

Candidate Responses – Orange County Board of Supervisors

Anne LeHuray

Question 1: Position Seeking:

AL: Orange County Board of Supervisors, District 5

Question 2: Have You Previously Held this Position?

AL: No

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

AL: Yes

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

AL: As a small business owner myself with decades of experience working with large and small business trade associations I bring deep insight into the complexities of fostering business growth. Fair tax and appropriate regulatory climates are just the beginning of the conversation. To grow, businesses small and large need predictability, access to customers and markets, and a population suited to take on available jobs. The Board of Supervisors role is to provide stable and efficient governance, maintain and improve infrastructure to meet evolving needs, and proactively promote workforce development.

My plan is to focus not only on the present but on plans for future growth. One current problem faced by Orange County small business is finding and retaining employees willing and able to do the job. Expanding the workforce means affordable homes, reputable schools, and livable communities. Additional residential developments are in planning stages. The BoS needs to make sure the developments fit the character we want to foster in our community, maximizing affordability while minimizing adverse impacts (traffic, environmental hazards, water, sewer, etc). The BoS can help by looking for ways to keep taxes in check while at the same time making sure impacts of proposed developments are well understood.

Career Technical Education (CTE) is much discussed in the County. Let's make it happen.

Let's also ameliorate sprawl by encouraging development with plenty of green space and with outdoor activities - walking trails, bike paths, river access - available for the entire community.

In short, well thought out economic development is one of the drivers of my campaign. My plan is to keep the community a place where existing and new residents like to live. Doing so will help our current small businesses thrive and attract more established businesses such as the recently announced new Orange County facility by technology research & development firm Mitre Corporation.

Virginia's recent focus on attracting international business looking to "come home" from overseas operations is a great opportunity for Orange County. My plan is to work with Richmond to help businesses find appropriate locations for new facilities in the County.

Orange County is also developing a reputation as a fun destination for tourists and weekenders to explore the many established and new wineries, breweries, distilleries, and fine restaurants - small businesses all. Let's encourage more of that.

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?

AL: "Agriculture" is a big tent. There is a need for recognizing and fostering both established and innovative ways of doing things. Orange County agriculture includes operations that have embraced cutting edge technology. Expansion of high-speed internet access to the most rural areas, such as envisioned by the County's FiberLync initiative, can help every kind of farm by expanding knowledge of and access to markets and market drivers.

Orange County is becoming a destination for winery/brewery/distillery tourism - all based on farms. As Supervisor I plan to support Orange County as a destination for tourists and weekenders by encouraging continued growth of farm to table opportunities on the farms themselves or at nearby markets and restaurants. Traditional farms can get in on the action by holding farm tours, setting up road-side stands and participating in farmers markets, opening up to events on the farm, and probably many ways I'm not knowledgeable enough to recognize.

CTE can help in farming as well as other types of business by establishing agriculture-focused education paths.

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?

AL: Negative quality of life impacts can be described as "sprawl." One way the Board of Supervisors and county residents can help by ensuring that economic zones - residential, commercial, or industrial - are planned with green space for outdoor activities accessible to the community as well as with infrastructure (transportation corridors, utilities) that will not be overwhelmed by growing economic activity.

Planning for economic growth that includes a mixture of enterprises appropriate for different communities is essential to continued quality of life. The Board should promote growth in destination businesses such as wineries/breweries/distilleries as well as fine dining establishments and businesses focused on the arts will make the County desirable as both a destination and a place to live.

Attracting more industrial operations to existing and new industrial parks will avoid the negative emotions sometimes engendered by mixing intensive industrial facilities with residential neighborhoods. Expansion of commercial retail space has successfully mixed with residential development when thought is given to avoiding infrastructure overload and dissonant eyesores.

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

AL: To thrive existing businesses need to grow, which brings new residential and commercial development into the picture. I believe negative reactions to development proposals have been exacerbated by the decline - indeed, the virtual absence - of regular, reliable sources of local news. Newsletters published by homeowner's associations typically avoid controversial topics and are thus ill-suited to initiate extended conversations with local residents about paths that should or are under consideration for development in the community. Holding a public townhall at the end of a years' long planning process is seldom adequate for projects with perceived major consequences.

As a member of the Board of Supervisors, I will explore ways to restart civic conversations in Orange County. I strongly believe we need some sort of physical or virtual local news source. Social media fora such Facebook groups or NextDoor are not adequate, doing little more than notifying the community of yet another traffic tie-up on Rte. 3 or the latest gripe about some community facility.

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

AL: I see Orange County as a location where traditional (including technologically advanced "traditional") farming and forestry will continue to be a backbone of the County's economic and civic life. At this time, however, Orange County agriculture is already making beachheads into what we could call "alternative agriculture." I see Orange County continuing to develop as a destination for agriculture-related experiences: winery tours, farm tours, farmers markets. The future could include more farm to table fine dining opportunities, hot-house flower shows, and other experiences not found in cities or close-in suburbs.

Attention to developing outdoor opportunities in engineered green space should include education about history and land use as well as the natural environment. Hosting destination tourists is an opportunity to educate about the what's and why's of agriculture and forestry as part of an overall good time.

As a footnote, for this vision to come to pass, more B&Bs are needed.

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

AL: To me "social justice" means equality of opportunity for all residents. Opportunity can't knock if it doesn't know where to find someone looking for it. My vision of a local news source described in a previous answer includes seeing it as a vehicle for letting everyone know what is going on in local government, the schools, businesses, organizations, and the many facets that make a community.

"Social justice" means getting a good start to life, building a foundation for thriving. To me that means good schools. The emphasis in all our schools needs to be education. The schools should provide help when needed to advance education. Justice for all means school resources are focused on helping students to, as the saying goes, be all they can be.
