

We reached out to all the Pickens County Candidates for County Council that will be on the ballot June 11, 2024. We thought it would be great to have written answers to questions so you could review their written responses to 4 questions to help you discern who receives your vote on June 11th. We asked them to be concise and to the point in their answers. We have 5 good candidates to choose from and we hope this style of written answers helps you to narrow down your choice as to who deserves your vote. Sadly none of the present elected councilmen (Chris Bowers, Roy Costner, Henry Wilson, or Alex Saitta responded to our questions)...

Question #1 Do you agree with the American Library Association's statement, "*Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources available to other users violate the Library Bill of Rights. The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users.*" If so, why, if not, why not.

Dale Holloway's Answer:

I do not agree with the American Library Association's statement. I am offended that any of my tax dollars would go to fund any type of perversion due to my Biblical position. I realize that we do not have the right to force adults to adhere to our moral standards and they have the right to consume materials of their choice. However, no government funded institution supported by our tax dollars should promote or provide any perverse or pornographic materials to minors. It is illegal to provide pornographic material to children online, or to sell it to them in stores. It is illegal for children to buy tickets to movies that are rated above their age level due to sexual content. Therefore, Libraries should not have the right to check out pornographic material to minors or have it available to them.

Scott Lang's Answer:

I do not agree with The American Library Association "Library Bill of Rights"! This is the Left's attempt to further expose our children to material they are not ready to be exposed to. In fact, pornography should not be available in our libraries at all. If adults want to purchase that kind of material, that is their choice. But to place it in libraries where children can be exposed to it by chance, that should not be allowed.

Mason Sims' Answer:

I do not agree with this statement because just like movies and video games there needs to be certain restrictions put in place to protect the minds of our youth. As most of you know, I teach middle school science at Legacy Charter School. I can say without a doubt that the respect for teachers was not what it was in I was in grade school. The students that my colleagues and I teach have very little respect and have a colorful vocabulary. I feel that a lot of this has to do with the unrestricted access that our students have to the internet and books. In the preamble to the US Constitution it says "Secure the Blessings of Liberty to Ourselves and Our Posterity." Posterity means future generations and I do not believe that our founding fathers intended for us to give our children the freedom to check out books that contain obscene material.

Brandon Thomas' Answer:

I don't agree with this for obvious reasons. Libraries should aim to provide materials that are suitable for the developmental stage and maturity level of their users. Age restrictions will help ensure that children are accessing content that is appropriate for their age group, avoiding exposure to material that may be too mature, explicit, or disturbing for younger audiences. Libraries should always adhere to legal regulations regarding the dissemination of certain materials to minors. Parents want assurance that their children are accessing materials that align with their values and beliefs. Age restrictions can and will serve as a way for libraries to communicate to parents that they are mindful of the content accessible to minors and are taking steps to ensure appropriateness.

Question #2 : There is over-collection of taxes taking place as evidenced by an abundant "reserve fund" balance on hand...last year I heard the reserve totaled over 30 million. This reserve fund balance is higher than the recommendation from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) who recommends that local

governments maintain reserves equal to two months of operating revenue or, around **16.7 percent of annual revenue**. What percent do you recommend we have on hand and do you think we should lower the millage rate and if so, by how much?

Dale Holloway's Answer:

While I realize the value of having a rainy-day fund set aside for emergencies, I am also keenly aware that over taxation places an unnecessary burden on the citizens of Pickens County. To have a growing surplus of county funds seems to be a strong indicator that there is over taxation taking place. I would be in favor of lowering the millage as long as we can maintain the recommended balance of 16.7 % in the county funds.

Scott Lang's Answer:

I agree our reserves should be at the recommended amount of 16.7 percent. This is one thing I would like to take a hard look at if I am elected. The current Council created a loophole in the state law and nearly doubled the amount they raised the millage rate. Instead of the 5.3 mills that is allowed, the Council raised taxes by 10 mills. The Council members say over and over they are conservative, but there is no mistaking that is a result of the liberal left ideology.

Mason Sims' Answer:

Yes, I believe that we should lower the millage rate. Back in 2021 there was a record 10 mill tax hike which upset many citizens of Pickens County. The Council had \$23 million in savings and the federal government had also just given the county another \$24 million in COVID money. Just like I mentioned at the forum several weeks ago, I said that tax hikes should be a last resort, not a first option. Four years ago Pickens County had one of the lowest property tax rates in the state at 57 mills and it is now currently 90 mills. Since the population has increased in Pickens County since 2020, I believe that we should lower to about 70 mills rather than stay at 90 and we should also have about 6-7 million on hand rather than 30 million.

Brandon Thomas' Answer:

It's important for local governments to maintain a balanced approach to taxation and reserve funds. While the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommends reserves equal to two months of operating revenue, the optimal amount should vary depending on factors like economic conditions and the specific needs in our County. A comprehensive assessment of current financial needs and future obligations would be necessary to determine an appropriate reserve level. As for lowering the millage rate, it would depend on various factors including the financial health of the County, projected revenue, and County needs.

Question #3 Who has influenced your life the most in the past 5 years and in what ways?

Dale Holloway's Answer:

I was blessed with a wonderful earthly father. He taught me great work ethics, to live a life full of integrity and a host of other practical life lessons. His influence in my life in the last five years and beyond has been priceless.

Scott Lang's Answer:

My wife influences me the most. She has an uncanny ability to see if my direction is a little off. She has wisdom that I believe comes from her relationship with our Lord, and I am grateful for her opinion at those moments when I need it.

Mason Sims' Answer:

I would say that my mother and father have influenced my life in the past 5 years. My parents have always been people that I have looked up to and are probably the most hard-working people that I know. Even though I am an adult, I still go to them for advice when I have important decisions to make. My father works in the disaster recovery business where they clean up debris after storms pass through.

Back in 2014, my dad did a job in Barnwell, SC that nearly killed him so that I would be able to have enough money in my college fund. My mother gave me advice many years ago which was you never get a second chance to make a first impression which explains the way that I dress. I am very fortunate to have their support during this campaign of mine.

Brandon Thomas' Answer:

My two children have certainly played a significant role over the past five years and really since the day they were born. My children have had a profound impact on shaping my perspectives, priorities, and daily routines. They challenge me to grow, have taught me patience, and inspire me to see the world with fresh eyes. They're a constant reminder of the importance of love, responsibility, and nurturing relationships.

Question #4 : When faced with a critical vote on the council who are your top 3 advice givers and why?

Dale Holloway's Answer:

As you know I am a man of faith and on the top tier of advisors would be my heavenly Father whom I will seek wisdom from in earnest prayer. Second, I like to listen to the voices in my community that I serve. Thirdly, an aspect of good leadership is to surround yourself with other individuals who are smarter and more talented than you in multiple areas. I have attempted to do this very thing and at present I have several diverse groups (businessmen, farmers, prayer groups, among others) that I highly respect in which I count on to tell me the truth, share good ideas, and help me to see outside the box.

Scott Lang's Answer:

My top 3 advice givers are 1. my Lord and Savior because He gives us the wisdom we need to make those critical decisions if we only ask for it; 2. my wife for the reason I stated above, and 3. the people that I want to represent. Elected officials are supposed to represent We The People, NOT lord over We The People.

Mason Sims' Answer:

My campaign manager, my mother, and my father. I would say that these 3 people are true patriots and they have a great understanding of what the majority of my constituents want. Once I am elected, I will rely on these 3 people for advice to make sure that I am voting in the best interests of the people that got me elected into this office. I cannot thank these people enough for all of their support these past few months!

Brandon Thomas' Answer:

My constituents will serve as my biggest advice givers on critical votes because they are directly impacted by the decisions I make. They'll provide valuable insights, feedback, and perspectives that will help me better understand the needs and concerns of the community I represent. By listening to their input, I can make more informed decisions that align with the interests of those I serve.