

City of Fairfax 2026 Mayoral and Council Candidates Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Sandi W. Slappey Brown

Sandra Slappey Brown
Signer ID: 6DTGQ9XP19...

Office Sought: Fairfax City Council

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1. Opening Statement - under 300 words (All opening statements will appear in print in the October edition of The Fairfax Independent)

I have been a social worker, primarily in local government, for more than 30 years. I understand how people and their environments interact, and how government can help shape those relationships. Serving on the Fairfax City Council feels like a natural extension of this. I can bring a balanced approach considering various perspectives, such as those of residents (both owners and renters), business owners, City staff, visitors, and potential future residents, along with various interests such as housing, environment, development, education, safety, transportation, amenities and more.

One of my priorities will be to help the City determine a path forward for development as there are many options being presented to us. We need to keep moving in a positive direction, replacing aging buildings and asphalt parking lots with new commercial and residential space in a way that stays true to our personality and culture.

Another priority is about creative and diverse options to support housing – for long-time residents and those who wish to move here; for younger and older residents; residents from various backgrounds and various income levels. I want to be a part of continuing to strengthen and diversify our housing options.

The third priority is about strengthening trust and stability in government. I want to explore changes to the City charter considering staggered terms, and potentially longer terms, for Council members. I want to explore the role of the Mayor in decision-making. I also want to ensure that the Council works closely with City staff to continue providing many and varied opportunities for residents and business owners to be heard and for their input to help shape the future of the City.

You can learn more about me at www.ssb4ffx.com

2. Development & Quality of Life (under 200 words)

The City is experiencing redevelopment in areas such as Northfax, Kamp Washington, Old Town, and along the Route 50 corridor. What level and type of development do you believe the City can realistically accommodate without negatively affecting residents' quality of life? In addition, if an existing unresolved development was sold to a data center developer, would you approve this application?

There are more than 20 projects currently in some stage of development, from pre-application through construction. Most are mixed-use, multi-family, multi-story buildings. While I believe some of these projects will benefit us, I do not believe it would be good to have all of these projects moving forward as the cumulative number of housing units and new residents would be hard for the City to absorb.

I support the proposed zoning ordinance changes as they provide clear criteria about what we want for the City and what is expected when developers want exceptions. The proposed changes provide guidance and parameters to help streamline the review and decision-making processes. We need to manage the pace and nature of our growth so we don't overwhelm our infrastructure and City services and we don't alter who we are as a City. It will take collaboration among the Council, City staff, relevant commissions, developers, and residents to make these decisions in ways that align with our collective vision for the City.

I would not support building a data center in Fairfax City given what we know at this time about impacts on nearby residents and the environment.

3. Budget & Priorities (under 200 words)

The City has limited resources and cannot fund every worthwhile project. What is one program, project, or spending priority you would be willing to delay, reduce, or reject—and why? In addition, please add your thoughts about the general retail sales tax not to exceed 1% to provide revenue solely for eligible capital projects involving the construction or renovation of schools, public transportation purposes, or both that will appear on the November 3 ballot.

To determine which program or project can be delayed, reduced, or rejected, I would need to consider the big picture of all the competing priorities, the internal and external factors that are most influential, the opportunities available, and the future projections based on all available information. Making budget decisions should not be done in a vacuum; this leads to fragmented decision-making. Immediate needs and impacts must be balanced with preparing for our future.

I support the 1% sales tax to be used solely for school construction. This was the original purpose of this new tax, and that need still exists. While transportation funding needs exist as well, we must look elsewhere for those resources and not shift our focus on this opportunity. I support this new tax as we must continue to seek new and diverse options for revenue to help spread out the cost-sharing among property owners, businesses, and visitors to our city.

4. Taxes & City Spending (under 200 words)

Fairfax City has a relatively high level of services for a small municipality, but residents are also facing rising costs. How would you balance maintaining the services residents expect with keeping property taxes and other local costs affordable?

We must continue to make difficult, thoughtful decisions about our tax rates and our expenditures. Fairfax City has a lower real estate tax rate than Fairfax County and the Cities of Falls Church and Alexandria, and a slightly higher rate than Arlington. Our meals tax rate is slightly higher than Fairfax County, Falls Church and Arlington, and lower than Alexandria. It is important that we consider these nearby jurisdictions when assessing what we believe is right for us as these are the areas our residents and visitors are comparing us too.

The services and amenities our City provides are a big part of what make us special. Our schools and public safety, parks and recreation opportunities, our festivals and events, our outstanding trash service, and more. We must use data where it is available to assess the value of these services and amenities to our residents and taxpayers. We must continually look for ways to be more efficient and make better use of the money we have, and ways to grow and diversify our sources of revenue. And we have to keep communicating with our residents to help them understand these issues so they can be informed stakeholders.

5. Regional Cooperation & Development (under 200 words)

Projects in neighboring jurisdictions can significantly impact the City (e.g., the AT&T redevelopment). How would you collaborate with regional partners to manage these impacts, and how would you resolve situations where the City's interests differ from theirs? In addition, please add your thoughts about FCPS and City partnership review.

We want and need to be a collaborative partner with our neighbors, regional coalitions, and other entities that have shared interests. We must be at the table when projects are being proposed and designed so that our interests are incorporated from the beginning. We must strive to be trusted to bring a constructive spirit to our role in these projects, so that we are invited into the process and our input is sought. This lays the groundwork for working through differences when they arise.

I believe the School Services Agreement generally benefits Fairfax City students. We get access to a vast array of programs and resources through our connection to FCPS. However, I would be interested in exploring options for our Fairfax City School Board to have a voice on the FCPS School Board. Many County Boards and Commissions have a seat for a City representative. As we must follow FCPS policy and direction, this is something I would be interested in exploring.

6. Major Projects & Infrastructure (under 200 words)

The City is making significant investments in infrastructure and facilities, including the Willard-Sherwood Health & Community Center. What criteria should City Council use to determine which major projects receive funding when resources are limited?

I fully support building the Willard-Sherwood Center. It replaces aging facilities (Green Acres and the Willard Health Center) that were long past their use-by date. And moving these services far outside our City limits would not have served our City residents. I believe the new Center will be a highlight of our City that will draw visitors and new residents, and ultimately contribute more to our bottom line than it costs.

We need to ensure that we are maintaining our facilities to get the most use out of them, and we need to be engaging in long-range planning so we don't get caught unawares with aging infrastructure. Safety must always be a priority. We should look to our Comprehensive Plan to ensure new projects align, and we must leverage other funds whenever possible to maximize the value for our investment.

7. Virginia Constitutional Amendments (under 200 words)

The November 3 ballot will include three proposed amendments to the Virginia Constitution concerning reproductive freedom, marriage rights, and voting rights after felony incarceration. Do you support or oppose these amendments, and why? As a Fairfax City Council member, how would your views on these constitutional questions influence the way you lead and represent residents who may strongly disagree with you?

I support all three amendments to our Virginia constitution. We thought reproductive rights were protected at the Federal level, and we were wrong. We must protect Virginia residents' rights to reproductive choice. It is an issue of health equity for all women. We also must protect Virginian's rights to marry whom they choose. There is no reason for government to limit those choices between consenting adults. And finally, we must pass the voting rights amendments so that we do not continue to disenfranchise those who have broken the law. We have a justice system to handle that. And when the debt to society is paid, voting rights should be restored.

My positions on these amendments are consistent with my values, and my values will drive how I lead the City as a Council Member. I welcome engagement with those who disagree with me so that we can learn from each other. I hope that through dialogue, we can find common ground, but at the very least, we can seek to understand each other.

8. Civility & Governance (under 200 words)

City Council decisions can generate strong disagreements among residents and elected officials. What specific steps will you take to maintain a civil, respectful, and productive Council—even when you strongly disagree with another Council member?

Civility and integrity are core to who I am. I have conducted myself professionally (and personally) with a commitment to calm, rational dialogue. I do not engage in public spats, nor do I engage in destructive, argumentative exchanges. I have had many difficult conversations over the years in which I listened and learned, and shared my views. I am known for asking a lot of questions as I seek to understand. When both parties are willing to do this, we often find a way

to move forward. And it builds trust among us – to know that we can work through differences and maintain a respectful relationship. I keep my promises, respect my role, and commit to working through differences with others in private discussions and not on a public stage.

9. Accountability & Ethics (under 200 words)

How can Fairfax City residents, rather than any political party or special interest group, hold you accountable, and what will you do to ensure transparency in your decisions and follow-through on your commitments?

I welcome the transparency and accountability of public office. I welcome discussions and questions from residents about my positions and my decision-making processes. I am candid about the factors I am considering in decision-making, and where I am in the process. I also am open to new information – this leads to greater confidence in decision-making knowing I have had access to and am able to consider input from various constituencies along with available data.

FOIA laws require public accessibility of Council deliberations and decisions, with a few defined exceptions. Residents will be able to hear my questions, see my voting record and see my follow-up actions. I appreciate this aspect of governing and believe it is core to a functioning democracy.

10. What do you love about the City and your final thoughts? (under 200 words)

I spent my entire adult life living in Fairfax County before moving here in 2018. There was a vibe here that I wanted to be a part of. My husband and I put a pin in the Auld Shebeen, drew a one-mile radius, and chose a home in that circle. We often walk into Old Town with our dogs, passing parks and homes, schools and churches, government buildings and offices, greeting people all along the way.

This is what I love about Fairfax City. The small-town feel where you always see someone you know. The community events that bring all kinds of people together. The residents who are so engaged in our local government and in their communities. And the dedicated City staff who serve us all.

I am excited to be a part of leading our City as we continue our growth as a community; we've got a great path ahead!