



**FALL 2024 VOTERS' GUIDE**

**GENERAL ELECTION ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2024  
POLLS OPEN 6:00 A.M. TO 7:00 P.M.**

The League of Women Voters of Falls Church publishes this Voters' Guide. The League has a long tradition of publishing the verbatim responses of candidates to questions important to voters. Please visit [my.lwv.org/virginia/falls-church](http://my.lwv.org/virginia/falls-church) for more information, and go to [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) to enter your address and compare candidates' responses to the League's questions. The League does not support or oppose any candidate or political party.

For more specific voter information, contact the City of Falls Church Voter Registration and Elections Office at (703) 248-5085 (TTY 711) or email: [vote@fallschurchva.gov](mailto:vote@fallschurchva.gov) regarding voter identification requirements, early in-person or absentee voting by mail, and sample ballots. Online, go to [www.fallschurchva.gov/vote](http://www.fallschurchva.gov/vote).

**ELECTION DAY VOTING:** Registered voters who live in the City of Falls Church are eligible to vote at the appropriate polling place for their residences.

**Polling Places:** Ward 1 votes at Oak Street Elementary School, 601 S Oak Street. Both Ward 2 and Ward 3 vote at the Falls Church Community Center, 223 Little Falls Street.

**IDENTIFICATION REQUIRED TO VOTE: Virginia law requires all in-person (early and Election Day) voters either to provide an acceptable form of ID or to sign an ID Confirmation Statement at the polls.** Voters arriving at the polls without an acceptable form of ID will be required to either sign an ID Confirmation Statement or vote a provisional ballot. If a voter votes a provisional ballot, they will have until noon on the Friday following the election—November 8 this year—to deliver a copy of

identification to their locality's electoral board or sign an ID Confirmation Statement for their provisional ballot to be counted.

The following forms of identification may be used to vote (a full list of acceptable IDs is available at [elections.virginia.gov/VoterID](http://elections.virginia.gov/VoterID)):

- Voter confirmation documents
- Virginia driver's license or special identification card issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles (current or expired)
- US Passport or passport card (valid)
- Employer-issued photo identification card (valid)
- Student identification card issued by a public or private high school or institution of higher education located in Virginia (valid)
- Other US, Virginia state, or local government-issued identification with photo (valid)
- US Military identification card (valid)
- Virginia Voter photo identification card issued by the Virginia Department of Elections
- Tribal enrollment or other tribal ID from any of the 11 tribes recognized by Virginia (valid)
- Nursing home resident ID if issued by a government facility
- Current utility bill, bank statement, government check, or paycheck containing the name and address of the voter (within the past 12 months)
- Any other current government document containing the name and address of the voter
- Signed ID Confirmation Statement (available at polling place)

**EARLY VOTING: In Virginia, all registered voters may vote**

**early, either in-person or by mail from September 20 through November 2, 2024. No excuse is necessary.**

**ABSENTEE VOTING IN-PERSON (Early Voting)** began September 20, 2024. You may vote in-person at the Voter Registration and Elections Office, 300 Park Ave, Center Level, Suite 206, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm weekdays, and on Saturday, October 26 (9:00 am-5:00 pm), and Sunday, October 27 (12:00-3:00 pm). Early voting stays open late on Wednesday, October 30, until 7:00 pm. The last day to vote early in-person is on Saturday, November 2 (9:00 am-5:00 pm).

**ABSENTEE VOTING BY MAIL** requires the completion of a Virginia Absentee Ballot Application Form, available either online or by mail. Your request for an absentee ballot by mail must be received by the Voter Registration and Elections Office by 5:00 pm Friday, October 25, 2024. You will be mailed the absentee ballot, which must be mailed back in time to reach the electoral board by noon on Monday, November 11. **NOTE: Since July 1, 2023, witness signatures are not required to vote by mail; however, you must write in the last 4 digits of your Social Security Number and your year of birth.**

**ACCESSIBLE VOTING:** There are accessible voting options at each polling place and early voting location. Voters who are 65 or older or have a disability can vote from their vehicle at the polls on Election Day or at the Voter Registration and Elections Office before Election Day.

**ABOUT THIS GUIDE:** Candidates in the local races detailed below are listed in the order they appear on the ballot as determined by the Virginia State Board of Elections and the City of Falls Church Electoral Board.

**FALLS CHURCH CITY COUNCIL AND SCHOOL BOARD – SPECIAL ELECTIONS**

In addition to these local races, this year's ballot includes races for **US President and Vice President, Candidates:** Kamala D. Harris/Tim Walz (Dem), Donald J. Trump/JD Vance (Rep), Jill E. Stein/Rudolph T. Ware III (Green), Chase R. Oliver/Mike ter Maat (Lib), Claudia De la Cruz/Karina Garcia (Ind), Cornel R. West/Melina Abdullah (Ind); **US Senator from Virginia, Candidates:** Timothy M. Kaine (Dem), Hung Cao (Rep); **Member of US House of Representatives**

**(8th District), Candidates:** Donald S. Beyer, Jr. (Dem), Jerry W. Torres (Rep), David Kennedy (Ind), Bentley F. Hensel (Ind). There is also a **proposed Virginia constitutional amendment** on the ballot: *Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended so that the tax exemption that is currently available to the surviving spouses of soldiers killed in action is also available to the surviving spouses of soldiers who died in the line of duty?*

**FALLS CHURCH CITY COUNCIL**

**THE OFFICE, TERM, AND COMPENSATION:** The City Council enacts ordinances and resolutions, approves budgets, sets tax rates, and establishes policy. The seven Council Members are elected at-large for four-year terms and are not affiliated with any national political party. Elections of City Council Members are typically held in November of odd-numbered years for three or four members. However, there is a Special Election this year on November 5, 2024, to fill a vacant seat for a remaining term through December 31, 2025. As of July 1, 2024, the annual compensation

for Council Members is \$11,000; the compensation for Mayor is \$11,500.

**THE QUESTIONS:**

1. What led you to run for this position, and, if elected, what are your top three **PRIORITIES**?
2. What initiatives would you support to ensure the City's long-term **FINANCIAL VIABILITY**, given the growth Falls Church is experiencing?
3. Please elaborate on why you support, oppose, or have no

position on this statement: With current and proposed construction of apartments, condos, and senior living units, Falls Church is doing our part to address **REGIONAL HOUSING** needs.

4. How would you **BALANCE** increased **DENSITY** with environmental and sustainable **INFRASTRUCTURE** needs (such as tree canopy, stormwater, pedestrian and biking safety, parking, schools, and public works and emergency services)?
5. As an elected official, what would you do to support and respond to **CITIZEN INPUT**?

**The Fall 2024 Voters' Guide was prepared, using monies from the LWV Education Fund, by:**

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## CANDIDATES FOR FALLS CHURCH CITY COUNCIL (VOTE FOR NOT MORE THAN ONE)



### John B. Murphy (Ind)

**BIOGRAPHY:** US government economist, statistician, and representative to the United Nations on International Economic and Social Statistics. Falls Church Board of Zoning Appeals Chair, Zoning Ordinance Advisory Committee Chair. More at [murphy4fcc.com](http://murphy4fcc.com).

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#### QUESTIONS:

**WHY RUNNING/PRIORITIES:** My name is John Murphy and I live in Falls Church. My family and I are very lucky to live in a vibrant small community with incredible green space. If elected to City Council, my top three priorities are a pedestrian master plan with improved pedestrian access and safety, continuing to grow Falls Church in a manner that is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable because good growth requires all three things, and continued excellence of our school system. Our schools are the crown jewels of Falls Church.

**FINANCIAL VIABILITY:** Various City estimates show the popu-

lation growing between 21% and 35% by 2030. We need both a plan and active work to meet the infrastructure needs for that level of growth. While new mixed use developments are reported to provide over \$4 million in net new revenue to the City, that does not include the almost \$40 million in sanitary sewer capacity costs that have recently been identified. We have to be proactive across the board rather than responding when shortages or problems arise after approving new growth.

**REGIONAL HOUSING:** Support this statement. With about 2000 new units open or under construction over the past decade we are clearly lifting more than our weight on housing creation to address the regional shortage. The housing being created is for the most part very expensive. We've increased unit counts but have not met the needs of local business employees or teachers and other City employees who would love to live where they work if they could afford it. I believe that our community would prefer both economic opportunity and doing our fair share. Our tree canopy is below COG recommendations. When negotiating voluntary concessions for new projects, greater consideration of green space and canopy should be a priority. There is a balance that can be found to meet regional goals.

**BALANCE DENSITY/INFRASTRUCTURE:** Growing density

while preserving the environment and green space is a challenge. Our community has to decide what we value and how to pay for it. Our storm water capacity is limited and development outside City boundaries is not within our control. We have to balance growth with investments in sanitary sewage capacity, storm water infrastructure, roads, schools, and all public services. All changes have to be consistent. We can't make one decision that contradicts another. If the environment is a priority, we need to make it front and center during development negotiations.

**CITIZEN INPUT:** As an elected official, I will listen to issues from residents. I've already had residents reach out to me as a candidate with complaints about predatory towing, taxes being too high for seniors and those on fixed incomes, and even safety on our roadways. Sometimes you have to look in unexpected places for the cause. Can the issues of high taxes for seniors be addressed through better outreach about existing programs? Is road design or constant construction and lane blockage by delivery trucks causing aggressive and impatient drivers? Listen to the issue but take the time to see if there is a root cause. Listening is important but understanding what you hear and figuring out what can reasonably and fairly be done is more important.



### Laura T. Downs (Ind)

**Biography:** FCCPS School Board member 2020-2023 (Vice Chair in 2021, Chair in 2022 and 2023); FCC Elementary PTA President 2017-2018; President-Elect of MEH Middle School PTA; Board member of the Falls Church Education Foundation

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#### QUESTIONS:

**WHY RUNNING/PRIORITIES:** Due to the tight timeline to qualify for this election, I felt I owed it to the city to step up, as I have experience as a publicly elected official. I can do this job on day one, especially since I know the school board budget and budget season for the city starts soon. I served as a School Board member from 2020-2023 (Vice Chair in 2021; Chair in 2022 and 2023). If elected, my top three priorities are: 1) Streets: improved bikeability, walkability, pedestrian safety, traffic calming and congestion, and increasing the tree canopy and number of pocket parks, 2) Services: adding staffing to understaffed city offices and streamlining processes to improve customer service for residents, 3) Stewardship: embracing and doubling down on what made us US News and World Report's #1 Healthiest community in 2024: Walkability, Education,

Health, Local Economy, Food and Nutrition and Infrastructure.

**FINANCIAL VIABILITY:** Our growth will ensure the City's long-term financial health. Both voluntary financial concessions from developers and increased commercial tax revenue have improved our financial outlook. Having a more diverse tax base reduces the reliance on personal property taxes. In fact, the City Council has reduced the tax rate over the past few years while maintaining a Triple-A bond rating. That would not have been possible without commercial development. With exciting new restaurants, our meal tax revenues have exploded. Money is already coming in from the Broad and Washington development in the form of property tax. We receive 4-5 million dollars each year from mixed-use development, and that number will increase as newer buildings come online.

**REGIONAL HOUSING:** Support this statement. I feel we are doing our part with detached and attached single-family homes, apartments, condominiums, affordable housing units, apartments for seniors, and assisted living facilities, but we should not take our eyes off the ball. If we want the city to remain the dynamic community it is now, we must have a diverse range of housing options that attract young people, families, empty nesters, senior citizens, and those who work at our businesses in the city. According to a June 2024 city report on housing, about half of the people who work in the city can't afford to live here. At the same time, many are concerned about population growth. We must watch the impact of growth on

schools and traffic and how it impacts our infrastructure.

**BALANCE DENSITY/INFRASTRUCTURE:** When negotiating with developers of mixed-use buildings, the city should (and has) require additional trees be planted, methods to address stormwater, sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic lights, and underground public parking. Voluntary concessions are often provided to address increases in school enrollment. By having density, things become more walkable, thereby reducing the number of cars on the street. In terms of the schools, the majority of our enrollment comes from single-family homes and not mixed-use buildings but we will need to keep our eyes on those numbers. "Growth paying for growth," is a term Council members mention. Developers must pay for growth in schools and the stress on infrastructure, public works and emergency services.

**CITIZEN INPUT:** When I was Vice Chair of the School Board in 2021, the Chair and I instituted monthly office hours at local restaurants so that parents, guardians, students, and staff could talk with us in a casual, non-intimidating setting about their questions and feedback. I continued those monthly office hours while I was Chair in 2022 and 2023. I would like to continue a similar approach if elected to City Council. As far as responding to citizen input, I would not only respond to emails received but also respond to citizens who make public comments at the City Council meetings. I understand the importance of listening to all sides of an issue before making a decision, and I look forward to engaging with and serving my fellow community members.

## FALLS CHURCH CITY SCHOOL BOARD

**THE OFFICE, TERM, AND COMPENSATION:** The School Board's primary responsibilities are to set policy for the school division, approve the annual budget, develop a strategic plan, and hire a superintendent to operate the school division in accordance with board policy. The seven School Board Members serve four-year terms and are not affiliated with any national political party. Elections of School Board Members are typically held in November of odd-numbered years for three or four members. However, there is a Special Election this year on November 5, 2024, to fill a vacant seat for a remaining term through December 31, 2025. The annual compensation for School Board Members is \$3,600; for the Vice Chair, \$4,800; and for the Chair, \$6,000.

#### THE QUESTIONS:

1. What led you to run for this position, and, if elected, what are your top three **PRIORITIES**?
2. Please elaborate on why you support, oppose, or have no position on this statement: Falls Church City public schools are **ADEQUATELY RESOURCED** to manage a potential increase in students, given the current and anticipated development in the City.
3. How would you address **CONFLICT** between the values and policies of Falls Church City Public Schools and mandates of the Virginia Department of Education?
4. How would you **ATTRACT** and **RETAIN** quality educational staff, in light of staffing shortages in the region and across the country?

## CANDIDATES FOR FALLS CHURCH CITY SCHOOL BOARD (VOTE FOR NOT MORE THAN ONE)



### Anne H. Sherwood (Ind)

**Biography:** I am the parent of three FCCPS students in 8th, 6th, and 2nd grades, and I have been active in the FCCPS community for many years. I am a former lawyer and the proud product of K-12 public schools. Please visit my website to learn more about me.

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**Email:** [annesherwood4schoolboard@gmail.com](mailto:annesherwood4schoolboard@gmail.com)

#### QUESTIONS:

**WHY RUNNING/PRIORITIES:** I love our schools, and they are a key reason my family moved to FCC ten years ago. I have three children—an 8th and a 6th grader at MEHMS, and a 2nd grader at MDES—and I've been actively involved since they started kindergarten. My roles have included being a room parent, serving on the International Night Committee, and volunteering with the PTA. Recently, I've been deeply engaged as a former co-chair and current member of the Advanced Academics Advisory Committee and as part of the FCCPS Choral Boosters Board. This passion

for engagement and education led me to start a graduate program in Education Policy at George Mason University. I'm eager to contribute further by serving on the FCCPS School Board. With Dr. Noonan's retirement and new policies on the horizon, I aim to ensure we continue to be student-centered, support teachers, and remain dedicated to IB and our Strategic Plan.

**ADEQUATELY RESOURCED:** No position on this statement. I understand these concerns—our schools are central to life in the Little City. I'm cautiously optimistic: FCCPS has fully staffed schools, good relations with the City Council, and future planning strategies. Currently, schools are at 70% capacity and expected to accommodate growth through 2045. Maintaining our relationship with the City and ensuring accurate enrollment predictions will be key. We should preserve the revenue-sharing agreement between the City and FCCPS to support balanced benefits from development. And we should continue using demographic data to align resources with enrollment. Monitoring growth and learning more about staff needs to respond to growth is especially important to me.

**CONFLICT:** Falls Church City Public Schools is a small district with an engaged community, allowing it to address local con-

cerns and have meaningful discussions on policies. FCCPS also collaborates with neighboring districts to share best practices and shape our policies. This approach, combined with the expertise of our educators and staff, helps FCCPS create effective policies aligned with IB values, and has made it a top district. FCCPS adapts to state-level changes while maintaining our core values, and when a past mandate conflicted with our policies, FCCPS successfully worked with neighboring districts to challenge it. I expect we would consider this approach again if needed.

**ATTRACT/RETAIN:** FCCPS teachers and staff are vital to our district's success, and we should continue attracting and supporting them. Last year, FCCPS conducted a salary comparison study, adjusted pay, and provided COLA increases. It also entered into a collective bargaining agreement to give educators a stronger voice on compensation and benefits, and it recently led the region with a new parental leave policy. Moving forward, we should enhance our community and our educators' quality of life by hiring strong leadership, supporting professional development, and fostering better communication and feedback. This will help build a positive workplace culture to retain and attract quality staff.