

Candidate Responses – Orange County Board of Supervisors

Crystal D. Hale

Question 1: Position Seeking:

CH: Board of Supervisors, District 4

Question 2: Have You Previously Held this Position?

CH: Yes

Question 2a: If yes, for how many years?

CH: Currently serving as Interim.

Question 3: Will you be attending the August 23, 2023, Orange County Candidate Showcase?

CH: Yes

Question 4: What is your plan for fostering business growth in the community for the next 5 years?

CH: As the District Four Board member, I will be actively involved with economic development efforts in Orange County, to include supporting existing and attracting new businesses. While I am best known for my passion to help others in my current role as Director of Social Services, I also have a bachelor's degree in business administration and an MBA from the University of Mary Washington. I have strong leadership skills and an in-depth understanding of what it takes to be successful in the business world. I understand that Orange County has a unique combination of resources and landscape that are attractive to existing and prospective businesses. As the District Four Board Member, I would further support the Orange County Economic Development Strategic Plan. This plan is comprehensive and builds upon feedback from stakeholders who have great insight on where we are and where we want to be in the future. The five focus areas of the strategic plan lay a firm foundation for a community to foster sustainable growth while preserving the rural life and livelihood of Orange County. Attraction and retention is an obvious and important part of fostering business growth and I will work hard to ensure we are business friendly to include promoting existing available sites and incentives. We must also continue workforce development efforts through a combination of programs that not only provide opportunities for businesses to prosper but also for our children to learn and grow into the workforce that our future will need. I will work closely with Orange County Public Schools and further develop a relationship that fosters problem-solving and partnership to get enhanced CTE programs into our schools. Our small businesses and entrepreneurs need to feel our love and support in as many ways as possible. They need to know we are rooting for them and willing to fight for them. I will be a cheerleader for small businesses and support local efforts to back them while highlighting the goods and services they provide to our community. Through my lifetime of being a public servant, I have gained an in-depth knowledge of how grants and local, state, and federal funding streams are accessed. As the District Four Supervisor, I will pay close attention to these funding streams and ensure continued efforts to draw down on these funds. I am also eager to do my part to ensure we are successful in the development of the Comprehensive

Economic Development Strategy so we can access additional federal funding streams. Lastly but not least, I will work tirelessly to ensure we maintain that rural quality of life that we all love about Orange County so our workforce will not only want to work here but will also want to live, play, and relax here.

Question 5: According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, Orange County has nearly 100,000 acres of farmland, and is home to approximately 417 farms of all sizes and types. How do you envision your role can best support all types of agricultural operations?

CH: I was raised on a beef cattle farm in Orange County and still live on that same farm with my two children, who are now young adults. I am proud and blessed to have grown up on that little farm in Burr Hill, where I learned the importance of quality animal care, maintaining and harvesting crops, and doing what is good for the land while providing an excellent product to the consumer. To say that I have an in-depth understanding of farming and the needs of our farmers in Orange County would be an understatement. As the District Four Supervisor, I will take my life-long knowledge and love for farming to do what is best for our agriculture and forestry industry. As your Supervisor, I will work to protect the land use and farm use tax structure as it exists for agriculture and forestry. While I realize some neighboring localities may not fully appreciate these special tax structures, I will make it clear that they are extremely important to protect if we want to be a farmer and forestry friendly community. Without these provisions, we could easily find ourselves in a crisis where farms and forestry are sold for uses that do not maintain our rural character and could be detrimental to our way of life and to our wildlife and their habitat. When considering rezoning, I will also give cautious consideration as to how it will affect our local farms and forestry. I understand the potential for conflicting views when weighing in on tough discussions regarding land use, property rights, and growth but I will ensure that all stakeholders get my full attention. I commit to performing extensive research, utilizing my communication skills, and thoroughly vet requests to changes with zoning, taxes and regulations that impact farmers. Additionally, I will emphasize the importance of being fiscally conscious so that the tax rate for farmers and all citizens is manageable. Finally, we must be reminded that trees and forests are a green energy and a renewable resource. Trees are constantly cleaning our universe by storing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen back into the environment. I will support sound incentives to limit clear cutting of forests and encourage balanced harvesting of hardwoods to ensure we have stable forests for future generations.

Question 6: What specific steps do you believe could be taken by the Board of Supervisors, other county officials, or others in the county to help the county attract businesses that will improve the economic well-being of the county without a negative impact upon the quality of life for the county citizens?

CH: In addition to my answer for fostering business growth in the community for the next five years, the County must encourage overall growth in the areas that are currently designated for such. While I understand some do not want to see growth in Orange County, it is inevitable and can be healthy when properly managed. We must encourage and support growth in these specific and planned areas. I will not support growth that lacks proper planning and management or encroaches on our most beloved resources and landscapes. We must work closely with the Town of Orange and Gordonsville so that we can partner to support businesses that attract people to visit, live, and play in Orange County. We must take advantage of existing space in the industrial park and take appropriate steps to best utilize these properties by getting sites pad-ready and consider specific needs of potential businesses.

We must stay aligned with the Germanna-Wilderness Area Plan (GWAP) while being mindful and actively engaged in the planning process of further development of that area. As the District Four Supervisor, I will push for additional grants and funding to support upscaling existing businesses, such as the AFID Infrastructure Grants and increased access to existing funding such as revolving loans. By taking these specific steps, we will be in a great position to attract businesses that will contribute to the economic well-being of Orange County without having a negative impact on the quality of life for citizens. We can find a balance for inevitable growth and the need to maintain our community's identity so that all can enjoy and have an excellent quality of life in this community.

Question 7: What steps do you think are most important to support existing businesses and encourage healthy growth?

CH: Providing financial support through appropriate grants and revolving loans as well as opportunities for businesses to be showcased and highlighted are examples of ways that the County can help support existing businesses. Creating and attracting a strong workforce will help our businesses continue into the future and can also help our citizens find attractive opportunities to work in the same community they live in. Connecting businesses with appropriate resources and continuously growing those resources are also essential to their the survival. The County must be willing to listen to the needs of our businesses and partner with them in their journey. As the District Four Supervisor, I will be able to illustrate my extensive abilities to listen, problem-solve, and foster relationships that focus on building successes together.

Question 8: How do agriculture and forestry contribute to your vision for economic growth and development within the County?

CH: Agriculture and forestry are key industries contributing to the overall economic stability and prosperity of Orange County. They provide jobs, generate revenue, offer opportunities to other industries directly and indirectly while significantly contributing to the overall culture and livelihood of the County. From farm machinery dealerships to small-scale meat processing operations, we must remember each of the contributors to this industry. Greenhouses, poultry farms, horse farms, goat farms, sawmills, logging businesses, tracts of standing timber, and prime hunting locations all are just a few examples of the enormous variety of agriculture and forestry we have in Orange County. Let's not forget agritourism, wineries, and event venues that serve not only as economic powerhouses but also as our own community gems. It will be my job to be mindful of the extensive reach of agriculture and forestry in Orange County and to be an advocate in the fight to protect what we have while attracting others to join in on the fun. In order to do that, we need to utilize existing plans for growth in specified areas of the County so that our agriculture and forestry operations can continue without fail. I will also encourage practices to balance the growth while pushing for incentives to be utilized as a tool to protect from over development. As the District Four Supervisor, I will advocate for agriculture and forestry while reminding the County that we do not need to implement rules and regulations for agricultural and forestry that are beyond existing state regulations. The County must also be informed and supportive of new agriculture and forestry projects and support these businesses as they try to maneuver through the permitting process.

Question 9: How do you define "social justice" and, from your perspective, how can the BOS ensure fairness for all Orange County residents?

CH: Social Justice to me is a matter of doing the right thing and ensuring access and equity for all. I know it's a topic that many like to avoid and some even pretend doesn't exist but I see the need for improved social justice everyday. In my current role as Director of Social Services, I strive to ensure that even our most vulnerable citizens get treated with the utmost respect and compassion. It is a daily reminder to me that we still have populations of people within our own community who don't always have a voice. From an abused child to an elderly citizen who is isolated in their own home, there is an urgent need for every human being to be seen, heard, and cherished. The Board of Supervisors must be in tune to the needs of all citizens, no matter their race, ethnicity, age, education or gender. We are all human and we all deserve the same opportunities and a voice. This starts with having leaders who consciously connect with others and advocate for them regardless of their background. I have been a public servant for my entire career with the past ten years serving others through the social services field. I have been working with an extremely diverse population in Orange County for the past six years and I can assure you that this is where I excel the most. Helping people to be safe, heard, understood, appreciated, and valued is my passion. This is the foundation of social justice. I do not believe that "fairness to all" is readily achievable in any society but I believe that if we truly care for, appreciate, and love one another, we will be closer to achieving social justice than we ever imagined possible.
