

Candidate Responses – Orange County Board of Supervisors

J. Bryan Nicol

Question 1: Position Seeking:

JN: Orange County Board of Supervisors, District 5

Question 2: Have you Previously Held this Position?

JN: No

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

JN: Yes

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

JN: The Nicol Orange Business Growth Plan (OBGP) sets forth a full complement of business focused growth initiatives targeted to attract, support and retain businesses in Orange County, Virginia. All businesses deserve a strong and consistent foundation upon which to establish and grow their businesses to the fullest extent in Orange County.

As such, I propose a three-point plan focused on re-establishing and enhancing the business climate fundamentals for Orange County: 1. A full and complete update to the 2013 Orange County Comprehensive Plan. The plan has seen amendments over the past 10 years but is in dire need of updating to address modern economic challenges and opportunities. We have entered a new phase of opportunity in the post-pandemic era that requires new planning and updated frameworks to address all business types and business friendly characteristics. 2. Review, update and enact the basic economic development elements that support business attraction and complementary growth throughout the County's major business growth areas. This includes, but is not limited to, planning and implementing utility requirements, transportation master plans and major projects, historic/cultural resource planning of sufficient detail to guide land use decisions and growth parameters. 3. Provide open, transparent public processes for Orange County citizens that focuses on collaboration and drives consensus around each major growth area of the County as well as with small, medium and large businesses.

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?

JN: According to a recent report cited by ABC news station, WIRC, Stacker.com noted that millions of acres of farmland are disappearing every decade across the United States*. What is troubling is the statistics cited in this report note that Orange County may have lost more than 50 percent of its farmland and almost 100 farms since 2017. This is an alarming trend and one that requires thoughtful and concerted discussion and action at the BOS.

As one of the top 25 counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia in total farmland acreage, Orange County's rural and agricultural heritage deserves attention, focus and support from the

Orange County Board of Supervisors as part of a vibrant and unique aspect to advancing our rural heritage of major agriculture and farmland resources. I pledge to use my role on the BOS to take appropriate action, listening to the needs of farmers and agricultural businesses and jointly chart a path of appropriate support to help end this troubling trend.

(*Source: <https://www.wric.com/news/virginia-news/list-top-25-virginia-counties-with-the-most-farmland/amp/>)

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?

JN: As the husband to a small business owner in the County, I have seen firsthand the challenges of creating, enhancing and growing a small business in Orange County. The BOS must proactively engage county citizens in a re-visioning process to chart a long-term vision that specifically implements attractive and harmonious development opportunities in target growth areas while supporting surrounding uses and quality of life measures such as adequate water resources, transportation improvements as well as complementary zoning.

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

JN: The first step to supporting existing businesses and encouraging healthy economic growth involves undertaking the necessary planning that provides the foundational support for existing businesses such as policies and code provisions that support growth without negative impacts to surrounding uses.

A second step is continually improving the business-friendly environment in the County that fosters promotion of Orange County businesses through policies and frameworks to attract new business and grow existing business.

Finally, I propose establishing local economic advisory councils in targeted growth areas to drive local awareness of specific needs for County resources and support, changes to relevant policies and plans and to advise and develop specific plans (foundational and comprehensive) for business growth and development.

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

JN: Agriculture and forestry are two vital components of Orange County's overall economic well-being and are key pillars to the overall economic success of Orange County. Both deserve active County focus through supportive guiding frameworks and policies that encourage agricultural and forestry business growth and development across the County. As cited earlier, the negative trends are alarming and harmful to our agricultural heritage. I support holding a forum bringing farm and timber owners to the table to discuss and learn about their concerns and suggestions for improvements to help drive economic growth across the County.

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

JN: I define social justice as equality for all people and that all people deserve equal rights and opportunities in education, employment, healthcare and housing as examples. Social justice is equality

in action. When the BOS acts in ways that support equal rights for all Orange County citizens then the BOS advances fundamental fairness that ensures people are treated equally.
