

Attorney Jay White took time to meet us this morning on a holiday and was a very gracious host. We began with a quick introduction and explanation of our committee and association: the issues we hold up as important and our role in the community. Then we jumped straight into the questions. He answered each carefully and thoughtfully. I have written the questions and answers below. These are paraphrased versions of his answers based on handwritten notes.

Q: Given your diverse background, why is now the time to run for the 83rd?

Jay: Many things coming together at the right time. The 83rd is ready for an effective leader who is interested in representing all of the citizens, not just a specific group. I want to bring ALL parties to the table and give everyone a voice. I plan to hold quarterly "kitchen table" meetings with leaders in the community and especially those in education, law enforcement/emergency services and those who are involved with economic development.

Personally, it's also a great time for me to run as my kids are now grown, I was recently redistricted into the 83rd, my career is stable and I have a very supportive wife.

Q: If elected what is your primary focus during this first term?

Jay: Education is #1 no question. It is the best tool we have to break the poverty cycle and provide people opportunity in our community and across the state. I would also want to put a grant program in place for veterans in the state to help them develop and launch their own small businesses. I will favor legislation that would flatten taxes specifically for small businesses. I believe owning your own business is a way to find meaning and prove the value of your own life to yourself.

Q: What is an example of smart growth legislation for the state and would you support legislation aimed at job creation and work site development?

Jay: I don't have a specific example at the state level, but through my experience as a (county) commissioner we looked at several ways to address this issue. The tricky part is how to adapt state mandates to local development, because not everything works across the board. I would want to find ways to make those state mandates flexible. One thing that came up while I was a commissioner, was the development of farm land. It's totally ok if farmers want to sell their land to developers and we did not discourage that, but we also wanted them to have alternative options. A plan we developed centered around a program to train local folks that wanted to farm and providing them the skills to do that. Then in turn connecting them with the local farmers and they could rent portions of these larger farms and provide residual income to (presumably) older farmers helping them to sustain their lifestyle without feeling forced to sell out. As a bonus, it helps to preserve local farming.

Q: How can we grow affordable housing in our state across income levels? Are there plans or policies you would want to initiate or remove (addition by subtraction)?

Jay: First thing is identify what "affordable housing" is in our state and even more specifically in a given community. Around here that might mean houses in the \$100K-\$150K range. I haven't read the most recent reports, but for this area I believe the minimum price point for most builders to start turning a profit is in the \$230K-\$250K range because of the cost of the land, materials and development. That's a tough gap to bridge. How do you incentivize developers to integrate affordable housing into their plans. One way to increase affordability in a given community is to increase the average income per household (going back to the #1 priority of education and creating opportunity). Another way, is something we initiated back when I was a commissioner, which was to partner with churches and non-profits and have them actually buy and improve houses in communities with houses that need fixing up. Once fixed up, sell those homes at cost back to owner/occupants. Simultaneously this creates more affordable housing, while improving areas that need it.

Q: Can we hear the story of how it came to be that as a 7th grader you made brandy for your sister's wedding?

Jay: Well, travel back to my chemistry classroom in 7th grade. My teacher liked to do things in the lab, conduct experiments with us, and assigned us experiments to do in the lab on our own. I really liked these and did them all pretty quickly. He told us we could do any experiment we wanted and he would help. My sister was getting married, so I decided I could make something for the wedding. I ended up making fig brandy because figs are what we had available. My teacher was cool with it and helped me make it. We all had a toast at the reception dinner with a shot of the fig brandy.

As we were wrapping up, he shared stories of being the youngest of 4 children, his father's approach to letting his kids settle their arguments with one another, and specifically how they always came together at the kitchen table to reach group decisions about family matters. His parents encouraged the kids to hash out issues from the small like should the older sister be allowed to date a certain guy to even the strongest disagreements between them. His parents still had the ultimate say, but he said that these sessions "at the kitchen table" were very impactful for him. He circled back and related this approach to what he wants to do with the quarterly meetings we spoke about in the beginning - small groups of leaders in the community coming together to try and suss out solutions to issues in the community/state and strategies for improving the community/state.

We spent about 45 mins with Jay and he was engaged and sharp throughout. I know I've left some things out. Personally, I felt it was a very successful beginning to growing a beneficial relationship. His biggest challenge is winning the primary against an incumbent that's a worker when it comes to campaigning. Whether or not he wins, he is a strong member of the community, a long-time Rotarian and a well-regarded attorney.