

Q&A: Charlotte's new mayor-elect on LGBT equality

Anthony Foxx committed to amending non-discrimination policies, other LGBT-inclusive changes

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

In November, Charlotte voters ushered in a new era of local government, electing the city's first Democratic mayor in 22 years and an historic 8-3 Democratic majority on city council. A number of city council candidates, as well as Mayor-elect Anthony Foxx, have expressed their support of the LGBT community and have said they'll seek to make LGBT-inclusive changes at the city level.

Q-Notes spoke with Foxx via telephone just two weeks after his election victory, discussing the general state of Charlotte, his top priorities upon taking office in December and his plans for supporting the LGBT community.

So, now you're the new mayor elect. How's that feel after campaigning for it and working toward it for so long?

It feels good. Obviously it is a challenging time for the city and for the country, but that's precisely that kind of time when you need leaders who have a proven resiliency and new ideas on how to tackle old problems and the courage to follow through. I'm looking forward to serving.

You've had a couple weeks since the election to reflect on your campaign. Looking back, what are you particularly proud of, and in meeting constituents what did you most learn about the needs of Charlotte and her citizens?

I'm proud of the positive campaign that we

ran. I thought it was important for our city in a time like this to really have a good debate on the issues, but not on personalities. I think we accomplished that. In terms of what I learned from citizens, I learned what I suspected, which was that not only is the community changing, but the community has changed. The leadership that we've had in place has governed under an outmoded leadership style and what I'll endeavor to do is be a lot more inclusive, a lot more focused on acknowledging the changes that have occurred in the demographics of our city and pushing to make Charlotte a place that's known as an even more welcoming place than it has been in the past.

You're the first Democratic mayor here in 22 years. The last, of course, was Mayor Harvey Gantt. Do you think the voters' decision to elect you is an indicator that the city is starting to turn bluer, more solidly Democratic?

You know, maybe. That may be true. It's really hard to say. Clearly this was an off-year election. The mayor's office was probably the biggest race on the ballot. In those years you see a dramatic drop off in turnout and I was actually surprised by the extent to which turnout was low this time. It was lower than it has ever been in the other two times I've run. Maybe that has to do with the economy or has

to do with people being worn out from 2008. I've seen an analysis that says 49 percent of the voters were Democratic, which roughly tracks the percentages [of registered voters] in the city. We've had a run of Republicans who've been able to attract Democratic support and independent support. This time, I think some of that independent group and some of those Democrats who had supported Pat McCrory chose to support me this time. I think it is an indication of the kind of campaign we ran. In local races I think you tend to see people voting more for individuals than the party. I think that was true this time as well.

LGBT folks are citizens too, so other than specifically LGBT issues, what will be some of the topics on the top of your priority list upon taking office in December?

Priority number one is getting the city back to work. We've got an unemployment level that is the highest in the state here in our county. If you track the numbers of people who are also underemployed, it even goes higher than that. There is a lot of work to do in terms of the short term trying to back-fill jobs in sectors hit hard and longer term identifying sectors with long-term potential and working with our community colleges and school system to orient ourselves to the jobs of the future. There is a lot of work ahead of us on that.

In addition to that, one critical need that I

see for our community overall is for leadership to be a lot more communicative about the problems we face and the solutions available to deal with those problems, whether that be the economy, transportation issues or housing. I'll be working hard to find new ways to communicate with the public because I think the more we can inform residents of Charlotte about where we are, where we are trying to get, I think the more supportive they will be for the solutions we end up moving forward.

On LGBT issues now — I asked you to read at least one of my opinion columns here in Q-Notes, I think, that reflected a lot of the frustration LGBT citizens have here. A lot of us work for companies that are very progressive. We are protected by corporate policies, but LGBT citizens who are employees of the city aren't protected. One of things we've needed for a long time is an inclusive non-discrimination policy from the city. A lot of people would like to see domestic partner benefits extended as well. When do you see the city council taking up these issues?

I'd like to see the City Council move on the non-discrimination issue very early in the next term and I'd like to see us do that in a bipartisan way. I know there are members of City Council within both parties who have

Parliament Resort Augusta, GA

Ph: 706-722-1155

www.p-house.com

**FALL/WINTER
SPECIALS!**

Stay Friday & Get Saturday Half Price!
Or Stay Friday & Saturday, Get Thursday or Sunday FREE!

(holidays not included. Cannot be combined with other offers i.e. birthday weekends.)

Birthday Weekends

December 4 & 5th
January 22nd & 23rd

Get \$25 Off Rooms

(\$25 Off Each Night. Your birthday must be in birthday month to receive the discount. Cannot be combined with other specials.)

RV Park!
Long-Term Spaces Available

**NEW YEAR'S
WEEKEND**

with Blue Moon New Year's Eve Party



December 30 - January 2



2009 Winner
Jeff Jarnigan

2010 Mr. SECC

**LEATHER
CONTEST**

February 12-14th 2010

Selling out fast!

For Entry Details:
www.seccclubs.org

Maze, Dungeon, Video Lounge, Cafe, Pride Shop, WiFi



Armin's Catering®

Armin Desch has passion for creating magnificent dishes and well-planned menus. His inspired ideas for presentation and a love for people make for a unique client experience. The result is a dramatic yet elegant presentation of sumptuously creative recipes.

Available for any event — including your holiday party!

Join the growing list of happy customers —
Call Armin today.



Holiday Discount

10% OFF

An order of \$500 or more

Expires December 25th, 2009
On regularly priced items.
Cannot be used towards previously booked or discounted orders.
Cannot be combined with any other offers.
Some exclusions may apply.
Valid towards food purchase only.

email:
armincat@bellsouth.net

704.947.1670

www.arminscatering.com