

Derek Mobley answers

1. As a political newcomer, why are you running for county commission and why do you think you are the best candidate?

I believe the decisions we make as a county over the next four years are going to shape our future for decades. Growth is coming to our state, but it will not be evenly distributed. As someone who was born in the triad, educated in our public schools, and now works in a skilled job, I am committed to being the best candidate to make sure everyone in Guilford County has a real opportunity for a similar experience. I am very concerned that if we do not invest in our public schools and offer competitive pay to our first responders and other public workers that we will continue to lose local residents to poverty and crime and their tax dollars will go towards recruiting outside workers because we failed to prepare our own residents for these opportunities.

2. How are you different from your opponent?

I have more than a decade of experience working as a senior analyst for some of the largest companies in the southeast. I know what it takes to work as a team to solve hard problems, and how to balance different perspectives while staying focused on achieving good returns and hitting performance goals. I have also been recognized as a volunteer leader of several local non-profit boards, because I strongly believe that sustainable solutions to local problems can only be found by starting with the local residents.

3. What is your current occupation and how does that job experience translate to working as a county commissioner?

I currently work as a Quantitative Analyst building mathematical models to predict how the financial choices our customers make will affect our firm. I think this translates well to working as a county commissioner because I am constantly working to understand how people respond to policy decisions and what their motivations and incentives tend to be. My job also requires experience with financial accounting and economics, which is applicable to budgets and economic development.

4. In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges Guilford County faces currently and what would you do to address those concerns?

Generational poverty and violent crime are the two biggest challenges that we face currently. I'm looking forward to working with the commissioners to invest in our public schools and first responders because I believe they are our most important tools for ending generational poverty and deterring violent crimes. I would also like to work closely with our local cities and towns to make sure we are offering job training and education programs for youths during the summer to keep them focused on their future and to close the learning loss gap from the pandemic. Affordable housing and substance abuse are two other important issues, but I believe they are closely related to those first two challenges.

5. A lot of the county commission's job is working with the county budget. What experience do you have with working with large budgets?

I have more than a decade of experience working with the budgets of large organizations that have multiple lines of business. As an analyst, I often use financial accounting and ratio or return analysis to compare the efficiency and returns of different business areas. I think this experience will be very useful as the board considers many upcoming capital projects.

6. A lot of the work that the county has been working on is spending ARPA and other Covid-19 funding. How would you work with the board to facilitate that process?

ARPA and Covid-19 funding is time sensitive so it makes sense that it has taken up a lot of the county's time. I agree with the current focus on transformative projects and I think that after a few false starts the county has made some prudent investments in water infrastructure for example. Given that I will be new to the board and that the funding is time sensitive, I believe I will be most effective if I learn the current process and make sure the requests of my district are given fair consideration.

7. What things should the county be spending more money on? Spending less money on?

In the most recent budget I think the commissioners made a wise choice to continue with school infrastructure projects from the bonds and to increase supplemental pay for educators as well as pay and benefits for first responders. However, we are in a rising interest rate environment which may put downward pressure on property values and create revenue challenges in the future. I would have preferred we focused more on retaining our existing employees and less on adding positions while the labor market is so shallow. I think if the budget had provided some property tax relief to our residents and fewer new positions we would have been better positioned for a turn in the economy.

8. Since the events of 2020, many in the country are calling for police reform and even defunding of law enforcement agencies. What are your thoughts on these stances?

I believe law enforcement is a critical service for the residents of Guilford County and our law enforcement officers are just as important to our quality of life as our other public servants. I think the majority of officers agree that there are many potential reforms to improve policing, but it is important to include them in those discussions because they have valuable firsthand knowledge of the consequences of those reforms. The literature that I have seen also leads me to believe that as a country we are spending too little on actual law enforcement and too much on prisons. Most developed countries have larger police forces than ours per person and less strict sentencing for offenses. This makes it easier to deter crime and keep more non-violent offenders from going to prison, which can create lifelong obstacles that are difficult to overcome. I think we should spend our resources staffing our police force with well-trained officers instead of filling the jails.

9. As reported recently, Greensboro saw a huge increase in rent prices for one-bedroom apartments over the last year. If **re-elected (elected)**, how would you work to provide affordable housing to people in the county?

Unlike the era after 2009, I think our housing problem today is a supply problem and not a demand problem, so I have been concerned by some of the focus on outdated policies I have seen that stimulate housing demand, because this will only make affordability worse. I think the most important thing I could do at the county level would be to help increase the supply of apartments and townhomes in the urban areas. This will require the coordination of many different groups because zoning, roads, water/sewer, and school quality and capacity all need to be in alignment in an area to support higher density housing.

10. Anything else you'd like to mention?

I believe that as a county we need to focus more on the people, places, and things that make us unique and build our local culture on those things. I think our leaders have a tendency to copy other areas that they believe are more successful and this makes it very difficult for our county to have a distinct identity to rally around.