

City of Fairfax 2026 Mayoral and Council Candidates Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Jessica L. Lough

Office Sought: City Council

Date Submitted: September 14, 2026

** * The Independent News Press does not have an Editorial Board and does not make any political endorsements in local, state or federal elections. This questionnaire is intended to be a discussion with candidates running for office and our readers. Based on readers feedback, our news coverage, and general welfare of the City of Fairfax, we have compiled the following questionnaire. We will not be able to respond to you for any clarification. Any response attacking another individual by name will be automatically deleted without any notice to you. Otherwise, we will not be editing any submission, including fact check and grammatical errors.*

Important Instructions:

- Opening statement under 300 words. Any submission over 300 words will get cut off in print in the October 2026 edition of The Fairfax Independent.
- The **deadline for submission is September 14, 2026** emailed attachments in word and pdf formats to Publisher at info@theindependentnewspress.com.
- Please sign the pdf copy of your response because it will be posted on our website. Responses to questions #2 to the closing statement will be posted on our website at <https://fairfaxindependentnews.press> by September 20, 2026.
- The USPS will be distributing the October edition to City mailboxes by September 30, 2026. In the event that you did not receive your free circulation in the mail, please let us know or visit one of our pickup locations: Fairfax Giant, Fairfax Regional Library, Main Street Bagel, De Clieu Cafe, and the Oakton Community Library.
- There will be one reminder to submit. If we don't receive your response, we respect your decision not to participate in discussion with our readers. We will make a note in the October edition that such candidates declined to participate in our questionnaire.
- **For those candidates wishing to participate, please respond with - "I intend to participate" by September 3 by emailing info@theindependentnewspress.com with your desired headshot.**

Please answer questions #2 to #10 as specifically as possible in under 200 words. Links in responses are accepted to candidates' websites. We will not accept links to social media because it is fungible. Where appropriate, please identify specific actions, priorities, or measurable outcomes rather than general principles.

Candidates' opening statements will be published in alphabetical order and the entire questionnaire will be published on our website both as text and pdf with your signature.

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

I'm running for City Council because I believe Fairfax deserves Council members who will listen to them, work respectfully with others, and make decisions based on facts. My goal is to protect what makes Fairfax special while preparing us for a strong and sustainable future.

I bring a mix of executive leadership, financial discipline, and a pragmatic approach to solving problems. Whether we are discussing development, transportation, housing, or the city budget, my approach is simple: look at the facts, talk with residents and business owners early, and focus on outcomes that benefit our community.

Listening is only step one. The valuable work is taking what you hear, pairing it with real data, and integrating it to make win-win solutions. Public input can often feel like a box-checking exercise after a decision is already made- I want residents to know their feedback shapes the final outcome.

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?

Fairfax's strong sense of community is one of our greatest economic strengths. People choose to live, shop, and dine here because it feels like a genuine, welcoming hometown.

*Responsible development means preserving what makes Fairfax special while creating opportunities for businesses and homes. Preserving that character isn't an obstacle to development; it's one of our greatest competitive advantages. **I support redevelopment that complements our existing neighborhoods, encourages locally-owned businesses, optimizes underutilized spaces, and creates a destination where people want to spend time.***

*I have an open mind about solutions, but they **should be built by combining objective evidence with meaningful public engagement from the beginning.** That means understanding the long-term impacts on traffic, infrastructure, public safety, neighborhood character, and our local economy before decisions are made and ensuring the residents and businesses most directly affected have a meaningful voice in shaping the outcome.*

I would not approve an application for data centers. Their significant energy demands, potential water use, persistent noise, and backup generators raise environmental and health concerns that outweigh the benefits for our community and are not the right fit for Fairfax.

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.

With limited resources, I would be willing to delay nonessential beautification and streetscape improvements when they compete with higher-priority needs like as schools, safety, infrastructure maintenance, and reducing pressure on taxpayers. While these types of projects can add value, timing matters and we should prioritize what our community needs first.

I support the sales tax referendum because it gives the City an additional avenue to address major capital needs without placing the full burden on residents. It's important to note that voter approval authorizes - not requires - City Council to levy a sales tax of up to 1%.

Before supporting a levy in Fairfax, I would require a clear understanding of the specific capital needs, the amount of revenue required, and the impact on taxpayers. I would also want to understand whether the full 1% is necessary or whether a lower rate could accomplish our goals. I would also work within the budgeting process that ensure that any new taxes that are levied - including the 1% retail sales tax - are not permanent and have a phase out plan.

Any additional revenue should address very specific capital needs and, where possible, reduce pressure on property taxpayers and not allow overall City spending to grow.

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?

Fairfax residents value our services and schools, and keeping taxes affordable should not mean sacrificing the quality of life residents expect and pay for. We need responsible fiscal management on both sides: how we spend and how we grow revenue.

I would bring greater discipline to budgeting by scrutinizing spending, measuring results, prioritizing essential services, and considering long-term costs (maintenance, for example) before making commitments. I would also look at our internal processes and operations to

identify where we can streamline our government to drive both cost savings and increase the speed at which we operate.

At the same time, we need to grow our commercial tax base by strengthening Old Town, supporting existing businesses, attracting new investment, and making better use of underutilized properties.

Balancing disciplined spending with a stronger commercial tax base can reduce pressure on homeowners while protecting the services that make Fairfax a great place to live.

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.

Decisions made by neighboring jurisdictions affect our traffic, infrastructure, schools, environment, and quality of life. For those reasons, strong regional relationships are essential.

I would engage our regional partners early, use data to understand potential impacts, and work together to identify solutions before positions are solidified and difficult to change. When our interests differ, I would advocate clearly for Fairfax residents while continuing to look for practical solutions and common ground.

I would take the same approach to the City's partnership with FCPS. Our schools are central to our community, and the relationship should be strong and collaborative. At the same time, periodic review is good governance. We need to understand what we are paying for, how responsibilities and costs are allocated, and whether the current arrangement continues to serve City students and taxpayers effectively.

The goal of a partnership review should not be to undermine the relationship, but to strengthen and improve it through transparency, clear expectations, and shared accountability.

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?

City Council needs a consistent and transparent way to prioritize major investments. We should start by developing a clear, resident-informed, long-term strategy for Fairfax that serves as our North Star and helps us determine which investments move us towards our shared vision, rather than making major decisions one project at a time.

We should then look at what our community needs most, including public safety and infrastructure requirements, number of residents served, long-term costs and benefits, and the consequences of delaying the investment.

We also need to look beyond the initial price tag and ensure that every major project has defined costs for operation, maintenance, and staffing, as well as how it fits within the City's broader capital and debt obligations.

Most importantly, we need to be clear about the problem we are trying to solve before committing taxpayer dollars. Each major investment should have defined outcomes and measurable metrics so we can determine whether it actually delivers the intended results.

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 proposed constitutional amendments. I believe individuals should have the freedom to make their own reproductive healthcare decisions, that lawful marriages between two adults should be treated equally under the law, and that voting rights should be restored after an individual is released from incarceration and has served their time.

These are statewide constitutional questions, not matters decided by City Council. My views on them would not change my responsibility to represent every Fairfax resident fairly and equally.

I know residents may disagree with me on these issues. I will listen respectfully, understand different perspectives, and evaluate local issues based on the facts and what best serves our City.

Being non-partisan does not mean I don't have personal views. It means no political party will tell me how to vote or determine how I approach an issue. I will make my own decisions based on the facts and the interests of Fairfax, and I respect the right of every resident to do the same.

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?

We can disagree and still treat each other with professional respect and courtesy. I have spent my career working with people who have different priorities, perspectives, and opinions, and I would bring that same professionalism to Council.

When I disagree with another Council member, I will focus on the issue rather than the person, ask questions before making assumptions, and make a genuine effort to understand their reasoning assuming good intentions. I will address disagreements directly and professionally rather than allowing them to become personal or play out through public attacks.

I will also look for areas of common ground. While situations arise where we may disagree on a solution, we are all serving for the best interest of residents in mind.

Most importantly, once Council makes a decision, even if it's not the outcome I championed for residents, I will remain committed to working constructively with every member. Residents should be able to expect debate from their elected officials without sacrificing professionalism, collaboration, or our ability to get things done.

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?

Accountability starts with being clear about what I said I would do and giving residents a way to see whether I followed through.

If elected, I will communicate regularly with residents about major decisions, seek their input early to shape the outcome, explain how and why I voted, and be transparent when new information arises. I will remain accessible through community events, neighborhood meetings, and direct communication; not just when an issue reaches the Council agenda.

I also believe Council should set clear annual priorities tied to Fairfax's long-term strategy, with measurable goals and regular public reporting on progress. Residents should be able to see what we committed to, what has been accomplished, what has not, and why.

I am accountable to Fairfax residents and they should be able to hold me accountable based on my decisions, results, and whether I kept the commitments I made to this community.

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

What I love most about Fairfax is that it still feels like a hometown. We have great schools, safe neighborhoods, parks and trails, local businesses, community events, and neighbors who connect and care about what happens here. My family and I chose Fairfax because it offered that sense of community, and it's something I want to protect.

I'm running because I believe we can preserve what makes Fairfax special while also shaping our future. That means being responsible with taxpayer dollars, supporting our local businesses,

championing our environment, listening to residents, and making decisions with the long term in mind.

Most importantly, I want residents to feel that their local government belongs to them. We will not always agree, but everyone deserves to be heard, treated with respect, and represented fairly.

It would be an honor to serve the community my family calls home and help ensure Fairfax remains a place people are proud to call theirs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jason Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Jason" is followed by the last name "Long". The "J" is large and loops around the "a". The "L" is also large and loops around the "o". The signature is positioned on the left side of the page.