

# County Commissioners Respond to Questions From Jewish Community

# V.O.T.E. '98

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The Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, Women's Division, Political Education Committee mailed the following questionnaire to all of the candidates for the Board of County commissioners

Their answers are listed below. Reprints are available at the Federation office. We wish to express our thanks to those candidates who responded to our survey. We hope that this information is helpful as you consider how you will cast your vote on November 3.  
This questionnaire was produced in con-

Name	1. What do you think is the most important priority for school planning: diversity, neighborhood schools (proximity), stability and utilization?	2. The Arts and Science Council funding cuts and counseling of minors' restrictions raised a lot of discussion about "community standards." How do you define the community standards for our county?	3. How do you define the separation of church and state?	4. Do you support prayer in school? If so, what form would prayer take?	5. b s
<b>AT LARGE</b> Becky Carney Democrat	By state statute it is not the County Commission's responsibility to site schools; however, this year we have added two new School Board appointed positions to the Planning Commission in an effort to coordinate long range planning.	I voted against the arts funding cuts and restricted counseling. My rationale is that I believe government services should be open and inclusive for all.	As stated in amendment #1 to the Constitution of the United States — "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof —"	I support the current CMS policy of a moment of silence.	My ser from
H. Parks Helms Democrat	My role as a County Commissioner is to support the planning and goals of the Board of Education and to provide funding to carry out their responsibility. Education of all our children is my priority. SPUD is a comprehensive concept for siting school facilities and the components are equally important.	Just as "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," "community standards" is subject to the interpretation of the individual. To define "community standards" is judgmental and divisive. It is not the role of the County Commission to define "community standards."	I fully support the First Amendment to the Constitution which provides that there shall be no enactment restricting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the full exercise thereof. This Provision requires governmental authorities to deal with secular matters and the church to deal with religious matters.	Any student should be able to pray at any time to his or her God in a manner that does not interfere with the educational activities of other students. I do not believe there should be any requirements for students to pray - or not to pray - in school. This is a personal decision.	As cal wor sion that org
Steve P. Helms Republican	Neighborhood schools are best if the parents are to play an important role in our children's education. Some parents do not have the time or transportation to go across town to participate. Neighborhoods can be a positive influence toward getting parents involved.	As a parent, I have a right to know who is counseling my child. I also have the right to know what my child is being counseled about. Government doesn't have the right to take my responsibility from me concerning my child. I do not believe it is fair for the county to fund controversial art at the expense of the taxpayer, regardless of its content.	I believe the Ten Commandments serves as God's law. I want the government to stay out of my Church. The Government's purpose is to serve the taxpayers and not to promote a particular religion.	A moment of silence is sufficient for people of all beliefs to pray to their God.	I am in for
Linda McCall Republican	The most important priority for school planning is to fulfill our responsibility to provide an equal opportunity for all students to acquire an excellent education in a safe, enriching environment in close proximity to home.	I believe in freedom of expression for all citizens. But, just like we all agree it would be wrong to scream "fire" in a crowded theatre, there obviously have to be some restraints on what is funded with tax dollars.	The Government does not have the right to enforce one particular religion over another.	Within reason, a time set aside for prayer and meditation can be very beneficial to both the student and the general atmosphere of the school. Therefore, I am in favor of setting aside a brief "quiet time" in which each student may silently pray and/or meditate without direction from any particular group.	My sen guid just app
Jim Richardson Democrat	I believe that diversity is most important for our children because it teaches them at an early age to respect the differences in each other.	Most of our citizens believe in decency and govern themselves accordingly. I don't believe in censorship.	That government not try to control the church, and that the church not try to control government.	I support prayer everywhere, but requiring a group prayer is wrong. If a school child wants to give a non-vocal prayer anytime, I think he should have the opportunity.	
Tom Vance Republican	While all four factors are important, I would prioritize diversity as most critical. We live in a complex society; our world contacts are ever expanding. We must learn how to work with and develop respect for all citizens.	It is impossible to set a set of standards we all could agree upon. What may appear "moral" to me may be offensive to others. I basically trust the judgment of the people to exercise their rights without seeking to impose their views upon others.	Separation of church and state is very critical. Our history and the history of other nations clearly show how dangerous it is for religious zealots to impose their doctrines on others.	I support moments of silence so that each individual, if he chooses, may do whatever he wishes, whether it be prayer to his God or merely self-reflection.	I God not, try t sona
<b>DISTRICT 1</b> Joel Carter Republican	Do this [neighborhood schools (proximity)] and the rest will fall in place. Help stabilize communities.	God Family - government. Society's standards are based on the edicts of God's laws.	Per the U.S. Constitution.	Yes, per the individual doing the prayer.	Gr
Margaret Markey Democrat	All (diversity, proximity, stability, and utilization) are extremely important considerations for planning schools. I would not prioritize one over the others. County commissioners shouldn't make that choice—that is a decision for the school board. The commissioners' responsibility is different—how much can the county afford to fund the schools given all of the other funding needs that exist in the county.	Again, this is not the role of the county commissioners. County commissioners have specific responsibilities under the law for setting the policies of and administering the county as an arm of state government. They were never intended to be a board of censorship nor a board to set community standards.	Through the freedom of religion clause of the U.S. Constitution and the cases interpreting that concept that have been decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. Basically, government must not establish a religion but neither is it to prohibit the free exercise of religion. I believe that a public official must be careful to respect the religion of others and not impose her own religious values on others.	I support a moment of silent prayer but otherwise I do not support prayer in school. My own childhood experience plays a role in this since I often felt left out and embarrassed because my religion was different than my classmates. Religious values are best taught at home and through a community of faith, not in public school.	I belic r exan resp play
<b>DISTRICT 2</b> C. Morgan Edwards Republican	(Did not receive response in time to publish)	(Did not receive response in time to publish)	(Did not receive response in time to publish)	(Did not receive response in time to publish)	(D
Norman A. Mitchell, Sr. Democrat	I have served on the Future School Planning Task Force (Committee of 33). We found diversity, proximity, stability and utilization were all important for school planning.	Tolerance of others, good educational system, respect for different religions, good and fair economic base and citizen participation. All of these components working together make Charlotte an attractive place to live and work.	The definition to me is just as it is stated, the separation of church and state.	No. You can pray anywhere at anytime.	My ate, tres
<b>DISTRICT 3</b> Darrel J. Williams Democrat	I believe the most important priority should be diversity. However, the other three—proximity, stability, and utilization—must also be used to properly analyze the location of schools.	Our standards should be based on a well-governed, safe, prosperous, healthy, and educated community. They should not be based on religious and moral beliefs of individual elected officials. We must celebrate our diversity, not tear someone apart if they are different than you are.	The state and church must remain separate entities. One must not interfere with the responsibilities of the other.	Yes, I would support prayer in school. However, prayer should be silent to allow everyone to pray to whomever and however they wish.	I d dec cot the
<b>DISTRICT 4</b> John P. Helms Republican	The most important thing in my view for Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools is neighborhood schools, at least through elementary grades. This is where the foundation of a good education [is] laid. These children need to be in their own neighborhoods where their parents can participate in all school functions and PTA meetings without driving 20 miles across town to do so.	I am in complete agreement with the costs in funding for the Arts and Science Council. This is the most affluent segment of our local community and in the least need of public funding. On community standards, students, minors should be counseled by parents and not by government bureaucrats with a one-size textbook solution for all.	Church and state should be completely separate.	I see nothing wrong with prayer in school whether it be silent prayer or a revolving prayer given by the different religions present at that school. In my view this would help build respect and knowledge for each other's beliefs.	M in
Lloyd Scher Democrat	The County Commission, by law, is not involved with school placement so it is extremely difficult to give a correct answer. My personal preference is the utilization of each school to the fullest. Students and school usage in the day and neighborhood and recreational facility at night.	I have no right to determine what is right for anyone in Mecklenburg County. Our responsibilities, as elected officials, do not include telling people what they can see. Choice in a free society such as ours gives the individuals the right to see, hear and to participate in the community. Citizens pay the taxes therefore they should have the right to any counseling programs available.	As elected officials, [we] swear to uphold the Constitution with our hand on the Bible. Not to uphold the Bible as some think. Church and State are separate, it is one of the leading foundations [on which] this country was established.	Silent prayers only. This would allow every student to pray without hurting anyone else. As with the commissioners' meetings we must be respectful to others' beliefs. I have started meetings off with a silent prayer when it is my turn to lead the commission in prayer while others do not care who they exclude.	M: sin th lic ot op
<b>DISTRICT 5</b> Tom Cox Republican	Siting policies which: 1) Support the system's highest priority which is to graduate all children with skills to keep a paying job (enough to raise a family) and 2) recognize the school's role as an anchoring community asset.	I am sure I cannot.	The state should guarantee that each person has the freedom to worship in his own manner but should not require the worship or observance of any one religion.	Yes. I can say that it should not be a prayer written by any one group or sect, by the school system, by the principal, or by any teacher. I guess that leaves silent prayer in classes with mixed beliefs, ecumenical prayers at commencement/ assemblies, or sect-oriented prayer and in small groups — and, of course, "listening" prayers when no one but God talks.	I l mu no
<b>DISTRICT 6</b> Bill James Republican	The Committee of 33 established a bus ride of 30 minutes or so as an "acceptable price" for diversity. The School Board has chosen to ignore this "rule" making diversity the only measure. "Diversity" to them only includes Black children (excluding Asians and Hispanics). Black children are centered in the center-city and are too far from "white suburbs" to be integrated effectively. A quality education is not a quota or a long bus ride.	Community Standards are the values we hold and the laws of our State. 77% of residents approved of the "parents rights" ordinance I authored on counseling children. Only one third said, "homosexuality should be tolerated as part of a diverse society." We have laws that criminalize certain immoral conduct and the law should be upheld until it is changed by the legislature. Change the law, don't break it or ignore it.	Thomas Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists in 1802 regarding a "wall of separation" is widely misquoted and recent disclosures from Jefferson have shown that it does not mean what liberals have said it does. The "wall" he referred to, was to keep government from "establishing" a state religion, not preventing men from exercising their faith wherever they wish (even at County Commission meetings).	YES—if student initiated and led. I am in favor of prayers at public functions and believe that each individual who prays should do so as his conscience and God calls him to (out loud, silent or otherwise). I bristle at the idea that because I am Christian and taught to pray "in Jesus' name," I must abandon my faith while in the public arena. That I will not do.	All i sion conu the i Libe ord duct in re
Everette A. Passaly, Jr. Democrat	I believe in neighborhood schools. Children should go to the schools that are closest to their neighborhoods and homes. I believe that the School Board is wasting a lot of money and school resources by busing. Also, the time that children are waiting for buses has been used before they get to school, not very loyal to the school and parents are less likely to become involved in their children's school.	My standards and your standards are different... But... government should not fund any immoral play, or art that is not within society's standards... professionals that work with young people are severely restricted when they cannot counsel them when they have social or sexual problems. Most young people will not discuss their problems with their parents, no matter what their relationship is with their parents.	The United States was founded on the freedom of religion. God is our foundation. We cannot eliminate God from our public lives. The church cannot rule government as it did in England and the rest of the world and as it does today in The Middle East. Religion has a place and that is teaching us the way we should live and treat other people.	Yes I do support prayer in school. I believe if you want to pray before school and at lunch that should be the student's choice. If students want to have an organized meeting or study the Bible they should be allowed to. I believe teachers have the same right.	Th en fur ag