

# ZEBULON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & WOMAN'S CLUB CANDIDATE FORUM

## INTRO

I first want to thank the Chamber, the Woman's Club, & my fellow Zebulonians watching here & at home. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about one of my first loves - this town.

Now I hope you don't mind me referring to my notes - when I feel that passion, that excitement, I can get to talking to a point that would give a southern pastor a run for the money (I should know my mom's a pastor!)...while I could talk for hours about Zebulon, I've been asked to talk a lil about me first...

I'm Quentin Miles.

As many of you know, because many of you know my family, we have been in this area since before Zebulon was Zebulon. I come from a large immediate family of 9 and a gianormous extended family of an immeasurable number. I was actually born right here in Zebulon - just down the street at the hospital that used to be just about where Family Dollar is - and I was part of the last graduating class from Zebulon High (Go Cougars!). Zebulon is in my blood...and so is the calling to serve.

At 18, to my parents dismay, I followed the call to serve, packed my bags, & off to Paris Island I went become a member of the United States Marine Corps. I was homesick but knew I had to fulfill this calling. From there, I spent time in Hawaii and was deployed as a Combat Engineer in Desert Storm/Desert Shield.

The entire time I was away, I'm not embarrassed to say - I was really homesick & I talked about Zebulon, home, all the time. I tell you though, from the time my boots hit the combat zone, everything I did was driven by my desire to get back home to Zebulon. I was going to do whatever it takes to get me back home to Zebulon. I said "I'm going back home to Zebulon" enough that if you ask anyone in my platoon - they'll laugh & tell you they know all about Zebulon.

Once I retired from the Marines, I happily came back to Zebulon only to be called to serve again...this time as a Visual Information Specialist with the Drug Enforcement Administration in DC. Being less than 5 hours away from Zebulon was perfect.

After over a decade of serving with the DEA, I retired, came home to learn to farm, and met another calling - serve Zebulon.

So here I am. A lifelong Zebulonian. A Marine. A photographer. A farmer. And a Candidate for Commissioner.

As a Zebulonian, my heart is big, my work ethic is bigger, and my passion to help our community is bigger than them both.

As a marine, I am skilled at finding solutions, working as a team, being adaptable, and am dedicated to leaving no one behind...

As a photographer, I am skilled at seeing and also creatively developing the potential, the beauty, the possibilities others may not see or develop and committed to finding that potential, the beauty, and the possibility in every person, place, and thing I encounter.

As a farmer, I am skilled at patience, at understanding process... at knowing how to tend to, cultivate, and harvest what's been planted and know how to strategically plan for future harvests...and at respecting our surroundings, the environment, and the natural process

As a Candidate for Commissioner, I wholeheartedly believe in our town's motto – we are the town of friendly people...but I also believe we are so much more – we are a force, a force to be reckoned with when we unite as a community.

I am confident in saying we are in perhaps one of the most exciting times in our story and there is no one more passionate, more equipped and ready to unite the past with the present and the future, unite the Zebulon lifers with the newest of new residents, unite the revitalization of the downtown with our charming idyllic history....

I stand before you now asking you to give this native Zebulonian a chance to help make Zebulon that town on the hill, backed by a united front of friendly people, a unique downtown, and the only place anyone would want to call home.

## Traffic/Infrastructure

**Zebulon has an evident traffic problem with concerns voiced by citizens consistently – well-known bottlenecks in certain intersections and excessive traffic and related noise downtown detracting from redevelopment efforts. How should the Town address what some perceive as inadequate planning for infrastructure as it exists today and provide timely, cost-effective solutions?**

A town's infrastructure includes a variety of aspects that all contribute and serve as the basis for a successful economy and a great quality of life....you've got everything from roads, bridges, buildings, transportation, water, water waste/sewage, IT services, power, electric, sanitation/waste removal, telecommunications, etc.

Our citizens have to have confidence in our infrastructure.

But we hit a major growth spurt and many do question our infrastructure.

As a result of being part of the traffic as well as hearing the concerns of a multitude of residents, I wanted to gain a better understanding of the entire picture, so I reached out and met with both current and former elected officials and government employees, Mr. Elmore at the NCDOT, and got acquainted with the numerous traffic studies conducted for the last 7+ years...like

-Jan 2014 Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization North East Area Study  
(pg16 suggests a roundabout at NC97/NC96 to provide a 60% reduction in delay)

- Dec 2016 Joint Public Hearing Agenda : Barrington Development off Old Bunn Rd.  
(page 4, section 5 referencing Traffic Impact Analysis proposes improvements of additional auxiliary turn lanes at NC97 & Old Bunn and Old Bunn & Sheperd School rd.

There are more but I digress...

What I have found is studies, surveys, and plans were made over the last few years...and have only been told one explanation as to any delays in implementing solutions...and that explanation is that costs have risen and revenues are down all due to Covid and the NCDOT has placed many projects, including, but not limited to, NC64/264 on hold (DOT website, N&O Aug 2020).

I believe the bottom line – it is up to us as elected officials to not only keep our citizens in the loop of these studies, our plans, and if we encounter any obstacles but to listen and do all we can to address their concerns and improve their quality of life. And this seems to be where we are.

As Commissioner, I will locate and become more proficient in understanding the previously conducted traffic studies of the last 10 years, ask questions, investigate, & work with all parties involved in addressing traffic issues – from the DOT to the Planning Board – and find out what all the hold ups are in implementing the recommendations provided by the subject matter experts, work to implement what needs implemented, and keep the citizens updated on every step.

As for being able to offer cost-effective solutions, I have reviewed the published budget and have attended/watched meetings for the last 2 years. I do not believe I have all the necessary data, factors, and information to make an informed statement on where money should or should not be allocated or how. When elected, further in-depth analysis of the budget and all projects will promptly be conducted.

***The Town has a very focused initiative in redeveloping our downtown. Also, the residential sector is booming. How should the Town actively compete for and secure businesses and services that support our growing residential sector – eg, medical, groceries, etc. – as well as diversify Zebulon’s economic base?***

My whole campaign is centered around Unity Through Community and this is a place where we can unite to find that good ole country balance of who we are (A Hallmark movie town? A cookie cutter town? A hybrid?) complete with our existing strengths, unique attributes, and incentives to attract, woo, and land new businesses that only line up with and enhance our quality of life and who we are as a community.

But before we can do anything, we, as a whole community, have to have confidence in our infrastructure – we have to know our roads are safe & accessible for safety services, that our water/waste/electric/internet/etc services are reliable, and so on...the strength of our infrastructure is perhaps the most important factor in determining our town’s well-being, quality of life, and economic viability.

We also have to acknowledge where we currently are – we are in uncommon, unprecedented times where economic trends are more erratic and unpredictable with the pandemic and according to many industry experts, what economic incentives worked before aren’t as effective now.

I view this as a being pretty great for us...we were already at the start of one of the most exciting times in Zebulon...we were embarking on a modern renaissance before the pandemic...so changes, rebranding, reestablishing who we are was already happening and is just another factor in our decisions.

So as Commissioner, I will dive further into the ins and outs of the town's existing infrastructure plans, ask questions, get answers, and keep the citizens in the loop as to what is going on.

I will look further into the existing incentive programs we offer, like the Facade Grant and Existing Business Retention & Expansion, as well as investigate other possible incentive programs we can offer and collaborate with organizations like the Chamber to be able to offer economic development assistance to incoming and existing businesses, & research the viability of other concepts such as business incubators, collaborating with local schools, etc.

I will work with other elected officials, departments, organizations, citizens to help identify, build upon, and (advertise and play up) our strengths that will attract new businesses, industry, etc....

Off the top of my head, we have

- a strong, highly rated fire department which translates to possible insurance savings for businesses,
- we are the town of friendly people and who doesn't want to do business with friendly people?,
- our police department is top notch,
- our geographical location is ideal...

attributes like these are noted by industry experts as possible "attractors" for businesses.

**The Triangle s one of the fastest growing regions in the United States and that growth is spreading even to more rural areas. On average, Zebulon is growing at the rate of three (3) new residents daily. What does "smart growth" mean to you and how do you plan to balance maintaining Zebulon's small-town character with the growth opportunities that are available?**

Zebulon is on loan to us from future Zebulonians. Just as our predecessors laid the foundation for Zebulon to grow from a small train stop town just 114 years ago, we are tasked with adding another layer for the generations to come without forgetting where we came from.

For us to be successful in our contributions, we must rely on unity through community and continue to use a strategic adaptable plan, which is the basis of smart growth. This action plan will allow our town to evolve in a manner that will

- capitalize on the opportunities that build on our existing strengths & charm
- and allow us to prosper economically as well as socially,
- increase our overall well-being, safety, & quality of life,
- all while minimizing our effect on the environment.

With the concept of “smart growth” we must also be afforded

- the ability to evaluate regularly and
- address/correct situations and issues as they arise, such as addressing increased traffic, possible needs for more safety services/first responders, restaurants, events, grocery stores, schools, etc.

I believe we are witnesses to smart growth, like how we are transforming downtown and adding new communities, but I also believe we can do more.

As commissioner, I will work in concert with organizations, parks and rec, other elected officials, departments, citizens to ensure

- we continue to be the town of friendly people living in a semi-Hallmark Movie town with Christmas Parade, Christmas Tree lighting, farmers markets, Miss Zebulon Scholarship pageants, camps for kids...
- and add to this list of community-oriented activities and events
- and work to add businesses, services, industries that add to our unique quality of life and meet our standards.

I have spoken to a few citizens who are interested in doing organizing events to honor our service members, multi-cultural events, festivals, and the like as well as some who would be interested in organizing a sort of welcome wagon to new give a good ole country welcome to our new friends and show some southern hospitality.

### **Community Life/Culture**

**Little River Dam Park is one of several parks in the Zebulon Park System. Do you have any ideas on how the current park could be better utilized, how the cost would be covered, and a time-line for implementing for your plan?**

I had quite the conversation with the man most responsible for revitalizing and naming Little River Dam Park in the 80s...

I'm sure most of you know him or have seen him in his trademark overalls and full white beard around town, picking up litter, and fulfilling his duty of being a friendly Zebulonian...but never realized he is the man who helped clear the way for this very question to be asked.

His name is John Middleswarth...

As he told me his story, on Christmas Eve Day '85, he heard his calling to do his part and clear the dam/surrounding area...this came after hearing stories of how this place used to be a hot make out spot for decades (Blueberry Hill), predates the civil war, and driving by every day thinking someone should get it back to it's glory. So he did.

He and his family's efforts were so impressive, he was awarded a multitude of awards – man of the year & was asked to name the park. He even found himself and Zebulon as a feature story on Mike Rowe's show "Returning the Favor" where he was given a riding lawnmower as a token of the town's appreciation – (a link to the video is on my facebook page if you'd like to watch.)

So in the 36 years that have passed since he began, he and other Zebulonians shared with me that a number of different ideas have been floated trying to determine best utilization of this park -from kayaking to festivals to biker events to leaving it untouched -but nothing as ever gained much traction.

For us to be able to maximize the potential of this park, we need to gain an understanding of it's layout and natural properties...

Both Mr. Middleswarth in the 80s and Mr. Joe Chamblee who worked the land at the dam in the 70s as part of the Jaycees indicated the most viable parts of the park extend to Greenpace Rd They indicated there were also spots of quicksand, & it was very shallow in certain areas

Another private citizen, I'm told, also invested their own money to conduct a survey of the land and created a plan to revitalize that area, but still nothing came of it.

We also need to understand why none of the previous ideas of the last 36 years took hold so we do not go down the same dead end...

As Commissioner, I first will honor the history of this park...it truly is the people's park - most every historical aspect of this park is rooted in private citizens taking pride in their community. Because of this, how it should be used should be up to them, not me...be it:

- a simple scenic place of serenity, photography, and nature
- a campgrounds
- a venue for small festivals/markets/reinactments, fairs, weddings, parties, family reunions, church gatherings...
- a place for scout (girl/boy/cub/eagle) cabin
- or whatever the people want...

Once we as a whole community decide what we want, then we can determine how to tend to the grounds – if riprap is a possibility, if we need to add pavilions, landscaping/trees, bathrooms, more picnic tables/benches/lights...and I will work with Sheila Long and the rest of the parks and rec crew to do what needs to be done to keep this a place we can be proud of.

**As the town grows, so does its public safety needs. In your role as Mayor/Board member explain how the Town should meet these needs – including budgetary concerns – ensuring needs are met and response times are reasonable for all residents?**

The safety of our community is of the utmost importance.

This issue can also be included in my statements about infrastructure – we must have safe roads, adequate roads, accurate maps and technology, access to water, and so on to address public safety needs.

I've been meeting with some of our brave firefighters, have spoken with Chief Boykin, and have a ride along scheduled with the police department in a concerted effort to gain a better understanding of not



just the current situation, needs, response times, but to hear first hand their requests, concerns, and how we can help them protect and serve us even better

The firefighters have told me that currently, with the explosive growth we've already witnessed, when 2 calls come in at the same time, they sometimes have to rely on neighboring departments to help out.

They also have indicated there is a growing concern over a pay differential between what we offer and what surrounding departments are offering.

As Commissioner, I will continue to meet with firefighters and police officers regularly to make sure our budgets and plans line up with their needs to ensure they all have the proper and necessary equipment to protect and serve us all and are appropriately compensated.

I will work with the Board and other elected officials to help both chiefs.

-Chief Boykin achieve department accreditation, which can increase the quality and depth of the hiring pool, increase police community involvement - like the Citizen's Academy scheduled for the beginning of next year, collaborating with the pastors, & work to introduce community watch groups.

-Chief Perry to provide necessary support and resources to ensure call-time responses are acceptable - including strategically located new stations, maintain their recently awarded Class Two denotation, work towards enhancing the volunteer portion of the department and fair/equitable/comparable compensation.

Regarding the budget, as of now, I have reviewed the published budget and have attended/watched meetings for the last 2 years. I do not believe I have all the necessary data, factors, and information to make an informed statement on where money should or should not be allocated. When elected, further in-depth analysis of the budget will promptly be conducted.

### **CLOSING**

I want to thank again the Chamber, the Woman's Club, and those who are watching for this opportunity to briefly share my passions, my thoughts, my reasons for running to be your next Commissioner. And I have to add it is an honor to be among a group of candidates who come from such different places and are so diverse & accomplished..

But we, as a united community, realize we are at a pivotal point and we must take advantage of what is before us - the opportunity to grow our roots longer and deeper while we turn that page in the next chapter of our evolution...

The more we grow, the more we need versatile and accessible leaders, variety in representation and idea generating, and novel ways to keep our down-home country charm alive and kickin as we grow...

My granddaddy June Miles always said "a man's word is his bond" and I'm here to tell you that when I say I am an ideal candidate for Commissioner, I guarantee it – as Commissioner I will work tirelessly to ensure Zebulon is prosperous now and in the future and that all will be seen, heard, and represented... all while honoring the humble beginnings of our small country town of friendly people and those who made Zebulon the reason we are all here and wanting to represent it's people.

I stand before you now, again, asking you to give this native Zebulonian a chance to help make Zebulon that town on the hill, backed by a united front of friendly people, a unique downtown, and the only place anyone would want to call home.

I humbly ask for your support and vote this election. Early voting starts this Thursday & election day is November 2 – check my Facebook page and website for more information.

**U N I T Y   T H R O U G H   C O M M U N I T Y**

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