

Questionnaire for Candidates for County Commissioner,
General Election, November 5, 2024

Questions	Carissa Graves	John Paisley, Jr.	Anthony Pierce	Ed Priola	Chris Smith	Pamela Tyler Thompson
Budget/Taxes/Spending 1. In general, do you believe Alamance County government's property tax rate is too high, too low, or about right? 1a. At about what level do you think the county tax rate, now 46.86¢ per \$100 valuation, should be set? 2. Historically, Alamance County has been considered to have had a relatively low property tax rate, at least compared to more urban areas to the east and west. In recent years, there are some who have urged that maintaining a low tax rate should not be such a high priority, but rather that the county should increase its tax rate in order to fund additional government services and/or spend more in some existing areas. What is your overall philosophy on the proper balance between tax rate and spending for 2024 and beyond? [50 word limit] 3. The county's next tax revaluation is scheduled for 2027. Do you believe the county's tax rate after the revaluation should be "revenue neutral" compared the pre-revaluation level, to accommodate for the expected increase in property values? 3a. If yes, please respond: In the past, some candidates have expressed support for a "revenue neutral" tax rate, but, once elected, did not abide by that commitment when the situation actually arose. How can voters take you at your word that you will, in fact, insist on a "revenue neutral rate" after the next revaluation? [25 word limit] 4. Alamance County's commissioners have put a ¼-cent local option sales tax referendum on the ballot four previous times, each of which has been turned down by county voters. Supporters of the additional sales tax would help offset the impact of the property tax. Would you vote for or against putting the referendum on the ballot again? 5. In general, do you believe Alamance County government spending is too high, too low, or about right? 5a. Specifically, which areas do you believe are "too high"? and which are "too low"? (Limit of three per category) 6. Prioritize your top three spending priorities among these (or other) possible issues for the next 2-4 years: a. Building new/additional court facilities b. Establishing a satellite EMS station in Mebane c. Converting a building already bought by the county for a 9-1-1 center d. Providing additional pay for county employees e Raising the local supplement for ABSS teachers f. Increasing funding for other aspects of ABSS g. _____ (Other - please specify) h. _____ (Other - please specify) 6a. Which, if any, of the above is of sufficient urgency or significance that you would be willing to raise property taxes in order to fund them?	1. I believe the tax rate is POSSIBLY too low. 1a. It should be evaluated based on community needs and budget. 2. My philosophy is to maintain a balanced tax rate that ensures essential services like education, healthcare, and public safety are properly funded, while also protecting residents from excessive tax burdens. For 2024 and beyond, I support strategic spending that enhances community growth without compromising fiscal responsibility or increasing taxes unnecessarily. 3. Yes. 3a. Voters can trust me because I am committed to transparency and accountability, and I will advocate for a revenue-neutral rate as a key priority in office. 4. For. 5. Alamance County government spending should be evaluated for efficiency. 5a. Areas where spending may be too high: 1. Administrative overhead; 2. Non-essential programs; 3. Consultant services. Areas where spending may be too low: 1. Education; 2. Public safety; 3. Healthcare services. 6. 1. e. 2. b. 3. c. 6a. No response.	1. Too High. 1a. 43/100. 2. The tax rate must be at a level to support the actual needs of our citizens, but the county should not be a supplier of every wish list item for all interests. Departments should be expected to live within their annual budget. 3. Yes. 3a. Situations arise that might make it impossible to provide required or needed services at that rate. (see <i>Alamance News, June 20, 2024, page 2</i>). 4. Against. 5. Too high. 5a. No response.	1. About right. 1a. Same for now until we understand what it costs to run this county. 2. Anyone who tells you the county is in a position to cut taxes this upcoming year is misleading you. I want to cut taxes across the board but we have to protect our children at schools from both mold and other safety threats. 3. Yes. 3a. I support revenue neutral taxes, I want to lower taxes but we have to pay county employees without sacrificing quality and fund the schools. 4. For. 5. No response. 5a. No response.	1. Too high. 1a. 42.2. 2. My top priority for Alamance County is to cut property taxes so families can keep more of their hard-earned money. We need to fund essential government services (law enforcement, first responders, education) while cutting wasteful spending. Let's let families, not government bureaucrats, decide how to allocate their limited resources. 3. Yes. 3a. I previously served as the Field Director for the National Taxpayers Union, traveling the nation fighting to cut taxes, government waste, and bloated bureaucracies. 4. Against. 5. Too high. 5a. Too high: General Government (administrative bloat). Too low: Public Safety (law enforcement and first responders). 6. 1. Support the Sheriff's Office (Deputies, SROs, Jail). 2. Support first responders (emergency management, fire, EMS). 3. Institute zero-based budgeting 6a. TBD. We need to better understand the cost to run the county and evaluate current spending of each department. 7. If county provides county services, we should want to ensure folks in the county can get to and from the services we provide.	1. About right. 2. Alamance County should maintain a low property tax rate. People move here for the slower pace and lower cost of living. We should work to protect that. We are not Orange or Guilford, we are Alamance. Our taxes should remain significantly lower than those counties. 3. We should keep taxes and spending as low as possible while providing the services our citizens demand. 3a. N.A. 4. For; letting citizens vote on a policy is never a bad idea. 5. About right. 6. Public education and public safety are my top spending priorities. Deciding which specific needs are most important is something that should be done with input from local experts and the community at large. 6a. No response.	1. About right. 1a. 46.86. 2. First, I do not feel the commercial property was evaluated correctly. The residential property increase (you and me) carried the burden of the county which was unfair to say the least. The 2027 reval MUST be correct. You cannot continue to add debt like you have a non ending bank account. 3. Yes. 3a. With commercial property evaluated correctly in 2027, all should pay their fair share. This possibly could lower property taxes due to increased revenue. 4. For. 5. Too high. 5a. Too high: Court house addition, ACC Training Center due to delayed action, constant bonuses. Too low: Recreation and Parks, Senior Services, Teacher Supplement. 6. 1. e. 2. g. Housing for homeless veterans 3. h. Recreation and Parks. 6a. No response.
County government policies 7. What role, if any, should the county have in public transportation? (25 word limit) 7a. Specifically, do you support continued county funding of Alamance County Transportation Authority (ACTA)? 7b. Specifically, should the county provide any additional funding to Burlington's LINK transit system to expand routes in other areas of the county? [25 word limit] 8. Please outline the principles that would govern your decision on which companies should receive tax-financed incentives and under what circumstances. [50 word limit] 9. What should the county be doing to foster a strong business climate? [25 word limit] 10. Do you support or oppose countywide zoning? [25 word limit] 10a. Why or why not? [25 word limit] 11. How much of a problem are gun ranges or other target shooting in rural areas of the county? Major or minor?	7. The county should support public transportation by improving accessibility and expanding services, especially in underserved areas. 7a. Yes. 7b. Yes. 8. I would support tax-financed incentives for companies that demonstrate a commitment to job creation, fair wages, and sustainable practices. Incentives should be tied to measurable outcomes, such as community investment, economic growth, and environmental responsibility, ensuring that taxpayer funds lead to tangible benefits for Alamance County residents. 9. County should streamline regulations, provide resources for small businesses, promote workforce development, and enhance infrastructure to create a supportive environment for economic growth and entrepreneurship. 10. Support. 10a. In order to promote orderly development, enhance land use planning, and protect community interests, ensuring sustainable growth and quality of life for all residents. 11. Major.	7. I support ACTA. ACTA provides services for citizens unable to obtain medical transport and other transportation for themselves. 7a. Yes. 7b. No. 8. Incentives must be earned per the agreed terms with the county. To receive incentives, a company must sufficiently increase tax revenues and employment to a substantial level even during the incentive period. 9. With a reasonable tax rate, use the assets of ACC and ABSS, and provide recreational/cultural opportunities to create a community where employees enjoy living. 10. Oppose. 10a. We currently have a Land Development Use Plan and approximately 62 other ordinances to protect citizens. We should not overregulate. 11. Minor.	7. If county provides county services, we should want to ensure folks in the county can get to and from the services we provide. 7a. Yes. 7b. Yes, if and only if it supports allowing Alamance County residents access to county services. 8. It's about doing what's right for the county and putting the unique needs of Alamance County First! 9. It's all about doing. 10. Support. 10a. If we are serious about wanting to preserve farm land, rural character, and proactively manage booming growth, we need to use this effective tool of zoning. 11. Minor.	7. Limited. As President Ronald Reagan said, "Government's first duty is to protect the people, not run their lives." The private sector can provide transportation services. 7a. No. 7b. No. 8. We need policies that promote smart, balanced economic growth in Alamance County by attracting a variety of investments in industry, services, and family agriculture. Our policies should not be designed to pick winners and losers, serve special interests, or subsidize favored businesses. Transparency in all deliberations is key. 9. We must create an opportunity economy by removing barriers to entrepreneurship and encouraging farms/businesses to create well-paid local jobs that offer meaningful work. 10. Oppose. 10a. The county already has some 62 ordinances that include rules similar to zoning rules. We need less bureaucracy, not more. 11. Minor.	7. Our county has far too many pressing needs right now, public transportation is not a priority at this time. 7a. No response. 7b. No response. 8. I do not support tax-financed incentives for private industries. 9. Our county already has a strong business climate. 10. Support. 10a. People have the right to enjoy their property and they cannot do so if anyone can build anything in their backyard. 11. I would seek more input from our citizens on this since I don't live in a rural area.	7. I feel ACTA should have carried it all instead of yet another bus line. We don't need multiple bus lines. 7a. Yes. 7b. No. Have one bus transit to serve all areas. 8. I made a promise that I would no longer support incentives. If we cannot have a competitive teacher supplement (incentive) we will not have excellent teachers fully staffed, which in turn builds the workforce of the county. 9. Recruit family-friendly businesses. Better fund the arts which will also recruit strong and unique businesses. Market our parks and recreation to bring big volume events to county. 10. Support. 10a. We have big industry on our borders. Our folks need power to decide what they want coming into their county. We must protect rural part of county. 11. Minor.

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11a. What, if any, additional noise or other county regulation would you favor? [25 word limit]	11a. I would favor regulations that establish designated hours for shooting, enforce minimum distances from residential areas, and require sound barriers or other noise-reducing measures.	11a. At this time, I foresee no need for additional noise ordinances.	11a. TBD.	11a. None. The board of commissioners shouldn't invent new burdensome rules and regulations on legal businesses.	11a. No response.	11a. I would think the major concern of a gun range is if you lived beside it. They MUST be safe no matter where located.
12. There has been discussion from some residents who have suggested that the Confederate monument in front of the historic courthouse should be moved. Would you support or oppose moving the monument? If so, where? [25 word limit]	12. I support moving the Confederate monument to a more appropriate location, such as a museum, where it can be contextualized without causing division or offense in public spaces.	12. Oppose – Our history is important.	12. When Senator Galeley was commissioner, she stated it wasn't in the commissioners' power to move it. The courts went back and forth and as of today that court ruled the same.	12. Whether or not the monument should be moved is a decision best left to the voters or the courts (not a mob or elected officials).	12. We need to get the culture wars out of our politics.	12. This is an old fight. I honestly do not have an opinion.
13. Which, if any, of the following federal holidays should be added as an additional holiday(s) for county employees? [25 word limit] a. George Washington's Birthday/Presidents' Day b. Juneteenth c. Columbus Day	13. Juneteenth.	13. No additional holidays.	13. b. Juneteenth	13. None. Public employees should not be afforded special benefits (e.g., additional holidays) compared to the private-sector taxpayers they serve.	13. All three.	13. I would suggest a survey, each person can choose one; then seeing results. However, this will affect the budget and has to be taken into consideration.
14. Some North Carolina counties have adopted ordinances that seek to ban discrimination within their jurisdictions based on sexual orientation (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people) in public accommodations and employment. Does Alamance County need such an ordinance?	14. Yes.	14. No.	14. Yes.	14. No. A patchwork of such local ordinances is unwarranted.	14. We need to get the culture wars out of our politics.	14. No.
14a. Would you vote for or against such an ordinance?	14a. For.	14a. Against.	14a. For.	14a. Against.	14a. No response.	14a. Against.
15. Do you support or oppose the contracts that the county has previously entered into with ICE (the Immigration and Customs Enforcements) and the U.S. Marshals Service to rent Alamance County jail space to house their prisoners during transport to federal facilities?	15. Oppose.	15. Support.	15. I support saving taxpayers dollars for rental space or temporary housing for inmates being transported from facility to facility.	15. Support.	15. Sheriff Johnson is understaffed and shouldn't have to do the job of other federal agencies. Keeping Alamance safe should be our top priority.	15. Support.
15a. Would you be inclined to support or oppose a renewal for: a. ICE b. Marshals Service	15a. a. Oppose. b. Oppose.	15a. a. Support. b. Support.	15a. No response.	15a. a. Support. b. Support.	15a. No response.	15a. a. Support. b. Support.
16. In general, do you believe that the county is providing too much, too little, or about the right amount of funding for the Alamance County sheriff's office? [25 word limit]	16. About right, but ongoing assessments are essential to ensure effective community safety and resources.	16. About right – I usually oppose sign-on bonuses because of their temporary impact, but our contract requires recipients to remain with the Sheriff's Office for 2 years in order to receive the full bonus.	16. About right.	16. Too little. Without safe communities, little else matters. I will support law enforcement and first responders as a top priority.	16. About right.	16. About right. I do not agree with constant bonuses. I have suggested that this department seriously needs to find out why people keep leaving. The problem is not being solved.
16a. If too little, would you be willing to raise property taxes to provide increased funding?	16a. No, I would seek alternative funding sources or efficiencies within the budget.	16a. N.A.	16a. N.A.	16a. No. We can increase funding to the sheriff's office by cutting wasteful spending (e.g., administrative bloat).	16a. N.A.	16a. No.
17. The sheriff has reported a rather persistent shortage of jailers in the Alamance County Detention Center. What can the county do to improve recruitment and retention of jail employees? [25 word limit]	17. The county can improve recruitment and retention by offering competitive pay, enhanced training programs, career advancement opportunities, and promoting a positive workplace culture within the detention center.	17. We have successfully resolved this issue with the signing bonus coupled with a 2-year service requirement. Our pay study has resolved the issue with competitive salaries.	17. Offer a comprehensive compensation package for county employees including "jailers" to ensure they can make a livable wage with great benefits and support their families.	17. Unfreeze hiring on those positions; offer hazard pay that makes the positions appealing to both new and existing employees.	17. Signing bonuses, scholarships for law enforcement students who agree to live and work in Alamance County for a specified period of time.	17. Look at the environment and take an honest look at WHY there are constant shortages. You can NOT pay your way out of this.
Education 17. Does the county budget provide too much, not enough, or about the right level of funding for the Alamance-Burlington School System?	17. Not enough.	17. About right.	17. Too little.	17. About right.	17. ABSS does not receive enough funding overall, but this is more a result of our state legislature than our county commissioners.	17. About right.
17a. If too little, would you be willing to raise property taxes to provide increased funding?	17a. Yes.	17a. N.A.	17a. Yes, if needed. We have to ensure students and educators can breath clean air and are in a safe environment.	17a. No.	17a. No response.	17a. N.A.
18. In your view, who is responsible for what some critics describe as the poor condition of the county school system's physical facilities? Commissioners, school board, school administration, other?	18. A combination of local government funding priorities, insufficient investment in infrastructure over the years, and a need for effective planning and maintenance strategies.	18. School board.	18. Both. There is a underlying oversight issue that needs to be fixed.	18. School board and School administration.	18. The state legislature's chronic under-funding of public schools has led to a problem that county commissioners cannot fix alone.	18. County commissioners, school board, school administration.
19. What specific initiatives or policies would you propose or support to improve the quality of public education in Alamance County? [50 word limit]	19. I would support initiatives that increase funding for school facilities, enhance teacher salaries, and expand access to mental health services. Additionally, I would advocate for programs that promote STEM education, improve parental engagement, and ensure equitable resources across schools, fostering a nurturing environment for all students to thrive.	19. With the new ABSS Administration, the working relationship has vastly improved. The County has researched needed repairs for ABSS and the boards have jointly set priorities, resulting in necessary repairs.	19. A 21 st century mindset. One that involves transitioning to a proactive approach that plans and puts things in place prior to a disaster strike. We need to look 3, 5, 10 years down the road and get ahead of our issues and funding gaps because we can't afford to continue to pay large lump sums of tax dollars due to our reactive governing.	19. Hold town hall meetings where parents/educators can bring concerns directly to the Board of Commissioners. Request detailed monthly updates from the ABSS administration on all capital projects (funding/completion status, issues). Institute zero-based budgeting, requiring all ABSS expenses funded from county funds to be justified in each budget period.	19. I would support hiring a full-time grant writer/fundraiser to seek out funds from public and private sources to supplement county funds. This could relieve some of the stress on our taxpayers and allow us to bring in more money to the county.	19. It starts with the home. Parents must be involved with their child's education. Student behavior is held accountable, Serious recruitment of teachers by strong supplement and professional development, TOP quality leadership, NO more petty battles between Commissioners and Board of Ed.
20. Alamance County voters approved a \$150 million bond package for ABSS in November 2018 to be used for renovations and construction to increase capacity at the high school level. Do you anticipate the need for another bond referendum for repairs and/or expansions at other grade levels during the next four years?	20. Yes.	20. No.	20. TBD.	20. No.	20. Not sure.	20. No.
20a. If yes, please identify where you see the greatest facility needs and why. [50 word limit]	20a. The greatest facility needs are at the elementary and middle school levels, where overcrowding and outdated infrastructure can hinder learning. Upgrading these facilities is essential to provide modern classrooms, safe environments, and adequate resources, ensuring that all students receive a high-quality education that meets their developmental needs.	20a. N.A.	20a. No response.	20a. N.A.	20a. N.A.	20a. N.A.
21. In general do you support or oppose the concept of allowing additional charter schools to be developed and started in Alamance County? [25 word limit]	21. I support the development of additional charter schools in Alamance County, as they can provide innovative educational options and enhance competition, ultimately benefiting students and families.	21. Support.	21. Support, as long as there is a need and there are no funds being taking away from public schools in the process.	21. Support. Taxpayer dollars should follow students to the educational institutions of their parents' choice (whether they are public, charter, private, faith-based, or home schools).	21. Charter schools should be fully-funded by the state with no funds from the county.	21. Support. A parent has the right to choose where their child goes to school.