

ALL Content is quoted in its original entirety.

“During election years, the Rappahannock Record conducts written interviews with candidates who will appear on the ballot in contested races for local office.

In Northumberland County, two candidates appear on the ballot for the District 2 board of supervisors’ seat, incumbent Richard Haynie and challenger Keith Harris

Their responses are in alphabetical order and unedited for content. Voting is underway through Election Day, November 4.”

Extracted content:

Richard Haynie Republican Endorsed 	Richard Harris Independent Candidate 
What is your main goal for running?	
<p>During the past two years, citizens of Northumberland have elected new supervisors who share my goals of building a solid financial foundation for future growth of the local economy, creating a county school system that produces student excellence in all the basic skills that the future will demand, and ongoing improvement of the quality of life in Northumberland County.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the school board does not wish to cooperate with the board of supervisors. During the last four years, they have overspent their budget four straight times, thus forcing the supervisors to use county funds to cover school board debt, as we are required by state law. This wasteful spending has reduced funds to the point that we could not afford raises for county</p>	<p>My main goal is to get Northumberland County fiscally strong and ensure tax dollars are spent wisely.</p>

employees, like teachers, sheriff's deputies, and social workers among others. This lack of discipline results in waste of half of the county budget and directly impacts our shared goals for improving conditions throughout the county.

What steps would you take to improve the relationship between the board of supervisors and the school board?

Of the five members of the school board, only one, David Curran of Reedville, has any experience running a school system, and he is always in the minority. In fact, the school board voted to hire a detective to investigate him for his opposition to the majority and the former superintendent. The other members of the school board include a retired teacher in her 80s, the head of the Northumberland County Teachers Association (Northumberland County Education Association), a former music teacher and a housewife. None of these have any experience in business, finance, accounting, law, or management—exactly what is necessary to run the largest enterprise in the county, except for Omega Protein. We clearly need a fresh school board with large entity management experience and an understanding of what the students need to succeed after graduation into a technology-driven world. The current woeful standard test scores in math, reading and science give no reason for optimism.

Early this year, we discovered that the school board and school management hid three years of employment tax deficiency notices from the IRS that led to a tax lien on all county school assets. The board of supervisors was forced to pay another school board debt. Since that time, the school board has been placed under investigation by the Virginia State Police for financial irregularities, while a seemingly endless stream of old expenditures continues to come to light. Under these

I will work to continue what superintendent Dr. Leslie has started to foster trust and honest discussion between the two boards and to keep the education of our students front and center in these discussions. I will work to bridge trust and honest discussion between the board of supervisors and the school board and always keep the education of our students our top priority. Communication is key to getting us working together to better our schools.

circumstances, I see little possibility for improved relations with the current school board.

After years of steady expenditures around \$35 million, we're now seeing county-wide expenditures regularly closer to \$40 million. Would you support greater control of government spending?

What are your thoughts on an additional real estate tax increase in light of last year's 12% hike?

In the last three years, budget increases have been due to inflation and new technologies, state mandates, and school budget overruns have forced the supervisors to raise taxes despite our personal wishes to the contrary. This raises the issue of whether expenditure can be controlled or reduced to cut county taxes in the future. Currently, there is a standing order from the county finance director that no purchases of any kind in any department may be made without approval. At this very moment, we are discovering thousands of dollars of school system purchases that were never properly documented or approved by a supervisor. Many of these purchases were made by the use of twelve credit cards floating through the school system. This is but one area of many financial irregularities now being investigated by the state police. We await their findings and recommendations. We will use them to reduce future taxes.

Greater control of government spending is a must. In 2020, our county's real estate tax was \$0.56 and this year is \$0.74. Every part of the budget needs to be looked at because our citizens cannot afford to see these rate increases continue. I do not want to see additional taxes levied on our citizens. I watched the board of supervisors meeting on Oct. 9th and was impressed by Dr. Pica's plan for upcoming budget. I look forward to hearing more about her ideas to lower tax rates while adding to the reserve fund and providing salary increases for county and school employees. I would also like to see the county adopt a semi-annual payment plan for our citizens to alleviate the burden of making one large payment.

What priorities should the county have towards economic development?

There are two areas that always come up when discussing economic development: infrastructure and workforce training. Infrastructure refers to our transportation and road systems, energy systems, and available commercial spaces. All must be improved, largely through cooperation between county and state agencies. We have an Economic Development Commission to address these concerns, which I support and encourage.

Northumberland County needs economic growth while preserving our rural character. Our dollars now go to other counties helping to fill their tax treasury, not ours. We need to implement strategies to attract and retain new businesses while supporting existing businesses and those strategies should include plans to increase water, sewer, and electricity capabilities. We also need to search for and apply for every grant possible to help with our growth.

Workforce training should be made a part of the county school system. We have a multi-county vocational training center in Warsaw to address this concern, but unfortunately, there are a limited number of slots available to Northumberland students—only 10 to 12 per year. Numerous local small businesses have complained that there are far fewer employees available than necessary to meet local demand. I strongly suggest that we return vocational training to the county school system. People need to realize that the economy has changed, and the nationwide emphasis on college education has produced a nationwide shortage of skilled labor. Entry-level employment income for skilled labor is now much higher than entry-level employment wages for college graduates. Our school system must react accordingly.

What are one or two goals you would like to accomplish during your term?

In addition to financial reform and school reform, I would like to see an overhaul of the county tax system to better reflect economic reality and to reduce the burden on residential homeowners.

Great working relationship with the school board to increase educational opportunities for our county's children. Economic development that brings services and tax revenues to our county while also protecting our county heritage.