

# Candidate Responses – Orange County Board of Supervisors

**Brit A. Lewis**

Question 1: Position Seeking:

BL: Board of Supervisors District 4

Question 2: Have You Previously Held this Position?

BL: No

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

BL: No, but I have prepared a statement to be read.

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

BL: With the entire county being a little less than 220,000 acres, farmland and farmers are half of who we are, half of what makes us beautiful. One of my goals is to work with the OC School Board and look into either bonding out a Certified Technical Academy or to foster additional bridges and courses with Germanna Community College. If we first invest in training and education our high school students, we will have an employee base from which to procure knowledgeable employment from and to grow local businesses within Orange County. Secondly, we need to stop focusing on large box stores and large communities that do little to nothing in supporting the local community. Rather, we need to invest in #shoplocal businesses and farms. By doing this, we not only secure local business success but we also ensure employment for citizens and begin to grow a sustainable future. Further investing and supporting of programs for children of all ages, such as the 4H is also key to sustainability of the county's farmers and farmland. In addition, we need to find lost money in our budget and also implement a rollover policy at the end of the budget cycle, not use it or lose it. We waste too much of our taxpayer's money doing it this way. Where, if we provided a rollover function without basing the line items next year budget on what was not used, we will be able to spend more wisely in the county and provide support mid-year to our line items as requests arise. We may also be able to place additional roll over money into a county investment pot, whereas we can use this to grow and support our business owners.

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?

BL: Orange county farmers are the pulse of the body of the entire county. We are so lucky to have meet cattle, dairy cattle, feed corn and hay, soybeans, horse farms and hobby farms to name a few. Land use taxation is important to continue to ensure our farmers and their land is assessed and taxed accordingly in order to ensure the backbone of this county is not being overtaxed or exploited. In addition, providing a high-quality education for our future farmers is key. As you will see below, working with the school board to establish a CTE program is key to this. A CTE program will provide large vehicle repair, auto mechanics, plumbing, electrical, cooking, agricultural management and small business management to name a few.

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?

BL: Orange county is a diverse and beautiful county. From it's farms, small towns, housing areas, rural communities and incredible modern history dating back to prior to the Revolutionary war when settlers were sent to the Rapidan River area (District 4) to settle the area and be the "base" for westward expansion in this part of the colonies as well as great Native American history from the Outponies and Mannahoac tribes (to name a few). Therefore, many in our district would like to see this history used; from building tourism to "Walking in their Shoes" trails to small, regulated development in historical fashion and green space to be used by all. To get this and other business forward, low impact proposals forward, as supervisor, I plan to invite, liase, listen to and work directly with all offices in the county. From planning, to RSA, to historical societies, to business owners and citizens to law enforcement and FIre/EMS leaders as any development has a direct effect on all of these functions and more.

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

BL: We need to ensure that doing business in Orange County is attainable to all. From initial planning to support in education of employees, to the process of garnering support and advertising from the county. If we want healthy, not reckless, growth we need to ensure that every business owner is supported. We, as a county, need to stop looking and stop permitting the destruction of large tracts of land that once developed (as seen in our neighboring Spotsylvania and Culpeper counties) actually winds up taxing existing residents and business owners to death as well as bringing in immeasurable crime to the county.

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

BL: Agriculture is literally half of this county in acreage. We are also lucky to be the home of federal land and parks as well as sites that many residents have long forgotten about. We have acres upon acres of forestry land that home to many of our neighbors, deer, bear, fox, field mice, sparrow and cooper hawks (to name a few), raccoons, coyote, bobcat, opossums, owls, vultures, bald eagles (YES! on the Rapidan River), approx 41 species of butterflies and honeybees, to name just a few. All of these species play a vital role in our environments. However, their role to our farmers is even greater. Imagine when animals die, if bugs and vultures and fox and coyote etc did not "clean up". What would happen to our farmers crops, their feed crops for their livestock if we didn't support the bees, butterflies and birds? If we grow unchecked, we risk endangering all our lands. Without sustainable measures, additional ordinances to support growth, we run the risk of just destroying habitats, water flow and therefore the backbone of this county.

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

BL: I actually do not define social justice. We are (coming from someone who has lived all over the world) the luckiest country. We have a beautiful and sustainable constitution that continues to apply to daily life today. In addition, the great state of Virginia also has a string

constitution. Our rights, such as the freedom of speech, press, religion, the press, the right to bear arms and right to not have our liberties encroached up by unlawful search and seizure still stands true today. One person's freedoms cannot encroach on another's. There needs to be understanding that we each individually are afforded these freedoms. What needs to be fought against is corruption at every level. The laws of freedom are clear, the application, at times, is inexcusable and must be sought out, challenged and rooted out.

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