HIGH POINT CITY COUNCIL - MAYOR

Bill Bencini



Lives in: High Point

Contact: bbencini@aol.com; Facebook/Bill Bencini

Age: 62

Profession: Sales, manufacturer's representative

Highest degree earned: MBA, Wake Forest University, 1981

Leadership experience: High Point Planning & Zoning Commission, 1992-1998, chairman 1998; High Point City Council, 1999-2010; High Point mayor pro-tem, 2009; member ad hoc committee establishing High Point Furniture Market Authority; Guilford County Commissioner, 2010-present, current chairman; Guilford County Board of Health, 2012-2013; Executive Committee, Piedmont Triad Regional Council, 2013-present.

What is the value of prior elected experience? If you have none, how will you overcome the lack of experience to be a successful council member? The knowledge of what services the local municipality provides, the budgetary process, funding sources and constraints, the governance process and relationship between elected officials and staff, establishment of ties with other municipal, county, state and federal elected officals, and the understanding of the difference between effective and ineffective leadership.

What, if anything, can the city do to promote economic development? The city can revise our economic development progam, reaching beyond the single purpose of the current model: economic incentives for companies considering relocation or expansion in High Point. Our model should incorporate core city revitalization and repurposing and leveraging of local assets to increase the city's attractiveness and employment opportunities.

What is the most pressing issue the council will face in 2015? The most pressing issue for municipalities is the development and adoption of their budgets. It remains the most important process for which City Council is responsible. High Point's economy still struggles to recover from the 2008 economic downturn. Council will have to balance service levels in the face of constrained resources.

Do you support the proposed business alliance in High Point? Yes. There is a lack of coordination between really good organizations. This dearth of coordination led to one organization spending over $400,000 in private resources to bring in a consultant. Later, another city-related organization hired its own consultant with opposing conclusions. Alliances bringing consistency in purpose are necessary for success.

How can High Point retain local businesses while attracting new ones? Developers and contractors speak privately about the difficulty of getting projects permitted and successfully inspected. We need to develop a different culture, one that is customer-friendly ... to all citizens who enter City Hall ... in all departments that serve our citizens. Let's recognize that we have neighboring cities who compete for business presence.

Do you support the council's elimination of City Project as a city department, a reduction in funding to the revitalization effort and the transfer of the executive director's job? Why or why not? City Project was never a department. It remains a 501(c)(3). The city-paid staffer worked as director and will now work in the Planning Department. The previous structure mirrored other city models. This structural change and funding reduction will make City Project's mission more difficult and will not help revitalization efforts.

Marcus Brandon



Lives in: High Point

Contact: kmarcusbrandon@gmail.com; www.marcusbrandon.com

Age: 39

Profession: Consultant

Highest degree earned: Not answered

Leadership experience: N.C. General Assembly, legislator; vice chairman of House Education Committee; vice chairman of Guilford Delegation; founding board member of The Point College Leadership Academy of High Point

What is the value of prior elected experience? If you have none, how will you overcome the lack of experience to be a successful council member? Possessing prior elected experience gives you an advantage in knowing how political processes work and knowledge of certain policies. However, as a person that defeated a 30-year veteran of politics with no previous political experience of my own, I encourage all people who want to serve to undergo the challenge.

What, if anything, can the city do to promote economic development? In small cities, small business development is especially critical. As mayor, I would enact a tax-free zone for small- to mid-size businesses. I would also coordinate with High Point University for small-business incubators in low-income neighborhoods. What High Point needs is a fresh perspective.

What is the most pressing issue the council will face in 2015? Jobs and completing a revitalization program. High Point has the poorest ZIP code among North Carolina's major cities. As long as that's the case, all other conversations are moot. We have to get people back to work and generate more tax dollars. Jobs are the key.

Do you support the proposed business alliance in High Point? I support all groups that are investing their time, energy and money to better our city. What we need is a leader that can bring all the various groups together to support everyone's interest: a strong, sustainable High Point. As mayor, that's what I will do.

How can High Point retain local businesses while attracting new ones? Most businesses I talk to complain about the lack of foot traffic or interest in shopping in High Point. I think bringing in several major brand retailers to serve as anchors will attract people to shopping areas where new small businesses can start and existing ones can expand.

Do you support the council's elimination of City Project as a city department, a reduction in funding to the revitalization effort and the transfer of the executive director's job? Why or why not? I believe revitalization efforts should be organic and grass-roots. Although I acknowledge the city has some role, particularly in policy, my time in the General Assembly has made me question whether government is truly the best place for implementation. I believe this area should be mostly left to private organizations.

Jimmy Scott



Lives in: High Point

Contact: jdredscott@yahoo.com

Age: 65

Profession: Information security

Highest degree earned: Bachelor of science in information systems security, ITT Technical Institute

Leadership experience: Former station manager/on-air personality at WOKX-AM; past educational vice president of Toastmasters International; past chairman of the board of the Wright Focus Group; past president of the National Technical Honor Society High Point Chapter; various community advisory boards as well as associate minister of Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, Thomasville; volunteer youth coach for Carl Chavis YMCA, High Point Parks & Recreation, High Point Housing Authority and Ferndale Middle School.

What is the value of prior elected experience? If you have none, how will you overcome the lack of experience to be a successful council member? Interaction with people across all socio-economic levels.

What, if anything, can the city do to promote economic development? Restructure the public transportation system.

What is the most pressing issue the council will face in 2015? Downtown revitalization.

Do you support the proposed business alliance in High Point? I don't oppose an alliance of some form but have not been sold on what I've seen.

How can High Point retain local businesses while attracting new ones? Can't answer that in 50 words. What local businesses? What type of new ones?

Do you support the council's elimination of City Project as a city department, a reduction in funding to the revitalization effort and the transfer of the executive director's job? Why or why not? I don't see that these three are necessarily interconnected. High Point will have a new mayor and several new council members, hopefully with fresh ideas and approaches. We must be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water, but everyone wants clean bath water for the baby.



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