

Laura Dent, Candidate for Harrisonburg City Council 2020

1) Do you support the 50x25 campaign?

Yes, definitely. After our personal health, climate change is the most crucial issue for government representatives to address.

2) How would implement the 3 goals of 50x25 campaign?

If I'm elected to City Council, I would propose a mandate to require HEC to provide 30% renewable energy by 2022, to keep pace with Gov. Northam's Executive Order 43 for state institutions.

Once that agreement is in place, City Council would increase the percentage incrementally to reach 50% by 2025, and beyond.

3) What would you do to increase or facilitate the adoption of renewable energies or solar in City and School buildings?

Since the construction of the High School has been postponed, now is the time to address renewable energy. I would propose actions to include solar panels and possibly onsite wind turbines (if an assessment proves them feasible) as part of the project.

I would propose mandates for all new City buildings to include renewable energy - solar panels, or wind turbines if site-appropriate.

4) How would you prioritize city and state resources for addressing environmental justice concerns, specifically energy efficiency for low income housing?

In a time of scarce resources after the Covid-19 shutdown, priorities for energy efficiency for low-income housing would need to be weighed in comparison to other projects. Given current funding constraints, I would seek federal and state sources to supplement City resources, as well as explore options for trust funds or other incremental city funding, as well as on-bill recovery programs for low-income families.

5) What do you think about recycling?

I think recycling is great! It's unfortunate that 1) our curbside recycling was stopped, and 2) the single-stream process failed spectacularly, when a) the promised technology never was implemented and b) the global market for recyclables collapsed.

The City responded well enough for the time being with the drop-off recycling at the landfill - but even that has had to be curtailed, with the mobile recycling unit filling in for now.

Given all these constraints, I think we need to investigate more comprehensive locally-based initiatives.

1. Reduce! Encourage reducing plastic waste, such as imposing fees for plastic bags. Unfortunately we can't ban single-used plastics because of the Dillon Rule (that should be repealed; if it is, we have more freedom - then we could ban plastic straws!).
2. Reuse - the landfill swap program for reusable items is helpful, when it's available. Encourage reusable bags and containers; difficult now with the coronavirus precautions
3. Recycle - with the global markets for recyclables unavailable, consider local projects such as remanufacturing recyclable goods into usable products. Some examples have included: park benches, decking boards ... Local entrepreneurs could be funded to explore feasible technologies and markets.

In short, there's more that we can do locally, given the constraints globally.

6) Is there anything Harrisonburg can do to reduce transportation emissions, the largest sector of climate change emissions in VA and the United States?

Certainly. We can require that all new city transportation be electric or at least hybrid vehicles. We can expand transportation routes to better meet the needs of working people (currently geared toward students).

We have learned through the coronavirus shutdown that many of us can work from home. We should encourage companies and institutions to continue to allow teleworking to lesson commuting traffic.

Summary

I would be happy to work with EPSAC, CAAV, and other local experts in climate change technology and activism to identify further opportunities to address the needs of our future on the planet.

Thank you very much for the opportunity, and for your ongoing actions.

Laura Dent
Candidate for City Council