Port City Daily Questionnaire for NC Legislature candidates

Name: **Jim Harris**
Party affiliation: **Democratic Party**
Career: **Retired, Healthcare IT Systems and Services Director**
Degree: **BA, Michigan State University, MBA Wayne State University**

1. **What qualifies you to serve in the North Carolina legislature?**
   I value truth, facts, clear goals and accountability for results. I am committed to serve North Carolina residents proactively and objectively using the skills and experience I've accumulated and refined. I will always serve and act in my constituent's best interests. Honesty, integrity, fairness, open communication, and foresight (avoiding unintended consequences) is crucial to earn the public's trust.

2. **What is a bill you would like to sponsor or co-sponsor and what is a bill you want to repeal — or even amend? Why?**
   My priorities focus on four elements which NC residents have told me they expect their elected leaders to understand, to negotiate, address in a timely fashion, and enable – namely Affordability (prices, wages, housing, insurance, energy, child care, taxes), Healthcare (access, coverage/inclusion, cost), Education (facilities, a broad curriculum, teacher pay, equity across all Districts), and Transparency and Integrity (ban trading while in office, free & fair elections, campaign finance reform, term limits, restoring oversight, honesty and integrity). These will inform my sponsorship and my efforts to repeal opposing legislation.

3. **What will you do to hold industry accountable for pollution of toxic chemicals, such as PFAS or 1,4 dioxane, in the water or air? Will you support enforcing additional maximum contaminant levels of PFAS compounds, aside from PFOA or PFOS; how, if so?**
   I applaud our Attorney General's latest success in forcing Dupont/Chemours to take financial responsibility (~$650M) to restore/clean up PFAS and related chemical environmental disasters. I will fully support all reasonable efforts to enforcing and holding corporations accountable for their planned (and unplanned) activities, including set-asides for high-risk/unproven environmentally impactful products/manufacturing, and independent monitoring of compliance using EPA and scientific maximums.

4. **Is the public school allotment formula sufficient or does the legislature need to change it? Explain what your plan is for this issue.**
   It is woefully insufficient (NC is dead last in per-pupil funding), and it forces NC counties to supplement increasingly burdensome reductions and inflation-related expenses. Opportunity Scholarships are detrimental to a sound, basic education for ALL school-age children, and a taxpayer-supported gift to the wealthy in NC. I would propose the repeal of Opportunity Scholarships for those above a certain income level and restore equivalent (e.g., LEANDRO Remediation Plan) funding for all students in NC.

5. **State law allows law enforcement agencies, including the State Bureau of Investigation, to store data captured by license plate reading cameras (Flock cameras) for up to 90 days. Since the CEO of Flock cameras has now recommended agencies reduce the time camera data is stored down to seven days, would you make it a priority to change state law to follow this recommendation?**
   Yes, and I would take this one step further. Not only should data be time-bound in its retention, it should be specifically “white-listed” in terms of which other organizations or agencies have legal access to that data, regardless of timeframe.

6. **Do you support how the film grant program currently operates? Do you think the $31-million annual cap on award disbursements should be lifted? Do you think the General Assembly should allocate more money to the program?**
   I require more factual and objective data regarding its use, its positive impacts, its negative impacts, and its overall value to the NC economy. Without this data, it’s difficult to “pick the winners” when considering how to limit taxation, provide grants, or encourage economic development versus how to equitably tax (film) industry revenues derived in NC. Individual selections of certain program recipients also raises the issue of favoritism and possible corruption.

7. **Would you support rolling back the sales and use tax exemption for data centers to build in North Carolina? Explain.**
   Yes, among other protections against further expansion. Private equity is fueling an unsustainable growth rate of competing data center development, which may, in my opinion, eventually implode, leaving NC taxpayers with infrastructure, environmental and cost impacts which the public must bear.

8. **The current gas-tax funding system for the NCDOT no longer seems to efficiently support necessary projects – including the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge replacement. Is tolling the answer; what other funding mechanisms would you support? Would you vote on legislation to allow the Turnpike Authority to toll the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge if it comes before you?**
I believe there are other ways to solve this problem. First, revisit the existing funding system and its formulas (and priorities) to increase funding for high-cost projects versus standard roads/highways. Second, properly and fairly allocate revenue burdens for gasoline, hybrid, and electric vehicles. Third, encourage mass transit options to help solve our reliance on vehicles to support employment, education, and healthcare access.

9. **Would you vote to implement an independent commission to draw legislative and congressional lines? Why or why not?**
Yes. I would further propose term limits for public service elected officials, age-related retirement ceilings, prohibit stock/bond trades while in office, and demand campaign finance reform ("dark money"). I would also implement District Voting in place of At-Large voting in all Counties. NC citizens are tired of politics as usual, and the abysmal performance of our elected officials, who currently choose their voters, rather than the voters choosing their representatives.

10. **In terms of economic development, North Carolina gets high marks for business, but middling and lower marks for worker satisfaction and quality of life. What would you do to improve these metrics for state residents?**
NC is highly desirable to corporate development and relocation/incursion, in part because corporations have historically failed to uphold its fair share contributions to our tax base, either through direct revenue taxation on profits, paying its workers a living wage, or both. The resulting imbalance may, in my view, ultimately lead to a decision to "move on" after they no longer benefit from underfunded infrastructure, affordable housing, educational excellence, public works/parks, etc., which originally drew them to NC. I would propose an increase in the minimum wage, the repeal of Right to Work laws prohibiting union development, as well as establishing a fair tax rate for all large businesses. On the other hand, I would also propose we increase the small business tax deduction (currently a Federal deduction on the first $20,000 of income) to the larger amount of $50,000.