



2024 SURVEY FOR COLONIAL HEIGHTS SCHOOL BOARD

Candidate: Daniel J. LaLonde

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

I was born and raised in Colonial Heights. I went to Tussing Elementary, CHMS, and CHHS, graduating in 2011. I played recreational sports throughout my childhood and varsity tennis in high school. I left for college in 2011 and lived in Lynchburg, VA, for about ten years. I finally moved back to the area, purchasing a house in Colonial Heights, to attend law school at the University of Richmond in 2021. I recently graduated, and I am now working full-time in the area.

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

I consider myself an Independent. I recognize that people find great pride in the parties they associate with, and I do not doubt the sincerity of these people's beliefs. However, I have found that many ideas are far too nuanced (like a proper lawyer) to fit neatly into a package I could define as a "party." Some of my ideas on particular topics might resonate with people who identify as conservative, and some might resonate with people who identify as liberal. I believe that ideas should be well thought out and reasonable more than I think they should try to sway a voter one way or the other based on party affiliation.

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

I love the city I come from. I want to see Colonial Heights be the best city that it could be. I, of course, have ideas that could make the city more robust and enjoyable. Ultimately, though, I am running because I believe that if someone has the time, energy, and know-how, one of the best ways to be involved in the community is to run for public office. Running for office teaches me the community's needs and what it takes to connect with people and encourages others to get involved. Win or lose, those are positives.

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

First, the city has brought in many businesses over my lifetime. Over my lifetime, I have seen small businesses blossom and large businesses become attracted to the city. The city clearly understands what businesses are looking for when considering where to place themselves, which has led to particular increases in tax revenue.

Second, the city is doing a good job maintaining exposure in the surrounding area despite the pressures that increased federal and state regulations have placed on a small locality such as

Colonial Heights. Over the decades, many unfunded mandates have forced Colonial Heights to invest more money. Despite these new requirements, the city has maintained a balanced budget and found ways to grow and expand.

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

First, the city is unattractive. I have lived here my whole life, and it looks worse today than ever. The boulevard looks run down, the business districts do not appear welcoming, the parks look deplorable, and there does not appear to be much of a priority to fix this problem. I am not for wasting money where it does not need to be spent, but ugliness invites abuse. When the city does not look like it desires to be taken care of by its citizens, the citizens do not care for it.

Second, the city has not put any serious conversation into play about what type of city we want to be. When I was a child, Colonial Heights was a bedroom community. This means there were very few businesses in the city, and most people left the city to work. Over the years, the city has brought in more and more businesses. Bringing in these businesses is fine, but then I find that people in the city complain about things that businesses bring (e.g., increased crime or the increased need for public services like fire and police). This disconnect between the city's progress and the residents' complaints shows me that there has not been an open conversation about what direction the city wants to go.

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

Just like my campaign, I plan on being transparent. I am not a candidate who seeks to change my views based on what may or may not be popular at any given moment. I believe a public servant should listen to their constituents, consider their concerns, help educate them where information seems incorrect, and take responsibility for my actions. This approach is the approach I would take and would ensure that I am leading through servant leadership until the residents decide that they no longer want me in that particular position.

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

Identity. As I previously stated, many different types of cities exist in the Commonwealth. Some cities focus on residential engagement. Some cities focus on business development. Colonial Heights wants it all without the land resources necessary to make that objective possible. Colonial Heights needs to figure out what type of city we want to be so that we can make decisions in light of that objective.

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?

As I previously stated, it depends on the answer to the question of what type of city Colonial Heights wants to be. If the city wants to focus on residential engagement, then the city should

play a heavy hand in keeping the team in the city. The team adds to community engagement, gives the residents something to be proud of, and brings the community together. However, if the city decides that we want to focus on maximizing business tax revenue and bringing in as many businesses as possible, then the city should let the market decide the team's future. If the money is worth it for the city to keep the team in the city, then the city should act to keep it here. If not, then the city should let them leave.

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

One of the main reasons I am running for city council is because I feel like council members have not had to answer for their positions. So many of the members are voted in because of name recognition. The city council elections seem to be a more vibrant version of a high school class president election. Because of this reality, my goal is to bring attention to issues so that when residents hear my positions, it encourages them to ask the other candidates for their positions on similar issues. Only when we, as residents, have answers to these questions can we make informed decisions as voters.