



2024 SURVEY FOR COLONIAL HEIGHTS SCHOOL BOARD

Candidate: T. Gregory Kochuba

1. Please tell us a bit about your background and involvement in the community.

I was elected to City Council in November 2012, serving in the capacity of Mayor since January 2015. Through my public service on City Council, I have strived to provide leadership to our community and to council, utilize my strong financial background to create a fiscally responsible budget and execution, to develop an in-depth understanding of city operations, and to create collaborative community partnerships.

As Mayor, I serve on the Board of Directors of Virginia Gateway Region, Crater Workforce Development, Capital Region Red Cross and the Richmond Regional Tourism.

For over 36 years, I've worked for the Department of Defense where I gained extensive experience in finance, budgeting, accounting, auditing and economic forecasting. I'm a graduate of King's College, in Wilkes-Barre, PA, where I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. I'm also a Certified Defense Financial Manager (CDFM).

2. Do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent? If Republican, are you in accord with [The Republican Creed](#)?

According to the city of Colonial Heights code, candidates for City Council are required to run as independents. Personally, I am a conservative and a Republican. Yes, I am in line with the Republican Creed.

3. Please tell us why you are running for City Council.

Serving on City Council is an opportunity to serve my community and to utilize my skill sets to help strengthen and improve our city. Those skills include:

- proven leadership capabilities
- strong financial background
- in-depth understanding of city needs and operations
- strong collaborative partnerships with community partners

I believe it is vitally important to have city council members that have a wide range of professional and practical experience in order to creatively solve problems, cast vision, and think outside the box for growth opportunities.

I enjoy building relationships with community members, community businesses, and community partners to meet needs and create opportunities for the citizens of Colonial Heights.

4. What are two or three things that the City of Colonial Heights is doing well?

- Providing a safe community
 - The city has well trained and dedicated first responders. They are equipped with state-of-the-art equipment to support fast and effective response to all types of emergency needs or criminal activities.
 - City Council recently implemented an increased pay step plan to retain and recruit police officers and firefighters
- Maintaining a strong and fiscally responsible financial position
 - For 40+ years, the city has received a clean audit opinion and has earned the highest bond rating of AA+ for a city of our size. In addition, the city has effectively managed its resources without raising taxes since 2017, often under-executing its budget.
- Continuing to improve infrastructure throughout the city
 - The city has made major strides improving aging infrastructure throughout the city- most recently: Lakeview Avenue Modernizations, Westover/Boulevard intersection, Branders Bridge/Boulevard intersection, Lakeview Dam, High School renovations, and more. The majority of these projects were funded through state and federal grants. In the last two years the city has received \$24M covering about 90% of the projects' costs.
- Supporting our school system
 - The city continues to have a strong partnership with the school system, providing funding through an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding). The agreement provides school funding based on specific tax revenues. The school receives the funding and formulates and executes its own budget. The city also provides funding assistance on major school capital improvement projects.
- Preserving the small-town community feeling
 - The city has done an exceptional job preserving the small-town community atmosphere by sponsoring events like Fort Clifton Festival, Christmas Tree Lighting, Christmas Parade, Back to School Kick-Off Program, Senior Transportation Program, etc. It also honors those that served in the military with its Hometown Hero Banners and Memorial and Veterans Day ceremonies. The City's partnership with the Tri City Chili Peppers has been a great asset to bring the community together. These and other initiatives by the city make Colonial Heights a great place to work, live and raise a family!

5. What are two or three things that the City of Colonial Heights need to improve on?

- Economic Development
 - The city needs to enhance their approach to attract new businesses, retail outlets and restaurants. This approach should include leveraging the following:
 - Fort Gregg-Adams generates \$2.3B in to the local economy
 - 3 million cars go by our exit on interstate 95 per month
 - Colonial Heights is the last retail hub from Richmond to the North Carolina state line

- Our retail hub is supporting the cities of Hopewell and Petersburg, Virginia State and Fort Gregg-Adams, in addition to the citizens of Colonial Heights
- Communication
 - The City continues to look for new and innovative ways to improve methods of sharing information with the public on events, city services, city policies and codes, etc. Methods of communicating should come in all shapes and sizes to effectively reach all residents young or old.
- Code Enforcement
 - Over the last several years, City Council has approved several ordinances specifying requirements for homeowners to maintain their properties. The purpose of the ordinances is to ensure both the appearance and value of the property is maintained. To ensure compliance with these codes, City Council has allocated resources for additional personnel to the Director of Planning. These positions are in the process of being filled.

6. How will you seek to be responsive to city residents if elected to City Council?

Throughout my service to the City, I have been, and will continue to be, highly responsive to residents' questions, needs, concerns, and ideas. I will continue to respond to residents who have questions or concerns by phone, email, or meeting them in person. I will also continue to provide accurate and up-to-date information that impacts our community on my Facebook page or provide in-person updates to organizations throughout the city as requested.

7. In your opinion, what is the number one issue facing the City over the next four years?

Prioritizing and determining funding sources for major infrastructure projects, such as:

- repair/replacement of aging water/sewer lines
- sidewalks on the Boulevard for safety
- street paving and repair
- consideration of a new High School in the future

8. What role, if any, should the City have in ensuring the long term success of the Tri-City Chili Peppers as a team in Colonial Heights?

Over the last five years, City Council has provided considerable funding in the Capital Improvement Plan to make renovations to Shepherd Stadium. These renovations include:

- a new scoreboard
- dug outs
- PA system
- new seating
- turf

These improvements to our historic and prized Shepherd Stadium helped to attract the Chili Peppers to come to Colonial Heights. Recently, the City extended its contract with the Chili Peppers through 2028.

I believe, in order to keep the team in Colonial Heights, the City will have to continue to make improvements to the stadium. Additional updates would likely include:

- locker rooms for the players
- new restrooms
- additional seating
- upgraded parking
- renovating the concession stand

Without these improvements, the Chili Peppers could consider moving to Chesterfield or Henrico. Both these counties are aggressively pursuing “Sports Tourism” and have approached the Chili Peppers owner regarding a move to their respective communities. It is noteworthy that council recently approved the complete renovation of Roanoke Avenue, which leads traffic to the stadium. The renovation includes new water/sewer lines, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, lighting and new paving, which will provide a more attractive and efficient entry for fans.

9. Is there anything else you would like to share that was not already asked?

Before casting your vote for city council, I highly encourage citizens to look closely at each candidate’s credentials. What professional and personal experience will they bring to our City to improve the quality of life for our citizens?

My credentials are dedicated service to the City, proven leadership, a strong and experienced financial background, and collaborative community relationships.

Finally some noteworthy accomplishments of the last several years included:

- Provided personnel property tax relief
- Developed a strategic budget during COVID
- Maintained a strong financial position
- Completed major capital improvement projects (Lakeview Ave, Dupuy Ave, Westover Turn Lane etc.) at little or no cost to the city
- Implemented a Public Safety step pay plan
- Placed a high priority on street paving
- Completed several school renovation projects
- Prioritized code enforcement to maintain property values
- Established a Short-Term Rental Policy
- Approved additional phases to the Appomattox River Trail
- Partnered with the Chili Peppers, a Coastal Plains League baseball team
- Added 8 new pickle ball courts
- Continued renovations to Violet Bank

