

★ Spencer Board of Aldermen ★

Choose six aldermen

On the issues...

What's the top issue facing Spencer in the next two years?

What should be done about problems with rental properties?

What should be done about the library in Library Park?

Tracy Aitken

Address: 401 Eighth St.
Education: Bachelor's degree from Oakland University in Rochester, Mich.
Background: Served seven years in the Army as an intelligence analyst. Part owner of Pinocchio's Restaurant and also owns Usborne Books on Salisbury Avenue. President of the Spencer Business Association.



Growth, we need to grow. We need more businesses downtown and need more people to move to Spencer.

Says Spencer actually has a lower-than-average percentage of rental properties. Says the national average is better than 30 percent while Spencer's average is 25 percent. Even Salisbury's average is 26 percent. Rentals. The move by the Board of Aldermen to restrict front-yard parking should help with the problem with rental properties.

It'd make an excellent community center. It should be a community-based facility for everyone. I'm a firm believer in citizens groups, and citizens are involved in raising money for the building.

Scott Benfield

Address: 319 Sowers Ferry Road
Education: Graduate of Rowan-Cabarrus Community College.
Background: Owner of Scott's Plumbing. Former public works director for town of Spencer.



Safe routes to schools, the library building, the interstate business corridor, downtown revitalization, street paving and sidewalk maintenance.

I feel we have a lot of good ordinances in place. We may be able to look at having a business license that will be able to be revoked if property owners are in violation of ordinances. Also, we need to make tenants more accountable for the appearance of their property if the problem is caused by them. Chronic offenders should be posted in the Salisbury Post.

Work has already begun by assessing the property to see where we need to start. New energy-efficient windows, doors and repairs to the outside of the building need to be made before work can resume on the inside. After this is done, we are planning to install a new heating system. Then repairs to the inside floors and walls will follow. Hopefully, wiring upgrades will be added. We have applied for federal stimulus money, last year, and received none.

Delaine Fowler

Address: 510 Fifth St.
Education: Doctorate and masters degrees from Elon University. Bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.
Background: Owner of Fowler Physical Therapy in Salisbury.



If leaders who are willing to take action are not elected to the board this year, the biggest challenge we will face is apathetic leadership. Continuing to use conservatism as a reason not to act will continue to create a Spencer community that lags behind surrounding towns in economic recovery, business, job creation and services to our community. We need leaders who are ready, open and willing to listen to our community.

Business owners should be allowed to conduct business that follows the town's laws and regulations. Land owners should be allowed to do what they would like to do to their properties following laws and regulations. Spencer must enforce town codes and establish codes that limit public nuisances.

The library is one of the town's most beautiful structures. It is also another example of the lack of action taken by past boards to preserve historic structures. With an estimated \$2 million price tag the challenge to refurbish the library into a useful space is great. A great start is for the Historic Preservation Committee to begin searching for grants and campaigning for funds. It is my opinion that Spencer needs many state-of-the-art learning centers.

Donnie Hinson

Address: 101 Herman St.
Education: Graduate of Rowan-Cabarrus Community College and holds certifications for basic law-enforcement training.
Background: Sheriff's deputy who works in the Rowan County Justice Center.



Have less-strict code enforcement regulations where we can get businesses easier access to locate in Spencer. Support volunteer and nonprofit organizations who are appearing to beautify and help improve the appearance of Spencer. Continue to insure the safety of Spencer and its residents through police and fire agencies by implementing the current policies and proper training to accomplish this goal.

Not just with landlords as done in the past, hold renters more responsible for rented property. Do a more in-depth background check before renting your home, trailer or apartment would definitely be a plus for landlords and citizens of Spencer alike.

It is well known that we have problems with the library that need our attention. Knowing that, we have to answer the question of money to solve this continuing problem so that we can get the library back open for the citizens of Spencer and other areas. I, along with other aldermen, have been working diligently to try to find answers to this problem in as timely a manner as possible.

Jeff Kiker

Address: 601 Third St.
Background: Owner of P&G Security Inc. in Salisbury. Native of Spencer.



The biggest issue for me is finding ways to cover the budget and fund new projects without becoming a burden on the taxpayers or increasing taxes. This economy has created serious problems to overcome so we must find places to cut costs but not services. Bringing in new businesses to the Interstate Business District will start the restoration of Spencer and bring in new taxes to cover our needs.

Rental property owners should be accountable for the actions of the renters and fines assessed if the owner does not comply. If you hold them accountable and fine them accordingly, it will generate funds for the budget, cause them to look closely at their renter to make sure they will comply with policies, monitor their property closer and find better long-term renters who care about the property.

I remember the library as my school as a child so I have always wanted to see it restored. If we are to bring people to Spencer for our history then this too should be a location people should visit. The train museum should direct visitors to the library to view additional displays and movies to enhance the visit to the library. Conference rooms should be available for programs and seminars. We should find from other towns and learn what they did.

Jeff Morris

Address: 403 Crestwood Lane
Education: Bachelor's degree from Catawba College and juris doctorate from Wake Forest University.
Background: Attorney in Salisbury. Prior to returning to law school, worked throughout the mid-Atlantic region 10 years in Food Lion's store planning and development department as a construction supervisor.



The biggest issue facing Spencer over the next couple of years will be budgetary. According to statistics, Spencer's home values have dropped 2.7 percent in the past year. If those statistics are accurate, we could expect a commensurate drop in tax evaluation, unless property values rise before 2011 when the tax revaluation takes place. In the next two years we may experience negative revenue streams for the first time in decades.

Enforce existing ordinances to prevent urban blight that negligent landlords have created with poorly maintained, rundown properties. It is not always "absentee" landlords who are the problem. It is "negligent" landlords. Second, I would hold tenants to the same standards to which we hold the occupants who own their homes when it comes to un-owned grass, furniture and junk in the yard, and improper trash disposal.

Because the ideas for a complete renovation were so expensive in the past, the town has been waiting for a pot of gold to land in our laps to do the renovation. We sought stimulus money, which did not come through. So now it is time to scale back the more expensive renovation plans and tend to the basic renovation plans to make the building habitable for the public again. This would make the old school building a community gathering place.

David Smith

Address: 208 N. Salisbury Ave.
Background: Retired from military and works as an Army contractor.



Seeking to bring businesses to the town. Friendlier on ordinances that restrict the relocation of businesses. Keep the tax rate where it is. The town's unemployment rate is 12.5 percent, meaning a tax hike in these economic times is not a good idea.

Make sure we support strong code enforcement of properties that are out of compliance. We're doing two to three liens a month on properties that are out of code. We need to do more if necessary.

Pursue stimulus grants. Town Manager Larry Smith is supposed to return soon with plans from an outside source regarding plans for renovation of the library. Whatever the board supports on this measure, I'll go along with.

C.E. Spear

Address: 406 Baldwin Ave.
Background: Has served as either alderman or mayor for better than 30 years. Worked for Southern Railway, in the insurance business and also operated Industrial Repairs Co.



We've got several issues we need to look at over the next couple of years. Off-street parking is a problem and we need to seriously consider a ban on front-yard parking. We need to make the town more business-friendly by making the permitting process less of a bother.

Absentee landlords and in-town landlords need to maintain their properties according to ordinances already in place.

We need to make plans for how to go about renovating the library and prioritize according to needs and money available.

Reid Walters

Address: 503 Fourth St.
Education: Graduate of Western Carolina University.
Background: Teaches history at East Rowan High School. Also buys and refurbishes old houses.



Spencer is at a pivotal time and there are two directions it can take. The next board must create a marketing committee that takes an active role in selling out community outside of Rowan County. Spencer is strategically set between the Triad and Charlotte. The state gives us the gift of tourism. The residents must seat a board that takes an active role in selling our town, bringing new businesses and residents.

There are good landlords in Spencer who do a stand-up job with their rental properties. Unfortunately, those who do not maintain their properties give many a bad name. Landlords and tenants alike must be held accountable for the upkeep of their rental properties. If properties fall into code violations, both parties must be notified and fines levied on both parties.

Many foundations and grants exist specifically for the historic renovation of community schools and libraries. The current board failed to formally recognize a community-based library committee, closed the library with no renovation plan and has ignored the issue the last six months. The next board must press and ensure that town management secures funding for the project.