

Two vie for Weddington mayor seat

10.18.11 - 09:59 pm

Walker Davidson

Birth date and age:

45 years old

Address:

Weddington

Occupation/relevant work history:

Financial Advisor

Education:

BA Elon College, MBA Wake Forest University

Prior elected office:

None

Memberships, volunteer work (relevant to the office you seek):

Chairman Weddington Public Safety Advisory Committee

Family information (spouse, children):

Sally, 3 children

POLITICAL

Why are you running?

I have been watching the Weddington Town Council in action very closely for the past two years. I am not happy with how decisions are being made. Most decisions are pre-arranged before the public meetings take place. By the time most citizens become aware of an issue it is too late to have much influence on the decision.

As mayor, I will work to improve the decision-making process by including more input from citizens and by considering all aspects of the issues.

What do you hope to accomplish?

- Weddington to remain a residential community defined by a clear Land Use Plan.
- A Town Council that will adhere to the Land Use Plan and consider the wishes of the citizens who are currently raising their families in Weddington over the wishes of large land owners and developers.
- The Providence Volunteer Fire Department to remain open and independently run by a board made up of Weddington citizens.
- A Town Council that will limit spending only to those critical functions that cannot be performed by individuals or private organizations.

Identify the top three issues in your community:

- 1) The most immediate issue is the future of the Providence Volunteer Fire Department.

2) Our Land Use Plan needs to clearly define the character of our town based on the wishes of the current taxpayers.

3) Most citizens are not involved in the local political process. This provides opportunities for large landowners and developers to influence how the town moves forward, many times at the expense of the average citizen. I would like to see us move from our current situation toward one where an informed and active citizen base elects candidates who represent the true makeup of the citizens of Weddington.

Stephanie Belcher

Birth date and age:

September 5, 1964; 47

Address:

6068 Bluebird Hill Lane, Weddington, NC 28104

Occupation/relevant work history:

Stephanie has held various executive leadership positions in her 24 plus year career in healthcare. She is currently Vice President of Payer Solutions for Enclarity, Inc., a software company that focuses on data and services for the healthcare sector. She is responsible for product strategy, market analysis and business development. She has more than 20- years of experience as a senior executive for health plans such as CIGNA, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina and Horizon BlueCross BlueShield, specializing in operations, service, project management, product development, Six Sigma and information technology. Stephanie has numerous published articles and speaking engagements as a

subject matter expert on healthcare data, current trends in healthcare and business case analysis.

Education:

University of Delaware, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, minor in History

Prior elected office:

None

Memberships, volunteer work (relevant to the office you seek):

Stephanie has been an active volunteer her entire life. She is a life-long girl scout and has led troops since graduating from college, including an active troop in Weddington for 8 years; that meets at Weddington United Methodist Church. For the past year, Stephanie has served as the Chair of the Weddington Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. Prior to that, she was the Vice-Chair and an active member of the committee. Over the past three plus years the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board has dramatically increased community presence and activities. Additionally, Stephanie has lead an effort via P&R to meet all area schools, businesses, churches and organizations to increase communication, mutual support and cross-promotion. Stephanie is a member of the Weddington Hills Home Owner Association, has worked at all three Weddington schools as a parent volunteer and coached numerous youth sports teams.

Family information (spouse, children):

Husband, Rick Belcher, chemistry teacher at Weddington High School

Married twenty-three years.

Two daughters Victoria, age 16, Allison age 13

POLITICAL

Why are you running?

I am proud to live in Weddington; we have a great quality of life, wonderful schools and a pleasant rural atmosphere. As Mayor, I believe that I can make a difference in how Weddington is run and how we plan for the future. I want to help guide Weddington's next thirty years. I would bring a new voice and energy to Weddington and would focus on common sense-long range planning and strengthening our community. My business background and community service experience have shaped my philosophy around effective leadership, financial management, civic responsibility and strategic planning which will help me be an effective Mayor.

What do you hope to accomplish:

I hope to bring common sense, good listening skills and a fact based approach to Weddington. I believe that will allow me to best work with the Town Council and make good long term decisions. Weddington started out thirty years ago with less than 1K people and has grown to almost 11K, with most of that growth in the past ten years. I believe it is time to re-assess and define what our residents want from Weddington. My main goal is to create a long range plan that reflects our changing population and demographics and to build an even stronger community. Recognizing that every-man, cannot have every-thing, every-time, I hope to be able to build consensus and provide a practical framework to plan for

Weddington's next thirty years.

Identify the top three issues in your community:

1. Providence Volunteer Fire Department (PVFD): The current fire fee and fire district lines leave PVFD with projected shortfalls and lack of funding to support facility upgrades needed for overnight staff coverage. For several years Weddington has spent municipal tax dollars to support the PVFD and to pay for overnight staff. Only a portion of Weddington benefits from the overnight emergency medical services, yet the entire town supports this coverage with its tax dollars. Town Council should continue to pursue all appropriate measures with Union County to ensure that PVFD has the funding it needs to be viable. The town should focus on ensuring that all of its residents have equal emergency service protections. It will take two key changes to enable PVFD to operate in the black and upgrade its facility. First change PVFD to a fire tax verses the current fire fee. Second, move to a municipal fire district so that the town can more directly impact which services it wants to receive from the area fire departments.

2. The Water Tower in Weddington: Weddington is primarily residential, yet because it is near the main water line and at a good elevation it ends up as the preferred location for an area wide water tower. I recognize that Union County Public Work's (UCPW) has responsibility to provide essential services and that in this case they are limited in the locations available. In the past the County has recognized the need to minimize the impact of infrastructure projects on nearby residents while still providing necessary services. I urge our county Commissioners and the UCPW to solve the water pressure problems in the least invasive manner possible for those who live near the proposed location.

3. Weddington needs a long range planning: Many Weddington residents advocate “keep Weddington the same”, others want “a greater sense of town and community”. I believe that those views of Weddington are two sides of the same coin. People come to Weddington for the quiet, residential life-style, high performing schools and strong property values. They also want good roads with less congestion, public safety & essential services, a place to gather and the great quality of life that are part of a strong, vibrant community. While no-one wants a large commercial shopping district with big box stores neither do they want a half empty shopping center. So it is time for Weddington to have a serious conversation about how the town will plan and adjust for the future how it fulfills the needs of its residents on both sides of the coin. It’s easy to say “keep our unique rural character” it is harder to define what that looks like as our population and its’ needs change over time. The only constant is change and to thoughtfully prepare for the future, we need to plan now.

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