

candidates race to the finish

face off in Burlington's mayoral final election

Assistant News Editor | @JADelgadoNEWS

Celo Faucette

Challenging Ian Baltutis on Nov. 7 is Burlington native Celo Faucette, current mayor pro-tem

“

I LOVE BURLINGTON.
IT'S DEAR TO MY HEART.
I'M GOING TO STAY
ACTIVE IN ANYTHING
THAT I CAN DO TO MAKE
THIS CITY BETTER.

CELO FAUCETTE
BURLINGTON MAYOR PRO-TEM

FAUCETTE'S GOALS

1. Get individuals involved in the community
2. Focus on affordable housing and improving Burlington's infrastructure

PRIMARY RESULTS

36

Faucette received 36 percent of the votes in the primary.

CAREER TIMELINE

- 2005 - Retires from LabCorp after 36 years
- 2009 - First elected to the Burlington City Council
- 2014 - Appointed Mayor Pro Tem

FROM BIRTH, CELO FAUCETTE'S heart has always been in the city of Burlington.

Born in 1947, Faucette went through his elementary and high school years in segregation.

As a child, he remembers having to sit at the back of the bus, going to all black schools, sitting in all black waiting rooms and being a part of an all black Boy Scout troop. He constantly faced discrimination — a practice in Burlington that Faucette knew he had a duty to fix.

"I grew up in segregation ... I know how discrimination works. I don't want that to happen to anybody, anywhere else in the world," Faucette said. "Especially here in Alamance County and especially here in Burlington. We can't tolerate [segregation] at all."

According to 2010 census data, 57 percent of Burlington residents are white and 28 percent are black.

While his race played a big role in his childhood in Burlington, Faucette hopes the color of his skin will not make a difference in the way voters view him.

"I hope people look at the candidate and not the race," Faucette said. "If I should happen to win this election, I will be the first black mayor in Burlington."

As a community, Faucette believes Burlington strives for diversity and is against discrimination, but he feels there is still work to be done.

"As a black man you feel [discrimination] a lot, but I feel like I can make it better," Faucette said. "I can change people's minds. The content of my character makes me who I am, and not just the color of my skin."

Before Faucette became a politician, his father's death kept him from completing his college education which led to Faucette becoming one of LabCorp's first employees. Faucette continued to work for LabCorp, a health care diagnostics company headquartered in Burlington, for the next 36 years before retiring in 2005.

But retirement did not suit Faucette, who immediately got involved in politics.

"I wanted to get into politics because I knew how this town was when I left and when I was growing up, and I didn't want it to be like that anymore," Faucette said. "I grew up here, I know just about everything here in Burlington and that is a plus on my side. I know where people are and I know what we need."

As a grandson, brother and father to ministers, religion plays an important role in Faucette's beliefs and dreams for the Burlington community.

"Faith has been a big part of my family," Faucette said. "I believe in the Bible — it's sacred to me. My inspiration comes from my religion. 'Do unto others as they would do unto you.' You have to have love in your heart for your fellow man, that's the key. You have to believe in the Bible, you have to believe in yourself and you have believe in your community."

If elected mayor, Faucette hopes to continue building those community bonds by making the people of Burlington responsible for the city.

"Only we can make our neighborhood better," Faucette said. "Only individuals in our community can make the neighborhood better. It is up to citizens to take an active part in their neighborhood functions."

This is an aspect that if fixed, Faucette believes will change Burlington.

"We are ready for change. We are ready to move forward. We are ready to listen to you," Faucette said. "I want you to get involved — that's the most important thing about living in a city is being a part of a solution."

If elected, Faucette also wants to focus on affordable housing and improving Burlington's infrastructure.

While Faucette agrees with Baltutis in that community involvement will improve Burlington, there are several aspects of the current mayor that he disagrees with.

"[Baltutis] is a smart young man ... but he's not from Burlington," Faucette said. "I know my hometown, I know what it needs. That's an advantage I have that he doesn't have. I don't think he knows as much about Burlington as I know about Burlington."

Faucette also said he feels Baltutis' inability to work with the city council has been hindering Burlington's progress.

"[Baltutis'] greatest weakness is not willing to work with the council," Faucette said. "He has a lot of things on his agenda, [but] you have to be willing to follow up on what you tell people, no matter who you are."

While Faucette received 17 percent less of the vote during the primary election, Faucette reassures supporters that no matter the outcome, he is here to stay.

"If I lose, I'm not going away," Faucette said. "I'm active in my community. I'm going to stay active in my community. I love Burlington. It's dear to my heart. I'm going to stay active in anything that I can do to make this city better."

