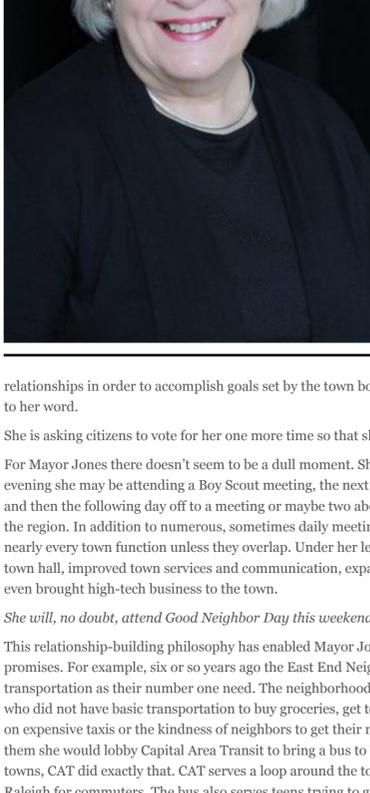


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Meet the Candidates: Mayor Vivian Jones ~ Relationship building will keep town moving forward

Vivian Jones first female mayor, longest serving mayor in town's history

September 9, 2013 at 11:42 AM



Editor's Note: This is one in a series of stories about the four candidates running for two slots on the Wake Forest Town Commission and two candidates for Mayor. If you want to know more about the candidates please attend the Wake Forest Chamber of Commerce Candidate Forum on September 10, 2013 from 6 to 8 p.m. at Wake Forest Town Hall, 301 S. Brooks St. In addition, WFT has reached out to all candidates for Town Commissioner, School Board and Wake Forest Mayor. Any candidate wishing to submit their profile should contact us at wakeforesttoday@gmail.com

WAKE FOREST, September 9, 2013 ~ Pint-sized Wake Forest Mayor Vivian A. Jones is anything but tiny when it comes to advocating for Wake Forest's 31,000 residents. When she ran for mayor for the first time in 1999, the town was about 12,000 people. From day one in 1999 she promised to be a leader who would build

relationships in order to accomplish goals set by the town board. She believes she has stayed true to her word.

She is asking citizens to vote for her one more time so that she can finish what she has started.

For Mayor Jones there doesn't seem to be a dull moment. She is every where all of the time: one evening she may be attending a Boy Scout meeting, the next day reading at an elementary school, and then the following day off to a meeting or maybe two about transportation or other issues for the region. In addition to numerous, sometimes daily meetings, many will attest that she attends nearly every town function unless they overlap. Under her leadership the town has built a new town hall, improved town services and communication, expanded recreational opportunities and even brought high-tech business to the town.

She will, no doubt, attend Good Neighbor Day this weekend.

This relationship-building philosophy has enabled Mayor Jones to keep many of her campaign promises. For example, six or so years ago the East End Neighborhood Association named transportation as their number one need. The neighborhood is home to many elderly residents, who did not have basic transportation to buy groceries, get to the doctor or pharmacy. Many relied on expensive taxis or the kindness of neighbors to get their needs met. Mayor Jones promised them she would lobby Capital Area Transit to bring a bus to Wake Forest. And to the envy of other towns, CAT did exactly that. CAT serves a loop around the town and provides an express bus to Raleigh for commuters. The bus also serves teens trying to get to activities and part-time jobs, as well as commuters and others throughout the community.

The recent purchase of the Renaissance Center is another fulfilled campaign promise. For many years and via many surveys, the citizens have expressed a desire for a central location to hold cultural arts programming that would be large enough to accommodate groups. When the opportunity arose to purchase the center, the town commissioners and the Mayor jumped at the opportunity knowing that land and buildings were only going to get more expensive. In addition, during her three terms she has overseen an expansion of the Senior Center, a renovation of Alston-Massenburg Center, the completion of several sections of greenway, the installation of the town's first public art, completion of the downtown streetscape, and more.

She is also admired around the state by other municipal leaders. She has been introduced as the hardest working mayor in the state at various North Carolina Mayor's Association conferences and has even been head of the association.

Here are the answers to our Wake Forest Today questions:

Q. You have been Mayor for 3 terms, what have you achieved?

A. The Town has accomplished some very important things during my years as the mayor: bus service to Raleigh and around town, AAA bond rating, E.Carroll Joyner Park, a good start on our greenway system, many great ways for communication between government and citizens. I am proud of these accomplishments. In my first campaign, I promised to be a positive leader and to build relationships, not only in our town, but in the entire Triangle area and the State. I have kept this promise and accomplished this goal. As a result, our community now has an attitude of expectation and cooperation. Most people talk about how much they enjoy living here. I am very proud to be the mayor of this wonderful community.

Q. What is your vision for the future?

A. My vision for the future of Wake Forest is to implement the Community Plan. This Plan represents the vision of the entire community for our future. As the mayor, I wholeheartedly endorse this vision and will work hard to see it come to fruition. Today's political environment is very dynamic. We have active and engaged citizens who are bringing new ideas and creating ways to solve problems or provide new services. It is important for leaders to allow this creativity to be adopted and used. I want to be that kind of leader.

Q. What have you started that you would like to see to completion?

A. I believe the purchase of the Wake Forest Renaissance Centre will have a long-lasting benefit to our community. We have a good Business Retention Visit program that is ongoing and supportive of our businesses. The Wireless Research Center is beginning to realize its potential. The Public Art Commission has completed its first project and is a fantastic and dedicated group of citizens. The Youth Advisory Board is beginning to develop into an influential group. These are some of the initiatives that I helped bring to prominence. I would very much like to be involved in how they help shape our future.

Q. You may know the history: Are you currently the longest running mayor? Will this next term set a record?

A. There have been 19 mayors in the Wake Forest since our charter was approved in 1909. I am the first woman mayor and the longest serving mayor. In the early years, the Board held 2 year terms. Mr. J. G. Mills served from 1915-1925 (10 years). Mr. Mills was the father of John Mills who is a current resident and who served on the Town Board in the 1980's and 1990's.

Q. Economically, if you had a crystal ball what do you think the future of the town will be?

A. Economically, I believe the future of Wake Forest is bright. We have an AAA bond rating due to our fiscally conservative approach to revenue projections, debt management, staffing, and operating cost containment. We will continue to provide the services our citizens need and we will work to provide enhancements to quality of life as we are able within the confines of good fiscal management.

Q. You have probably been the most active hardest working mayor in Wake County. What challenges do you see Wake Forest facing regionally?

A. We must be vigilant to maintain our position in the region. Growth issues throughout the region affect all of us and we must be at the table when discussions take place. We must also begin looking more toward the north and how we can partner with Youngsville, Franklin County, and others.

Q. Finally, much has been made recently regarding the endorsement of various political parties in local non-partisan races. Do you think that this really has always been the case and that politicians are just more open about their affiliations? Or do you think it is going to be a problem going forward -- a sort of Balkinization of town commissions and city councils into Democrats/Republicans? And what kind of problem might that cause?

A. I believe political partisanship has definitely increased in the past few years. At the local level, it is important to keep the non-partisan stance. The services provided by your town government are not ideological issues. Partisanship can prevent cooperation and create gridlock as we are seeing at the state and national level. This attitude has no place among neighbors who simply want their garbage picked up, their roads maintained, ballgames for the kids, and their town kept safe.

Q. Is there anything in the past 12 years you might do differently?

A. I realize that I have made mistakes over the years; however, I believe I have basically gone in the right direction with the greater good of the community as my goal. I would not change that.

Q. Can you tell new residents about yourself?

A. I was born and grew up in rural Randolph County, North Carolina with my parents, sisters and one brother. My parents stressed the need for a good education for all of us. Early on, my parents set an example of service to the community. I attended The Woman's College of UNC (now UNC-G) and received my one-year Secretarial Certificate during a time when most young women got married and began having a family. I have two children: a son, Bill, married with 3 children; lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan who is Vice-President of Operations for ConTech Corp.; and a daughter, Wendy, who lives in Clayton and is the Sports Information Officer and Assistant Athletic Director at Meredith College.

I have lived in Wake Forest since 1981. Before opening my restaurant in 1991 called Jovi's Cafe & Catering and Jovi's Kitchen and Market. I worked for Variety Wholesalers for nearly 10 years. I now consider myself retired. I am a member of St. John's Episcopal Church, former member Wake Forest Woman's Club, former board member of Downtown Revitalization Corporation. I was also a town commissioner before being elected mayor in 1999.

Profile by Wanda Mukherjee, Editor

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October 24th
3-7 pm
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120 S. Wingate St, Wake Forest

free food, free prizes, free admission

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Family Focused Expo! WAKE FOREST AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE Expo 2013

October 24th
3:00-7:00 pm
The Ledford Center
@ The Seminary - 120 S Wingate St, Wake Forest
(free parking at the High School)

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