8. What is your view on Governor Youngkin's announced LGBTQ+ policies?**

While I am currently a member of the School Board, I am responding to this question as a candidate - not as a Board member. Falls Church City is a small, relational community. That strength allows us to address individual student needs with nuance and student-family-school collaboration, which rigid rules developed by those outside the community cannot achieve. With regard to FCCPS' response, I believe that existing FCCPS policies of nondiscrimination are consistent with state and federal law and that the FCCPS policies provide a safe and supportive learning environment that is free from discrimination and harassment for all students and staff.

## VPIS City of Falls Church Local Candidate Questionnaire

**Candidate: Bethany Rubin Henderson**

**Years Lived in the City of Falls Church:** nearly 12

**Career fields / or occupations:** lawyer by training, social entrepreneur by trade, nonprofit CEO by function; and adjunct faculty at UMD

**Educational achievement:** JD, Harvard Law School. MA & BA, University of Pennsylvania.

**City Boards or Commissions served:** FCCPS Elementary School Renaming Committee

**In what organizations have you been active that helped prepare you for office?** New Leaders Council; NYC Urban Fellows; City Hall Fellows; White House Fellows; DC Alliance for Youth Advocates



**Campaign Website or Facebook Page (if any):** [www.bethanyforschoolboard.org](http://www.bethanyforschoolboard.org)

**1. Why do you want to serve on the Falls Church School Board? What do you accomplish while on the Board?**

I believe that educating the next generation is our most sacred civic trust. I am running to ensure that FCCPS empowers every student and teacher to thrive. I've spent a decade working in education & youth development, 15 years founding and leading award-winning social impact organizations, and 25 years working in and with local, state, and federal government agencies and officials (including school superintendents, city councils, and mayors). In short, I know how to make actionable policy and policy actionable. I will bring to the Board not only a decade of direct experience with FCCPS as a parent and frequent volunteer, but also deep expertise in organizational governance and leadership, in distilling and leveraging data to inform actions, and in applying an equity lens to policy design, delivery, and analysis, as well the ability and desire to listen deeply to, and engage with, multiple diverse stakeholders.

**2. Do you support expanding the educational school day or adding educational days to the school calendar, and expanding summer programs?**

Two things are equally true: time in school is critical to academic achievement, and critical learning does not only happen "between the bells". While extending the school day or year can increase academic attainment, it also carries significant, and potentially harmful, consequences for teacher and staff morale (and, thus, our ability to attract and retain top educators), for families, and for youth social-emotional development. Before making any decision about extending the school day or year, I support exploring opportunities to optimize student learning within our current school calendar and a robust community dialogue involving families, schoolteachers and staff, and students. I support the FCCPS Strategic Plan.

**3. What is your opinion of the school system's Strategic Plan? Are there part of the Plan that you would change?** I support the FCCPS Strategic Plan.

## VPIS City of Falls Church Local Candidate Questionnaire

### 4. What is your view on placing students with disabilities in the general education classrooms with their peers?

There is ample research that inclusive education classrooms – where students of mixed abilities learn together in a classroom with differentiated instruction, supported by teachers and learning specialists – result in the best academic and social-emotional outcomes for all students. In order for all students to be able to fully realize the benefits of inclusive education classrooms, and for teachers to thrive, I support investing in increased in-classroom supports, learning and instructional specialists, and professional development for educators.

### 5. What is your view of Career Technical Education (CTE) within our school system?

I believe that providing additional CTE options through partnership with the Arlington Career Center affords FCCPS students access to a wider variety of courses than if we tried to offer CTE only in house. To ensure that ACC's CTE courses are accessible to our students, I support annually assessing student demand for CTE and negotiating additional ACC student "seats" when needed, as well as offering the most in-demand CTE courses in-house to increase student access. I am excited about the potential of the new IB Career-Related Programme to afford even more FCCPS students the opportunity to thoughtfully integrate academic and practical learning as they explore how to turn their passions into fulfilling careers.

### 6. How do you view our teacher and staff compensation packages relative to adjoining jurisdictions?

People want to work where they feel consistently seen, heard, supported, and valued. Compensation packages are only one marker of how we value teachers and staff. Being named one of the Washington Post's 2023 Top Workplaces – based on anonymous educational staff surveys - demonstrates that FCCPS is doing a lot right. However, the recent study commissioned by the district revealed that many FCCPS salaries are below market. Attracting and retaining top educators requires not only that we work to bring compensation packages in line with the market, but also that we be consistently responsive to other concerns raised by teachers and staff and continue to empower our educators to bring their whole selves to work.

### 7. What current programs or actions of the Board would you change and how?

Understanding the needs and perspectives of all stakeholders in our schools is critical to effective governance. I applaud current Board leadership efforts to hear from more community members through office hours. However, waiting for people to approach the Board at places and times of our choosing is not enough. I would expand Board community outreach by seeking out and showing up in spaces where segments of our community whom Board members rarely hear from already congregate, to pro-actively build relationships and open new lines of communication and information flow.

### 8. What is your view on Governor Youngkin's announced LGBTQ+ policies and their impact on students and local school systems' response in compliance?

15 years as a parent and nearly a decade working in youth development has taught me that children learn best when they are able to be their whole selves at school, and when they are able to trust that the adults in their school buildings truly have students' best interests at heart. The governor's announced LGBTQ+ policies harm kids, compromise teachers and school staff's ability to unconditionally support students, and appear to be inconsistent with the Virginia Human Rights Act. If elected, I will fight to ensure that every member of the FCCPS community, including those who are LGBTQ+, experiences - in every interaction with our school district – that they are seen, valued, and belong.

## VPIS City of Falls Church Local Candidate Questionnaire

**Name:** Amie Murphy

**Address:** 411 Midvale Street, Falls Church, VA 22046

**Years Lived in the City of Falls Church:** 8

**Career fields / or occupations:** I am a Trial Attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division. Except for a two-year break when I accompanied my family to Algiers, Algeria, I've been enforcing civil rights laws on behalf of the government since 2005.

**Educational achievement:** J.D. from Fordham University School of Law, and a B.A. from Allegheny College (major in Political Science and a minor in French).

**City Boards or Commissions served:** N/A



**In what organizations have you been active that helped prepare you for office?** Meridian PTSA and MEHMS PTA (Member and Volunteer), Mustang Athletic Boosters Association (Member and Volunteer), City of Falls Church League of Women Voters (Member and former Program Chair), and Falls Church Forward (Member).

**Campaign Website or Facebook Page:** [www.amiemurphy.org](http://www.amiemurphy.org)

### 1. Why do you want to serve on the Falls Church School Board?

My job takes me to underserved communities across the United States, serving as a reminder of how fortunate we are to have such exceptional schools and the important role that education plays in opening doors to the future. My goal is to bring the values I've cultivated along with my experience in engaging stakeholders, developing workable policies, and performing effective oversight to help our schools continue to thrive.

My number one priority is student achievement and ensuring that all students in Falls Church can reach their full potential through the resources offered by our schools. I have two daughters attending FCCPS, one an eighth grader at MEH and the other a sophomore at Meridian. I attribute their success in school to their hard work combined with the efforts of our excellent teachers and staff who tailor their instruction, meet them where they are, and challenge them to push beyond their limits. It's important that we continue to offer competitive salaries and benefits so that we attract and retain this valuable resource.

Lastly, in this post-pandemic world, I also believe that a key component to opening the pathways to success is to address the mental health and emotional growth of our students. Unfortunately, due to long waitlists and high costs, these needs often go unaddressed in the community, posing a significant challenge for families and standing in the way of learning.

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### **2. Do you support expanding the educational school day or adding educational days to the school calendar, and expanding summer programs?**

Addressing learning loss is critical, and we should continue to support proven interventions such as onsite tutors, specialized instruction, and early identification of children who are falling off track. Studies have shown that a successful approach to addressing learning loss focuses on the whole child, which includes an emphasis on addressing mental wellness. We've seen an uptick in behavioral problems in our schools, and we need to get to the bottom of that. To ensure that students can thrive in school, at a minimum, we should renew our focus on helping them manage conflict, handle stress, navigate the pressures of social media, and treat others with respect and kindness. While I wouldn't be opposed to offering a wider array of optional opportunities for students to take advantage of over the summer, I think that lengthening the time they must commit to academics (either by a longer school day or mandatory summer classes) will only add to the pressures they already face.

### **3. What is your opinion of the school system's Strategic Plan?**

I am fully supportive of the Strategic Plan and the vision it embodies for our schools.

### **4. What is your view on placing students with disabilities in the general education classrooms with their peers?**

I feel strongly that students with disabilities should be educated alongside their peers in mixed-ability classrooms. Research shows that the benefits of having students with a range of learning abilities in the same classroom extend to *all* children, regardless of where they are on the continuum. Benefits include collaborative learning, increased empathy, and reduced stigmatization. On top of that, it better prepares our students for the real world where they will interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. FCCPS has fantastic teachers who are skilled at tailoring their instruction to accommodate a range of learning needs. Most, if not all, individual accommodations can be implemented in general education classrooms, provided that the lead teacher is supported with the proper resources, such as a co-teacher or paraprofessional when necessary.

### **5. What is your view of Career Technical Education (CTE) within our school system?**

Ensuring that all students in Falls Church can reach their full potential and are prepared to pursue their post-secondary path through the resources offered by our schools is my top priority. This includes offering an array of options for students who plan to follow a career path after graduation. At this time, I don't have enough information about the Career Technical Education offered by FCCPS to form an opinion on whether it is adequately meeting the demand. If there is a need for more courses (whether on campus or within the community) to meet the needs of students interested in learning a trade, then I will offer my full support.

### **6. How do you view our teacher and staff compensation packages relative to adjoining jurisdictions?**

Like many districts, FCCPS is impacted by a nationwide teacher shortage. Giving our teachers a seat at the bargaining table was a good first step, and I believe Falls Church should be a leader in the region when it comes to teacher and staff compensation. Our community is committed to our

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schools and how we compensate our most valued resource should reflect that. I also support expanding the program to allow free open enrollment for our teachers' children—doing so would increase their investment in outcomes, ease some of their commuting/scheduling burden, and deepen their personal involvement in our school community.

### **7. What current programs or actions the Board would you change and how?**

I look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with my colleagues to make the best decisions for our schools. I don't have any specific changes in mind; my main goal is to assist in charting a course forward by relying on input from stakeholders, sound judgment, and our community's values as guideposts.

### **8. What is your view on Governor Youngkin's announced LGBTQ+ policies?**

One of the things I love most about the FCCPS community is its commitment to being open, welcoming, and accessible to everyone. With over fifteen years of experience enforcing civil rights statutes, I feel confident sending my daughters to a place where they are learning the same values we teach at home. Our schools should be a place where students, including those who identify as LGBTQ+, continue to feel accepted. If any policies issued by Governor Youngkin appear to conflict with that, I will work with my colleagues to advocate for what's best for our schools.

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Sample Ballot

Commonwealth of Virginia, Official Ballot

Ward 1

City of Falls Church
General Election
Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Voting Instructions

- 1. Use a black or blue ink pen.
2. Make a clear mark inside the box to the left of your choice.
3. For a Write-In candidate, mark the box to the left of the line and write in the name.
4. If you make a mistake, ask for a new ballot.

Member
Senate of Virginia
37th District

Vote for only one

- Box for Kenneth D. "Ken" Reid - R
Box for Saddam Azlan Salim - D
Box for Write-in

Member
House of Delegates
13th District

Vote for only one

- Box for Marcus B. Simon - D
Box for Dave A. Crance Jr. - L
Box for Write-in

Clerk of Court

Vote for only one

- Box for Paul F. Ferguson
Box for Write-in

Commonwealth's Attorney

Vote for only one

- Box for Parisa Dehghani-Tafti
Box for Write-in

Member City Council

Vote for not more than 3

- Box for Erin H. Flynn
Box for Justine J. Underhill
Box for Tim K. Stevens
Box for Letty C. Hardi
Box for Write-in

Box for Write-in

Box for Write-in

Member School Board

Vote for not more than 3

- Box for Bethany R. Henderson
Box for Jerrod F. Anderson
Box for Amie S. Murphy
Box for Write-in

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