

Kannapolis to choose three for City Council

By **EMILY FORD**
Salisbury Post

KANNAPOLIS — This city stands at a crossroads.

After a century with textiles as king, Kannapolis prepares for a new era and a new economy based on knowledge and science.

Three City Council incumbents — Richard Anderson, Ken Geathers and Roger Haas — say they have the experience needed to manage the projected growth as the N.C. Research Campus takes shape on the site of a former textile mill.

"We only have one chance to get this right," Haas said.

But three challengers — Jim Harkins, David Baucom and John Williams — say they have new ideas and fresh perspectives at a crucial time.

"It's going to be great economic driver for us for many years into the future, but we have to manage it properly," Baucom said.

The switch from textiles to biotechnology will require deft leadership, making the Nov. 6 City Council election arguably one of the most important in the town's short municipal history.

"We certainly are in a transition period that's pretty dramatic," City Manager Mike Legg said. "We need a council that's in sync, pursuing the same goals and objectives to maximize all this positive change that's going on around us."

Geathers has sat on the council since Kannapolis incorporated in 1984. He said the Research Campus "is like the phoenix coming out of the fire."

"It will pump new blood and resources to all of North Carolina, just like Cannon Mills did at the turn of the century," said Geathers, who advocates a flexible approach to planning.

Baucom said he's running for election because he could recruit businesses to the area and grow the local job base.

More than 4,000 workers lost their jobs in 2003 when the mill closed, the largest layoff in state history.

For a century, Kannapolis revolved around the mill. For 40 of those years, Anderson worked there.

"That industry is gone and I'm certainly glad Mr. Murdock repurchased the buildings and land and is going forward with the research aspect," he said.

David H. Murdock, a California billionaire who owned the mill for a short time in the 1980s, is financing the \$1.5 billion life sciences research center.

But Anderson warns that unless the city addresses traffic congestion,

Kannapolis will look like "Charlotte at 8 a.m."

N.C. 3 and several intersections will be improved with revenues from sale of bonds backed by future tax revenues from the Research Campus, but many other roads need attention, he said.

Harkins said he doesn't understand why some people "seem to be a little apprehensive" about the campus.

Richard Anderson

Age: 71
Address: 211 N. Rose St., Kannapolis
Family: Married, four children, nine grandchildren
Background: Incumbent seeking fourth term. Kannapolis native. Former mayor. Retired Fieldcrest Cannon accounts manager.
Education: Attended Catawba College, 1964; associate degree, business management, Biscayne Southern University, Concord, 1966.
Contact: 704-932-3801



David Baucom

Age: 33
Address: 119 Greenview Drive, Kannapolis
Family: Married, two children
Background: Challenger, first run for city council. Native of Kannapolis. Owner Baucom Wealth Management Inc., Kannapolis.
Education: U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., bachelor of science, computer science, 1997
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Ken Geathers

Age: 63
Address: 1545 Steepleton Drive, Kannapolis
Family: Married, two children, three grandchildren
Background: Incumbent seeking seventh term. Resident 37 years. Addiction therapist, William Heffner VA Medical Center, Salisbury.
Education: Livingstone College, Salisbury, BS in mathematics, 1970; Biscayne Southern Univ., Concord, assoc. degree, bus. admin., 1973; RCCC, computer technology, 2003.
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Roger Haas

Age: 59
Address: 1422 Moorecrest Place, Kannapolis
Family: Married, four children, two grandchildren
Background: Incumbent seeking second term. Kannapolis resident for 43 years. President and founder of Adventures in Motorsports, Kannapolis
Education: Gardner-Webb University, associate degree, business, 1970; Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., management study program, 1975
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Jim Harkins

Age: 54
Address: 1807 S. Cannon Blvd., Kannapolis
Family: Single
Background: Challenger, second run for city council. Grew up in Oklahoma City and moved to Kannapolis 19 years ago. Manager of Cash-A-Check, Kannapolis
Education: Lyon College in Arkansas, bachelor's degree, English, 1975
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John Williams

Age: 42
Address: 1699 Mission Oaks St., Kannapolis
Family: Married, four children
Background: Challenger, first run for city council. From Tampa, Fla., works as mortgage consultant with Sunny Mortgage, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
Education: Beacon Bible College, Largo, Fla., undergraduate degree in communications, 1992; doctorate, theological counseling, 1994.
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"Look at the progress being done already, it's pretty amazing," he said.

Construction has already provided jobs and income, said Harkins, who wants the city to offer more amenities for thousands of anticipated new residents.

While the campus is a great idea, Williams said, "I just want to make sure that it brings opportunity to everyone, mainly different educational backgrounds."

Citizens complain that Kannapolis doesn't treat everyone fairly, Williams said.

The campus "is probably going to be the greatest redevelopment project not only in this area but in the state of North Carolina," Haas predicted.

Few cities have suffered such economic devastation only to see a multi-billion dollar industry move in a few years later.

Local Land Transfer Taxes and the Statewide Deed Stamp Tax

On November 6, 2007 16 counties across North Carolina — Brunswick County, Chatham County, Gates County, Graham County, Hoke County, Macon County, Moore County, Pender County, Union County, Washington County, Harnett County, Davie County, Johnston County, Henderson County, Swain County, Rutherford County — have placed on the ballot a real property transfer tax. A real estate transfer tax, also known as the "home tax," is a bad idea because:

A land transfer tax is an assessment that would be paid every time real estate is bought or sold. The tax is typically a certain percentage of the value of the property and is paid whenever title to real property is transferred. Local governments must get approval from the State Legislature prior to adopting a transfer tax. There is already a statewide transfer tax, often referred to as the deed stamp tax, and some special interest groups are asking that it be increased to fund various pet projects. These transfer taxes are very narrowly based forms of taxation that place a disproportionate burden on a small percentage of residents from a given jurisdiction.

The Salisbury Rowan Association of REALTORS® strongly opposes new or increased land transfer taxes because:

- **Entry-level and all other homes become less affordable.** Low-to-moderate income and first-time homebuyers who attempt to purchase a home could pay a tax greater than their down payment. Affordability is already an acute problem in most counties and these taxes would only make that problem worse. Some folks might see that as beneficial.

- **These taxes are discriminatory and regressive.** Typically the same impact fee is assessed on a \$50,000 home as would be assessed on a \$500,000 home.

- **Growth pays for itself.** Studies conducted by University economists across the state show that the taxes and fees generated from new development more than pays for the cost of the infrastructure needed for the new development.

- **Infrastructure should be paid for by everyone.** Infrastructure, including schools, benefits everyone in a community and, therefore, should be paid for by the public at large. Imposing the cost of infrastructure on a small segment of the community — new home buyers (many of whom are current residents) — is unfair.

- **Impact fees can also raise your property taxes.** By adding to the purchase price of a new home down the street from you, these impact fees can increase the appraised value of your home and raise your property taxes.

- **These housing taxes will never go away.** History shows that housing taxes, such as impact fees, once established, will inevitably increase and spread to adjacent jurisdictions. When Orange County levied its fee in 1993, the fee was less than \$1,000, but now the fee is over \$4,400 and there is discussion about raising the fee to \$10,000. Home prices in Chapel Hill are among the most expensive in North Carolina.



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