



THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY  
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA  
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



# Oral History Interview

with

Alyia Gaskins, Jim Moran,  
Lonnie Rich, Allison Sillerberg,  
and Justin Wilson

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**Interviewer:** Francesco De Salvatore

**Narrators:** Alyia Gaskins, Jim Moran, Lonnie Rich, Allison Silberberg, Justin Wilson

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## Summary:

Five former mayors, a current mayor, and members of the Alexandria City Council discuss their service.

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General	Alexandria City Council; Alexandria City Manager; Alexandria City Mayor; Alexandria City Vice Mayor; Alexandria City Attorney; Campagna Center; Civil Rights Movement; Clergy Council; Confederate soldier statue; Congressional Baseball Practice Shooting; Council Chambers; D-Day; Defense of Marriage Act; Fort Monroe Authority; Hopkins House; January 6; New Mayor School at Harvard University; Public housing; Same-sex marriage; Scholarship Fund; Scottish Walk Parade; Simpson Field; United Daughters of the Confederacy; U.S. Capitol Police; U.S. Conference of Mayors
People	Abercrombie, Neil; Abrams, Stacey; Barnett, Janet; Beatley, Charles “Chuck”; Biden, Joseph R., Jr. (President); Brown, Mike; Calhoun, Bob; Chis, Suzanne; Cleveland, William “Bill”; Collins, Debra; Davis, Jefferson; DeLauro, Rosa; Evans, Bennie; Evans, Michele; Frank, Barney; Frazier, Katelyn; Garvey, Kate; Gordon, Renee; Greene, Nelson; Jurgenson, Sonny; Kelleher, Jean; Krupicka, Rob; Lawhorne, Dana; Lawson, Vola; Lewis, John; McLean, Coco Sermaine; Olson, Angus; Pepper, Del; Ring, Connie; Scalise, Steve; Sunderland, Phil; Ticer, Patsy; Trump, Donald (President); Walsh, Marty
Places	Arlandria; Beverley Hills; Caen, France; Del Ray; Martha’s Vineyard; North Ridge; Oak Bluffs

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:00:00.0] All right. So, we'll get started by going around. If everyone can give their names, and if you currently hold office or if you have held office and—and yeah, what those positions were for the city? So, we'll start.

**Justin Wilson** [0:00:12.2] Justin Wilson, I was on council from 2007 to 2009, and then again from January 2013 until through the end of 2024, including two terms as mayor.

**Jim Moran** [0:00:28.2] Jim Moran, I was on the Alexandria City Council from 1979 to 1990, including five years as mayor. And then served the Northern Virginia in the U.S. Congress from 1990 to 2015.

**Allison Silberberg** [0:00:54.3] I was the vice mayor of the council. Sorry, January 2013 to January 2016, and then January 2016 till the end of 2018 or—yeah, the mayor. So, six years in total.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:01:16.8] I'm Alyia Gaskins, and I'm currently in office serving as the mayor. I just completed my first year. And prior to that, I served on the City Council. I don't remember the exact years. [Laughter]

**Allison Silberberg** [0:01:30.1] And I forgot to say, I'm Allison Silberberg, served as vice mayor and mayor. Thank you. Sorry.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:01:35.7] I'm Lonnie Rich. I served on the City Council from 1991 to 2000—so three terms. And they decided it was time for somebody else to have all the fun. [Laughter]

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:01:46.8] So much fun. [Laughs]

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:01:48.2] Good, good. I'm Francesco, and today is February 2, 2026, and we are at Lloyd House in Alexandria, Virginia. So, I want to start with, yeah, each of you be

reflecting a little bit on what are some of your fondest memories, either in the positions that you held or that you currently hold? And so, I've been going in this direction, but we can also switch it up.

**Justin Wilson** [0:02:11.5] Start with Lonnie.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:02:12.9] I know Lonnie always has a story, so.

**Allison Silberberg** [0:02:16.9] [Laughs] Francesco.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:02:17.2] We can start with you, too, if you want, but no pressure.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:02:21.0] My finest memory?

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:02:22.4] Yeah.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:02:22.7] Is that what—

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:02:23.5] Yeah, yeah.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:02:25.4] Well, I enjoyed my colleagues. I didn't always agree, but I enjoyed my colleagues. I felt like we had a—the nine years I was on council, we had a really good professional mix of people and a political mix, at least at the start. There were two Republicans and five Democrats, and one of the things that was really—I've noted this before—I think is really astounding, even though we were a 5-2 split by party, and I've asked all those people to confirm this. I don't think there was a single time in my whole time on council when we had a 5-2 party-line vote. It didn't happen. There were a lot of 6-1 votes, sometimes with me in the 1, and sometimes with Bill Cleveland in the 1, but we had 5-2 votes. But it was—it was never along party lines. And it was just—it was just a—it was a good group, and I think the other part that I really liked was and respected the process was the public hearing process. Cause most of the time, most of us had an idea of how we're gonna vote on stuff, but occasionally one or more of us would be surprised by what we heard from the public. And so—and I think most of the time it was like the same old stuff. It was the same people saying the same thing they've always said, but occasionally there would be something that would be said that would—it would change your vote. You'd go the other direction, and I actually thought that was an amazing process.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:04:03.3] I guess one of my greatest memories so far would be—I think sometimes it feels like you're doing things, and you don't always know that you're making an impact. And our council, we heard about a number of issues with our public housing authority board, and we decided to remove the current board and to usher in a fresh start. And a week or so after that, I walked outside, and there's a gentleman who has been unhoused for quite a while, Lee. And Lee asked me if he could hug me. I walked over to his bench, and I said, "Of course." And he gave me a hug. And as he pulled away, he had tears in his eyes. And he was like, "Miss Gaskins, I've been telling you for years that something was wrong over there." And he's like, "I didn't know if you ever listened to me, but I read the newspaper. And I know you did what you did cause of me." And while I'm not sure that I can say I did it because of Lee, I just—I don't know. It was just nice to hug him in that moment to know that something was changing, and to be able to like—I don't know—know that

people are paying attention. That we're trying our best. And on a happier note, I would say the greatest memory—fondest memory so far was being the grand marshal in the Scottish Walk Parade. And at the end when the clans do their "Battle of the Bands," they did a toast to me, and I was not expecting that. And it was just—I don't know. It was just a magical moment.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:05:28.1] What was the toast?

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:05:29.7] I don't know what they were drinking, cause I was standing on the stage with no alcohol. But they just lifted up like, "To Miss Gaskins," and that was cool.

**Allison Silberberg** [0:05:38.4] I think it was a special flask of something.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:05:43.2] Yes! [Laughter] I still don't know what was in it, but I was glad to—

**Justin Wilson** [0:05:46.2] Scotch, I suspect!

**Allison Silberberg** [0:05:47.6] I did see that.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:05:49.1] But that was really—

**Allison Silberberg** [0:05:49.5] It was very nice.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:05:50.7] Yes. And it was—it's like it wasn't planned. So that was really a nice surprise.

**Allison Silberberg** [0:05:55.5] Yeah. So, I would say seeing the kids come in from various schools to talk with me at City Hall. That's one of my cherished memories. And then I would ask them—we would discuss the city, and then I would ask them for their ideas, whether they were in first grade or fourth grade or eighth grade or whatever. And so, they wanted to learn about city government, but then they also had concerns and ideas that were really helpful to me as the mayor. So, and similarly some of my best ideas came from my monthly "Council in Your Corner" or "Mayor on Your Corner" sessions, where I would sit for almost two hours with the public, and I would listen. And so that kind of engagement—civic engagement—whether with the kids or with adults, "Mayor on Your Corner," that really helped me serve the public good directly. And it was just—anyway. I'm really grateful for that. The people would take the time.

**Jim Moran** [0:07:20.8] So I can think of one where I was particularly—that made me particularly happy. Another that was kind of a fun experience, and then another that was challenging. So, I guess since we're not on an extreme timeline, I'll—first of all, I think the most rewarding was getting legislation through that prohibited the city from discriminating against gay people in its hiring. Because it was the first in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and it may have been the first in the country. Phil Sunderland, the City Attorney, was trying to find an example of another municipality and was unable to. We were sued, of course, under the Dillon Rule, but we prevailed in court. So that was—and then there were some repercussions subsequently that, you know, made me all the happier that we were able to push that through. The most fun experiences when and during the Reagan Administration when they had us prepare for in the event of a nuclear war. And they had

these yokels that had come into the administration who didn't know what they were doing. I can see some parallel [inaudible 0:08:47.1] with today.

**Justin Wilson** [0:08:47.8] Yeah, fancy that. Yeah. I can imagine.

**Jim Moran** [0:08:49.0] Yeah, fancy that. And so, they had a map that they presented to us, and it showed that all the folks coming from Prince George's, Maryland, and Southern Maryland, and from D.C. would follow one route—and that was Duke Street. So, you would have, you know, a couple of million people that—well, that they were automobiles, but at least a couple of million going down Duke Street. And they had provisions where dump truck drivers were considered necessary personnel, so they couldn't evacuate. They would have to stay so as to plow cars off the road that had run out of gas or were stalling. And gas station operators—not just the owners but the operators had to stay so that they could provide gas. So, I thought it was somewhat poorly planned. So, being the performative politician, I was at that time in my life, I decided I was going to go on this trip to drive to Woodstock, West Virginia, which is where the entire—do you remember this, Justin?

**Justin Wilson** [0:10:07.0] [Laughs] No. This is great.

**Jim Moran** [0:10:07.7] The entire—well, the entire DMV—well, half the DMV.

**Justin Wilson** [0:10:13.1] Yeah.

**Jim Moran** [0:10:13.6] There was another half that was gonna go out west, but we were supposed to go to Woodstock. So, we took Duke Street to 66, and then 66 to Woodstock. But it was about a two and a half hour drive, at least. And there was a *New York Times* reporter who was covering it who later went on to write some books and a writer for the *New Yorker*. She's been very successful at that point in time. I haven't seen her recently, but she was very cute. And so, we had a little kind of [laughter] mutual flirtation going on. So, I had sort of planned this thing in Woodstock, and she came along. She was covering it, and—

**Justin Wilson** [0:10:53.8] We're gonna need a second hour for this as far as [laughs] the stories!

**Jim Moran** [0:10:57.2] Well, as long as—you know, as long as I have your attention I'll keep going. [Laughter] When I see you checking—

**Justin Wilson** [0:11:01.8] No! I'm enjoying this!

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:11:02.3] I am so [inaudible 0:11:02.4].

**Jim Moran** [0:11:02.6] —I see you checking your iPhone, and so I'm not—

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:11:04.5] I am so curious.

**Justin Wilson** [0:11:05.1] I'm enjoying this!

**Jim Moran** [0:11:05.4] —I'll stop. So—

**Justin Wilson** [0:11:05.5] I can stay here all night on this!

**Jim Moran** [0:11:07.3] So I drove down by myself, and she drove down by herself. But, you know, we—

**Lonnie Rich** [0:11:13.2] Drove back together.

**Jim Moran** [0:11:13.8] —we couldn't text in those days. Huh? Yeah.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:11:15.0] Drove back together.

**Jim Moran** [0:11:17.6] To what?

**Lonnie Rich** [0:11:17.9] You all drove back together.

**Jim Moran** [0:11:19.6] No we didn't! [Laughter] So—

**Lonnie Rich** [0:11:21.5] How do you expect—

**Jim Moran** [0:11:21.7] —you got to stick with the story. [Laughter] Don't—yeah, don't jump on the—so anyway—so we get down there, and they had this woodchopping contest. It was an annual event. And one of the contests was a tobacco chewing contest. So obviously I had to enter it, and it was a big deal because Woodstock really had not made it onto the map. And here they had about a dozen reporters from all over the country coming. We had—and you can see in the *Gazette Packet* and so on that by doing this—by being, you know, anyways we had garnered a fair amount of publicity. So, I participated in the tobacco chewing contest. They had this Chattanooga Chew stuff. [Laughter] And so I piled it into—you know, I was a—I thought I was a hot shit at the time. I disproved that pretty quickly, but so I stuffed my mouth with this—

**Justin Wilson** [0:12:23.0] Oh God!

**Jim Moran** [0:12:24.5] —tobacco—chewing tobacco and—

**Justin Wilson** [0:12:26.3] Had you ever chewed tobacco before, Jim?

**Jim Moran** [0:12:27.5] Never, never.

**Justin Wilson** [0:12:28.5] Oh God!

**Jim Moran** [0:12:29.0] I had never chewed tobacco in my life.

**Justin Wilson** [0:12:30.7] Oh no!

**Jim Moran** [0:12:32.3] I had consumed a lot of food—some of it edible and some not, but nevertheless, I filled my mouth up with it. And then I asked, "What do you do?" And this big burly guy says, "Well, around here, the real men, they just swallow it."

**Justin Wilson** [0:12:49.2] Oh God! [Laughs]

**Allison Silberberg** [0:12:50.0] Eww!

**Jim Moran** [0:12:50.1] So I swallowed it.

**Justin Wilson** [0:12:51.4] No, you didn't! Oh!

**Allison Silberberg** [0:12:52.4] Oh no!

**Jim Moran** [0:12:52.5] I did. And then I—

**Lonnie Rich** [0:12:53.9] The juice or the tobacco?

**Jim Moran** [0:12:55.4] The tobacco. The tobacco—well, it was a lot of juice, but a lot of tobacco itself. [Laughter] So I swallowed it, and—

**Justin Wilson** [0:13:04.7] Oh, that's horrible!

**Jim Moran** [0:13:05.6] —you know, I participated. I tried to spit, but there was some real pros. So, they—I lost the spitting contest.

**Justin Wilson** [0:13:12.3] Now you know why you didn't go back with the woman. Right? So that that's why [laughs] that's—

**Jim Moran** [0:13:15.4] No you don't know why. I actually, yeah, so you're jumping ahead here. [Laughter]

**Justin Wilson** [0:13:18.9] Sorry!

**Jim Moran** [0:13:19.8] Stick with the storyline here. This is all true. It was unfortunately it was documented. So, it was on a flatbed truck. It was a, you know, just a little higher—no. It was maybe this high, and we were up on the truck. And everybody was around. We had because of so many people in this caravan, you know, several hundreds of people. But the—then they had this stair that they—that you walked up to get on the platform. So, the contest was over, and they had TV cameras there too. And so, and I saw this girl—young woman. And, you know, they had their notepads out, and they were all looking up, "So, Mayor, what did you think? What do you think—what do you think about Woodstock"—and so on. And so, I turned to them, and I'm looking down at them. And then the tobacco came up, and I vomited all over all of them.

**Justin Wilson** [0:14:27.0] Oh no!

**Jim Moran** [0:14:27.1] I got the TV camera.

**Justin Wilson** [0:14:28.1] Oh no!

**Jim Moran** [0:14:29.3] I covered her in vomit.

**Justin Wilson** [0:14:30.7] Oh no!

**Jim Moran** [0:14:32.3] And it stunk because it was tobacco.

**Justin Wilson** [0:14:35.1] Oh no!

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:14:35.9] Oh, God!

**Jim Moran** [0:14:36.6] And I felt sick as a dog. So—

**Justin Wilson** [0:14:38.9] I'm sure you did.

**Jim Moran** [0:14:40.1] So I went back to my room, and I was—I just laid there the whole rest of the weekend. And so, we did not go back together, [laughter] and it never worked out.

**Justin Wilson** [0:14:49.7] Wonder why! [Laughter]

**Allison Silberberg** [0:14:51.5] Oh, God!

**Jim Moran** [0:14:52.1] But that was kind of a fun—obviously—

**Lonnie Rich** [0:14:53.4] Now, when did that happen—

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:14:54.1] That was very fun

**Jim Moran** [0:14:54.6] —a number of us were—

**Lonnie Rich** [0:14:55.0] —with the Reagan Plan?

**Jim Moran** [0:14:56.0] That was what?

**Lonnie Rich** [0:14:56.6] Well, how did that—how did it work with the Reagan Plan? How did that—

**Jim Moran** [0:15:01.0] I think we sufficiently—

**Lonnie Rich** [0:15:03.5] Spooked it?

**Jim Moran** [0:15:03.6] —disproved that the plan really wasn't—didn't work very well because even this caravan, which was maybe 20/30 cars, they had trouble. You know. We were backing—Duke Street is not an easy street to traverse, let alone—so we—I think we probably convinced them that they needed to, you know, go back to the drawing board. So that was the fun one. The challenging thing that comes to mind is the—

**Justin Wilson** [0:15:36.9] That's a later question, Jim. You jumped ahead in the questions.

**Jim Moran** [0:15:39.3] Oh, oh. Well then, okay. Let's go.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:15:41.3] We still haven't [inaudible 0:15:42.7].

**Jim Moran** [0:15:42.1] No. I've taken up enough time. [Inaudible 0:15:44.4], Justin.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:15:44.4] He's giving us all a story.

**Jim Moran** [0:15:45.5] Okay.

**Justin Wilson** [0:15:45.7] What was the question? I was like [inaudible 0:15:47.2]—

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:15:47.6] Fondest memory.

**Allison Silberberg** [0:15:48.1] Cherished [inaudible 0:15:48.1] memory was.

**Justin Wilson** [0:15:49.0] —fondest?

**Jim Moran** [0:15:49.1] I threw you off track here. I'm sorry.

**Justin Wilson** [0:15:51.6] Fondest memory? Oh, God. I don't want to say the same things as some of the others, but yeah. I mean certainly working with our colleagues, working with the community. It was always a lot of fun. I enjoyed the give and take. I loved the kind of—the debate on some of these things both with the community and with my colleagues. I just enjoyed that. But I think my fondest memory—and I'll talk about some other things when we get to some of these other questions that you had. But for me I think the fondest memory was being able to go to both the 75th and 80th anniversary of D-Day in Caen, our sister city. And to be there on those milestones was an experience of a lifetime to be in Caen and be there with our sister city and represent the city, but also to be there at that time. You know. Those were the—when I went the second time, the 80th anniversary was probably the last time any of the veterans will make it—will be there, will still be alive. And that was just an incredible experience and just as a—not only as an Alexandrian but as an American to be there. And I think particularly given all that is continuing to occur in our country, in our world right now, it was an incredible experience, so. And a unique opportunity that only happened because I was doing this job, so.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:17:24.1] Can you describe like the ceremony? Or the—

**Justin Wilson** [0:17:27.1] Yeah. So, in the 75th and the 80th both had the opportunity to attend both the American ceremony and the international ceremony. So, the American ceremony in the 75th was President Trump at that point. The 80th was President Biden, and then the internationals which is everyone, you know, King Charles and all the European leaders. But also, just to be there and one of the things for me personally that was particularly interesting was we had gotten back from the 75th, and my wife was talking to her dad who was still alive at that point. And he said, "Oh, you went to Normandy? My cousin is buried there in the U.S. cemetery." My father-in-law had never thought in all these years of my wife's existence—never thought to mention that she had a first—in her case a second cousin who was buried at the American cemetery at Normandy. And so, when we back for the 80th, that was number one on our list was finding that tombstone. And so, we arrived for the American ceremony. They ushered us to our seats, and we were like, "We need to do

one other thing." And they were like, "Well, you can't really—the President is about to come." We're like, "We need to do one other thing." And so, we ran to the section, and my wife was able to take a picture. It was the first family member to visit the cemetery ever. So, it was a pretty neat experience. So anyway.

**Jim Moran** [0:19:00.5] Good one.

**Justin Wilson** [0:19:01.2] Yeah, it was cool.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:19:03.9] Great! And so, I'm curious now. Maybe reflect a little bit on some of your challenges that you faced or are facing that, you know, in your roles for the city? And we don't necessarily have to go to in a circle for this. You know we can kind of—

**Justin Wilson** [0:19:17.8] Now we go back this way now.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:19:19.2] We can go back this way if you want.

**Justin Wilson** [0:19:20.0] Lonnie started.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:19:20.6] I mean I know Lonnie started but—

**Justin Wilson** [0:19:23.1] No. Lonnie—

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:19:23.7] —yeah, you also can start if you want to?

**Justin Wilson** [0:19:24.0] —you want to go—you want to go for it?

**Lonnie Rich** [0:19:25.9] Well, the hardest thing, I mean, for me every year, the hardest thing was always the budget. It's also the most important thing that we did every year. And it's hard because it was never a choice between good and bad. It was always a choice among good things that could be done by local government, and it's hard. And within that category, the hardest and one that I am happy to have had a part in changing was the decision about how to—how much we should distribute to local charities in support of their efforts. When I first got on council, it was kind of a—it was every council member would put in all their requests. They'd always, you know, \$10,000 for this and \$20,000 for that and \$40,000 for that. And the problem with it was is that we had no way of distinguishing between or among. And even if we said, "We're gonna spend a million dollars," it would be three million dollars' worth of council, you know, what do you call them when you—in Congress that you all do that?

**Allison Silberberg** [0:20:31.1] Earmark.

**Justin Wilson** [0:20:31.4] Earmarks.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:20:31.7] It's special—

**Justin Wilson** [0:20:32.2] Earmarks.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:20:32.4] Earmarks. And it was an untenable system and—

**Jim Moran** [0:20:36.1] We actually called them projects of national significance, but [laughter]—

**Lonnie Rich** [0:20:38.7] Yeah. Boondoggles [inaudible 0:20:41.1]. Right? But what we ended up doing was we decided to change it, and I worked very closely with Vola [Lawson] on this was—who was a great seat of management. And we came up with a system where the council would decide is how much were we gonna give to local charities. It was a lump sum, a million dollars or two million dollars—something like that. And then we appointed a special committee—a special committee made up of staff and members of the public—not chairs of different charities. But local people and city staff created a committee, and they would allocate the one million dollars.

**Justin Wilson** [0:21:22.7] Still exists.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:21:23.2] So and I don't think it's still good now like that.

**Justin Wilson** [0:21:25.3] It still exists. Yeah. Fund for Human Services. Yeah.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:21:26.8] But I was very proud of that because that was a good practical—cause there was—I can't distinguish between whether, you know, Scottish, you know, Campagna Center ought to get something that is opposed to the Scholarship Fund, as opposed to any—there's a thousand different charities in Alexandria that do great things. And it was just—it was—and plus it was a political problem because there would be some members on council who would vote for every one of them. [Laughter] It didn't matter—

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:21:55.0] [inaudible 0:21:55.0].

**Lonnie Rich** [0:21:55.1] —she would never make a choice—it was a "she." She would never make a choice.

**Justin Wilson** [0:21:57.7] I was gonna say—

**Lonnie Rich** [0:21:58.4] And that wasn't Allison. We weren't on the council together.

**Justin Wilson** [0:21:59.8] No, it wasn't Allison. [Laughter]

**Lonnie Rich** [0:22:00.7] But she would vote—

**Jim Moran** [0:22:01.2] We all know who it was.

**Justin Wilson** [0:22:01.9] We know who we're talking about.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:22:03.3] She would vote for everyone.

**Justin Wilson** [0:22:04.2] All of [inaudible 0:22:04.6].

**Jim Moran** [0:22:05.0] She who will remain nameless. [Laughter]

**Lonnie Rich** [0:22:06.0] And yeah. And she would also—

**Justin Wilson** [0:22:06.8] Just talked to her last week, actually.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:22:07.4]—she would also not just put in three or four. She'd put in eight or ten.

**Jim Moran** [0:22:10.2] Yeah.

**Justin Wilson** [0:22:10.2] Yeah.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:22:11.1] And the rest of us would put in two or three—

**Justin Wilson** [0:22:12.8] God love her.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:22:12.9] —and she would vote for everybody's cause she wanted everybody to think that you loved them, which is the political thing. But it's not—

**Jim Moran** [0:22:19.8] It worked for her politically.

**Justin Wilson** [0:22:21.1] Oh yes, it did.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:22:22.4] Anyway, but I was glad that—

**Jim Moran** [0:22:23.7] She keeps getting reelected.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:22:24.8] That's really funny.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:22:24.8] —I was all that—but the whole budget process is just hard cause it's hard choices. But it's what you're paying for, so.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:22:33.3] What was one of the charities that were funded?

**Lonnie Rich** [0:22:36.4] Oh, the charity was all of them, the Scholarship Fund, the Hopkins House. We gave them a special deal one year that was sort of aside from the divvying up the one main. It was like \$50,000 for a new roof that they needed. I don't remember when it was, but it was—I remember that one. But I mean it was—I mean every prominent charity in Alexandria was, you know, participating and wanted to get on the list because it was—people don't like to do fundraising. It's much easier to go to local government and say, "Give us the money."

**Justin Wilson** [0:23:08.5] Yes indeed.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:23:08.7] And let the taxpayers pay it, which isn't fair to the taxpayers cause they don't get to vote on it. Anyway, so.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:23:16.5] I would definitely plus one the budget, but I think the biggest challenge [laughs] I'm facing right now is snow. It is the snowstorm from hell, and we are eight days into it. I think it's hard because you prepare. You have all these meetings in advance. You mobilize all these resources. You think you've got a good plan, and then it comes, and it's not just snow. It's ice. It's

snowcrete, I think, is what they're calling it on Instagram. [Laughs] But it just doesn't seem like it's getting any better, even when you're working around the clock. I think it's hard because even though I like physically don't drive a plow, I think everyone thinks that it is my fault. So that's really hard, and I don't think that's not—that's like I've been called many names. I've been attacked in different ways before, but never like this into the magnitude. So, I think that's hard. I think it's the first time I've also had to see like up close the morale of our staff be so low. So, it's also hard to just like try and be a cheerleader for everybody in that. It's hard to be at home with a kindergartner doing virtual school because [laughs] virtual school doesn't work for little, little people. So, I don't know. I think this is the greatest challenge, where like I just need it to be over, and we keep going and keep going. But some reason, it just doesn't feel like it's getting any better, so.

**Jim Moran** [0:24:47.0] Normally, it would have melted, but it won't melt. And so, you've lost hundreds if not thousands of parking spaces.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:24:54.5] Yeah. It's parking.

**Jim Moran** [0:24:55.7] I know what [inaudible 0:24:56.7].

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:24:56.7] It's sidewalks. It's the plows. I mean, the plows could only put it like at the edge of the street so that they could go back. But then when they leave it there, that's become hardened. And now you need a special type of equipment to—

**Lonnie Rich** [0:25:07.1] And you can't see around it. It's a driving hazard.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:25:08.3] You can't see around it. You got to break through that, and then where do you put it? We can't put it anywhere because we flood. And if it ever starts to melt, it can't be in certain places. It can't just—

**Lonnie Rich** [0:25:18.7] So you put it in the school at Minnie Howard, and they're like [inaudible 0:25:22.1] because then there's no parking.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:25:23.7] Oh, now it's even [inaudible 0:25:25.0] we are—

**Justin Wilson** [0:25:24.9] Put it on our park. They called us—put it on my park.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:25:27.2] Yeah, we—

**Justin Wilson** [0:25:27.2] It's on Cameron Run.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:25:28.3] We had to call—

**Justin Wilson** [0:25:29.3] It's in my parking lot.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:25:30.4] There is no site that cannot be tapped—

**Justin Wilson** [0:25:31.8] And we told them, "Yes."

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:25:32.5] —that we are not putting that snow. And it just—I don't know. We've just been working 24 hours since Saturday, and it's still—

**Justin Wilson** [0:25:39.6] I warned you.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:25:40.5] —there's still so much now.

**Justin Wilson** [0:25:41.4] I said it's the worst time. [Laughs] I told her. I said, "It's literally the worst time to be Mayor."

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:25:45.8] Yes.

**Justin Wilson** [0:25:46.3] This is the worst.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:25:47.3] Yeah.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:25:48.1] What was it like for you to receive personal attacks? Like, how do you deal with that, like in this moment?

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:25:56.4] So I would say, like day one or two, I tried to just like find a different way around it. And that's when I started the videos online. I was like, "Well, I'm gonna do everything I can in my power. So, you can keep blaming me, but I'm gonna keep communicating with you like how we're trying." And I could be like really, really positive. I think then I realized that when you put out the videos, that means people also comment. And there's a lot of people commenting about problems. So, I need to check the comments. But when you get in there, and it becomes like the name-calling and stuff like that, I realize I have to figure out a different way of like motivating myself through it. That's been hard, and I think prayer has been helpful. Turning off the comments and like asking somebody else—well, not turn—I can't turn them off legally, but like asking my husband or somebody else to read them and just summarize for me. [Laughs] Like, where is the actual problem, so I can get that to staff has been helpful. And then, honestly, turning to other mayors. Like it happened to be the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and I went for like one meeting. And as I was there, there was a mayor from Pennsylvania, another one from Michigan. And they were like, "Being a mayor when it snows sucks, and you're gonna get an F- job, and you will be okay, and like suck it up." [Laughs] So I think that was also helpful.

**Jim Moran** [0:27:11.9] Did you tell them not to plow your street?

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:27:14.6] Not to plow my street?

**Jim Moran** [0:27:16.3] Yeah. I used to tell them, "Don't plow West [inaudible 0:27:18.3] Terrace," Lonnie, where Lonnie eventually lived at the end. [Laughter] Because they all accuse you of having your street plowed first.

**Justin Wilson** [0:27:26.3] Don't worry. They still don't [inaudible 0:27:27.2]. [Laughs]

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:27:27.5] So I'm gonna—I'm in an HOA community.

**Justin Wilson** [0:27:30.7] Oh, okay.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:27:30.9] So it's not even—not even the city.

**Jim Moran** [0:27:31.9] So you don't have control over that. Okay.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:27:33.2] No. But they didn't come. [Laughs] Like so there were—I had to turn off the neighborhood feed because they're—

**Justin Wilson** [0:27:39.7] My neighbor walked down my street on holiday a couple of days ago, and he's like, "Yep. Looks like you're not mayor anymore." [Laughs] I was like—it's like "Thanks, thanks!"

**Jim Moran** [0:27:49.9] Damn it! [Laughter]

**Justin Wilson** [0:27:50.6] Yeah. [Laughter]

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:27:51.1] Geez.

**Justin Wilson** [0:27:51.8] That's like just for the record, they [inaudible 0:27:53.1] any special treatment. No special—

**Jim Moran** [0:27:55.6] That street [inaudible 0:27:56.0] all of it goes to Russell is steep.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:27:56.1] But, I mean I don't think anybody knows, like what we deal with in these moments. I mean, going to Lonnie's point, I got a call today about like the cost of these ice things—the Bobcats and stuff are super expensive. And a question became like do we stop? And I was like, "I don't think you can stop"—

**Justin Wilson** [0:28:14.3] No, you can't.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:28:14.5] —"cause people still can't get out."

**Justin Wilson** [0:28:15.5] You can't.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:28:15.5] And they're like, then you're gonna have to like the budget—we're gonna have to cut all that. And so, and this is the first snowstorm of the year. So, [laughs]—

**Justin Wilson** [0:28:22.6] Yeah, could be more.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:28:23.5] —I think I mean it's just—it's just part of the job, but I think it's definitely been hard. And then I also think too it's not something the full council has to feel. We talked about colleagues. I'm getting their questions and their reports of snow issues.

**Justin Wilson** [0:28:37.9] That's right.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:28:38.3] And so it's really—it is—I think it's my first challenge where you're the one person who has to answer everything.

**Justin Wilson** [0:28:44.6] That's right.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:28:44.7] But we'll get through. I will still keep having fun. [Laughs]

**Lonnie Rich** [0:28:47.1] Could all delegate to the vice mayor all those issues—all those issues.

**Jim Moran** [0:28:53.4] She rides her bicycle, so it's—

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:28:55.3] Yes! You look for your [inaudible 0:28:57.5]. [Laughter]

**Jim Moran** [0:28:57.5] —an issue for her.

**Justin Wilson** [0:28:57.7] It doesn't work—doesn't work that way.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:28:59.2] Yes, yes. It's a—

**Justin Wilson** [0:29:00.5] They assume the mayor is in charge.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:29:01.9] It's still a mayor. Yes.

**Justin Wilson** [0:29:03.6] Spoken like a non-mayor right there. [Laughter]

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:29:06.6] Yeah.

**Justin Wilson** [0:29:06.6] I was gonna say that's [laughter]—

**Jim Moran** [0:29:09.0] It wasn't a helpful suggestion. [Laughter]

**Allison Silberberg** [0:29:12.8] But you meant well. It's good.

**Justin Wilson** [0:29:15.4] Go sit —and the end of the day. I said—

**Allison Silberberg** [0:29:16.5] It's a good—

**Justin Wilson** [0:29:17.8] —we'll let you know when the real work is done. [Laughter]

**Allison Silberberg** [0:29:21.1] Gosh. Well, yeah. I spent almost an hour late this afternoon trying to still clear up a safer path on my stoop. So, it's really—it is challenging on an individual basis as well as the city level, I would say.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:29:41.3] Yep.

**Allison Silberberg** [0:29:42.1] So the most challenging moment of my term was the unthinkable tragic shooting on the baseball field in Del Ray at Simpson Field—Simpson Park in July of 2017. An early morning about 7 a.m. out of nowhere someone who didn't really, you know, wasn't really part of our city for more than a few weeks came out with a rifle of some kind and started shooting up

where all these members of Congress and their aides and some lobbyists and some of the children of those members of Congress were also on that field on a bright sunny morning. And I'm incredibly proud of not only the Capitol Police who were there because of Steve Scalise and his role on Capitol Hill, but also three of our Alexandria Police Department officers arrived on the scene within just a couple of minutes at most. And between the five of them, they killed the shooter, and before the all clear, the EMTs, including Michael Cord and others, went running onto the field to save lives like Steve Scalise and others. And the mutual aid with all the jurisdictions involved, and everyone just performed really beautifully. And we were calm, and the police chief, Mike Brown, did an excellent job, as well as our sheriff, Dana Lawhorne. Everyone just stepped up. The communications team, led by Renee Gordon, and it just every—the public safety apparatus, if you will, of the city just worked beautifully. And we worked well hand in glove with the federal authorities—the FBI, etc. And my role as mayor was really to try to keep things calm and to reassure residents. I went door to door with the police chief, the fire chief, the sheriff as we went for over an hour door to door to check on people who were in that neighborhood. And also, to communicate online, as well as in writing, in the column, and social media, whatever. But to say emphatically that this shooting does not define us as a city. And the Clergy Council, which I had established, ended up being incredibly crucial in that moment.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:32:41.3] Can you say what the Clergy Council is?

**Allison Silberberg** [0:32:44.8] So early, like as I took office as mayor in January 2016, I had reached out to all the different houses of worship and their clergy. And I asked that they send one or maybe two representatives to meet with me and sit in a circle, and that I would listen. And we would discuss the issues that they felt were facing their congregants, and that they felt issues facing the city as well. And the idea came from a meeting at New Mayor School at Harvard, which I think you're doing. The idea came from the mayor of Boston, Marty Walsh, that they had a clergy council. And the idea was that we could come together as a community but not knowing that there might be an unthinkable moment. But in the event that there was, we would come together. But even if there wasn't, one house of worship would know about jobs or housing, and one house of worship would know some parishioners that needed housing or a job. Or that together I would say, "Let's all go plant trees in the Spring and the Fall." And they would urge from their pulpits, "Please go plant trees." You know. Tree canopy was one of my priorities as mayor, and we increased our tree canopy a great deal during my term. So, and I'm really proud of that, but back to the Clergy Council. So as soon as the shooting occurred, I was starting to get texts and not really calls but a couple of messages. But mainly texts saying, "We're praying for our city. We're praying for those who were injured," as I was in my own heart actually. And I knew through various contacts that at least one or if not two were so seriously injured. So, my heart was going out to all those who were injured physically, but also emotionally—traumatized, as well as in our community those who were traumatized by this unthinkable event. And then, you know, thanking the officers who were there and those who weren't there. I mean there was trauma for all of them. So, a number of members of Congress were in tears with me. They were, you know, reaching out, and it was unbelievable. But how the community came together, I'm so proud that we that night, you know, walking down Mount Vernon Avenue as a community, going—having the Clergy Council set up these candlelight vigils that night on their lawns. And so, anybody could come and receive, you know, some comfort and solace. Because it really, you know, our city doesn't have—thank God—that kind of violence. We certainly have our share of incidents, but not, you know—when I left office, at least, I'm proud of how we have, you know, hit a historic low on crime. But that incident, that tragedy, that shooting

just—anyway, the Clergy Council getting a text from various pastors and rabbis and, you know, people from all religions saying, you know, "We're keeping you and the whole city, and especially those who got injured in our hearts and prayers. We're all literally praying." I mean you could feel the power of prayer, almost. So, I really think that our city rose to the challenge, and actually on day one of my term—I just want to mention this—there was—I had suggested—let me back that up. I had requested that we have a table—tabletop exercise, and this also came out of that meeting with Mayor Walsh at Harvard in the New Mayor School, that they had done this. And they had recommended this for all mayors. And so, on day one at least for me—day two like every public safety leader, every department head leader, senior staff, we all sat in the work room, and we went right around the room and said—just say, and I, you know, led the meeting. I just said, "Say what you do—say who you are and what you do, and something has happened, and what's your role? Go!" And it's just like boom, boom, boom, boom, boom! And like 20 seconds each, basically, it was very fast and furious. It ended up, and I was advised, frankly, [laughs] by the city manager, "Do not do this and waste our time." But it ended up that two people who were critical didn't know each other. Most people didn't know them. They were new, and people didn't have their cell phone numbers in their systems. And they didn't know the role. And so, in these kind of situations minutes matter, but also seconds matter. People's lives are at stake. And so, and one of those people was Renee Gordon, the head of communications for emergency—emergency communications, and she was fairly new. And so, a lot of people hadn't totally physically seen her, and they definitely didn't have her cell phone number. So, it—but it—she wasn't the only one. There was another person—there were a couple of holes that just can happen when you have such a complex city. Right? So, but the city officials, the department heads, everyone just reacted really well and beautifully, and I'm extremely proud of that. And I'm especially proud of how the residents responded with resilience.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:38:50.6] That's good.

**Jim Moran** [0:38:54.6] Well, I think my most challenging issue sort of were in the area of housing. Initially, it was large condominiums that they had exhausted their 40-year depreciation. And so, the owners weren't making money because they could no longer write off depreciation against their revenue. And so, it was costing them money. And so, they wanted to convert to condominium—they weren't condominiums. These were multifamily apartments. And so, I was vice mayor, and we ultimately came up with a strategy where we would replace all of the affordable housing that we—that was taken over by condominiums. I know that was an ongoing issue for all of you, but the far more challenging part of housing was the racial part of it. It was public housing. And I felt along with a guy by the name of Angus Olson. He looked like Santa Claus, but he—I bought into his vision that the public housing wasn't working. It was providing shelter, but you had multigenerational families where, you know, you'd have the great-grandmother in one house, and the great-granddaughter in another. And there were a few dozen families really that kind of controlled the Housing Authority and what happened within that public housing complex. The kids weren't achieving success. They weren't expected to, and they didn't. And when you saw the school, you know, the reports from the school, our public school system wasn't working. And part of it was because they didn't have parents that had been successful educationally or in terms of employment. And the vast majority were single parents, and there were a number of sociological problems. And so, I thought, you know, our job extends beyond providing shelter. There needs—assisted housing needs to be a pathway toward economic mobility and ultimately self-sufficiency, and we're selling particularly kids short. And so, we got to do something about it. And so, I wanted the—us to start selling some of it by the waterfront. We would get—we'd get good prices for that housing but use

that money solely for buying scattered-site housing, whether it be on new developments like Quaker Lane or along Braddock Road. We don't know where they are now because they're hidden, and they were frankly—it worked.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:42:11.3] It worked.

**Jim Moran** [0:42:11.9] It worked.

**Justin Wilson** [0:42:12.0] It's exactly right. Yeah.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:42:12.8] Absolutely.

**Jim Moran** [0:42:13.3] Put a lot in Shirley Park and so on when we took down the—changed the Shirley Park, but I was vice mayor, and Chuck was adamantly opposed to it. And we had a—Angus put me up to—he said, "You know you're the only guy that's gonna be able to change Chuck, and Chuck will not let us do that." And so, at port—

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:42:34.7] This that—

**Jim Moran** [0:42:35.1] Huh?

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:42:35.8] Could you say who Angus is [inaudible 0:42:37.2]?

**Jim Moran** [0:42:37.9] Angus Olson was the public housing—the Director of the Housing Authority.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:42:44.4] Now say Chuck who—

**Jim Moran** [0:42:46.1] Chuck was Chuck Beatley, the mayor who had been mayor for a long time—for decades.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:42:51.1] Five terms. Yeah.

**Jim Moran** [0:42:51.9] Five terms. Yeah. And so, we met at Portner's Restaurant on Saint Asaph Street, and we had a conversation that I will—I'll never be able to forget. And it did kind of change the course of my life, and it resulted in—I was either gonna go, or he was gonna go. And he actually stated that. It was gonna be he or me—or if that's the—that's not the proper but "him." But it shock—

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:43:25.2] What year was that, Jim?

**Jim Moran** [0:43:26.7] This was—it was the year before—

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:43:31.8] 1984?

**Jim Moran** [0:43:32.8] —I ran—

**Allison Silberberg** [0:43:33.5] 1984?

**Jim Moran** [0:43:34.1] — for mayor as an Independent.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:43:36.0] It was 1984, right?

**Jim Moran** [0:43:37.0] So it was 1984. It was 1984.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:43:39.1] Okay.

**Jim Moran** [0:43:40.0] And you're probably gonna want to delete this, but I'll tell you candidly exactly what happened because I can't forget a word of it. Chuck was old school, and he believed that if you break up public housing, the Democrats will never be in the majority in Alexandria again. Because on election day, Joe [inaudible 0:44:06.8]—do you remember Joe [inaudible 0:44:08.1]? I think Lonnie—Joe and Pauline [inaudible 0:44:11.6]—well, they were kind of—they were one of the principles of the Democratic Party at the time. They were very close to Nelson Greene who was—I was very close to. And Joe had a convertible, and he had a megaphone. And he would drive up and down streets in public housing and tell people who to vote for. He said and Chuck said, "You know, if you get rid of that, we cannot win in Alexandria. You're giving it over to the people in Old Town, the people in the"—and you know he talked about Seminary Road. It's called something different than the [inaudible 0:44:45.6], so and forth—so forth. "And you don't know what you're doing. You're naive about this. And furthermore, if you put them into middle-class neighborhoods, they're gonna start voting Republican. And that's the end of the Democratic Party. You have no idea how this thing works" and so and so forth. So, we actually got into a screaming match, and that's when things turned. And ultimately, I had to—I had to run for mayor against Chuck in 1985 as an Independent, and I had to put together, you know, my own support. And unbelievably, I won, but that was the most challenging part. It was over housing and over, you know, what as Democrats what is our objective? How do we—are we doing what's right for constituency groups? I ran on the same thing, and with regard to [inaudible 0:45:50.8] because of the teachers—well, anyway. I won't get into it. But you know, and I think that's one of the inherent problems within, frankly, the Democratic constituency. But and that's—it shaped me for a long time. [Laughs] It's a critical juncture in my political career, such as it turned out to be.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:46:17.5] How did it shape you? I got to—

**Jim Moran** [0:46:19.6] How did it shape me?

**Francesco De Salvatore** [0:46:20.0] Yeah. How did it shape you?

**Jim Moran** [0:46:23.4] I had to grow up, and I realized that there was something that I cared about in terms of policy. I couldn't just smile and be friendly to everybody and assume that everybody was going to like me and support me. And I, you know, I could have kind of a free path to continuing in a political career. If I was gonna continue in a political career, it was gonna be real difficult. And I found out who was with me and who was against me. And I mean it's still unbelievable to me that we could have beaten, you know, a five decade as whatever—a five-term incumbent who was a really good guy. I almost worshipped Chuck Beatley because he had been the Democratic—he had a farm, and he'd bring us all out to the farm. And he had done so much for the city, but he was still an

old-style Democrat—Franklin Roosevelt. You know. And didn't really believe that some people within the city had the capability of much greater potential than they had the opportunity and the—and the, you know, the environment in which to fulfill that potential. So, it was a paradigm shift and [laughs] I don't know that I slept for the—since that evening, you know, for over a year until we won the mayoral race. Just I was more shocked than anybody that it happened. [Inaudible 0:48:21.0] so—

**Justin Wilson** [0:48:21.2] And you could argue—I mean, you could argue that you can—if you look back at the last 40 or 50 years of Alexandria history, the defining controversies have been around housing.

**Jim Moran** [0:48:31.5] Yeah.

**Justin Wilson** [0:48:31.7] I mean that has been—and to this day, I mean, it continues to be a dominating issue that divides the Democratic Party specifically.

**Jim Moran** [0:48:40.7] Exactly right.

**Justin Wilson** [0:48:41.2] And it still—

**Lonnie Rich** [0:48:41.7] Yep.

**Justin Wilson** [0:48:42.1] —it still continues to this day—

**Jim Moran** [0:48:43.1] Yeah.

**Justin Wilson** [0:48:43.5] —because don't—

**Jim Moran** [0:48:43.8] And there's a whole lot of Democrats who are great on everything unless it's about their neighborhood.

**Justin Wilson** [0:48:50.8] Yeah, it's interesting.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:48:51.0] Or their backyard.

**Justin Wilson** [0:48:52.2] It's a fascinating—

**Jim Moran** [0:48:52.5] Their backyard.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:48:53.1] Their next-door neighbors—

**Jim Moran** [0:48:53.9] Yeah.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:48:54.1] —literally.

**Justin Wilson** [0:48:54.1] It's a—I would note and I just posted on this on social media a couple of days ago. Harvard just did a study looking at all the Hope VI redevelopments that occurred,

including the ones you guys did here during both of your tenures. And noting that kids who live in Hope VI developments do way better—

**Jim Moran** [0:49:17.8] Way better.

**Justin Wilson** [0:49:18.2] —academically, than kids not, and interestingly, the adults don't. No difference in economic achievement or economic attainment for the adults, but the kids do way better.

**Jim Moran** [0:49:31.1] That's fascinating.

**Justin Wilson** [0:49:31.4] Which is fascinating and an interesting study. But anyway, this just came out like—

**Jim Moran** [0:49:33.6] Well, the only way to achieve economic self-sufficiency is by owning a home. And that has got to be the ultimate objective. Because you can borrow against it, and it gives you a different sense of who you are in the world. And we looked—I was close to the Kennedys, and this was one of the things that Joe Kennedy—talk about a lot.—they and particularly his son, Joe. In Massachusetts, which is one of the most progressive states, I think we would agree, the average household wealth is over \$270,000—the average—everybody included. You know what the average household wealth is of African American families in Massachusetts? Minus \$800. You know. They owe on credit cards, and of course, they pay monthly payments. Which means they pay multiple times with the whatever they purchase on the credit card, and it's all—it's all about housing. What neighborhoods you live in? What are the experiences of your children? Who are their role models? Do they have somebody in their life who can read to them? That the one most differentiating factor—the correlation between kids who make it out of poverty and those who don't—and it's—unfortunately, it's hardly small a statistic. But the one corollary that was consistent throughout—those who made it out had somebody in their first five years of life who would read to them while they sat on their lap. And that sitting on their lap is an important factor. Somebody that nurtured them while they're being read to. That was the one most differentiating character. And too often not only do too many children have parents who really don't read—who because they haven't had the opportunity of getting through high school, let alone post high school, but they don't have the time. There's too many kids.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:52:04.6] They don't have any books.

**Jim Moran** [0:52:06.5] They're working two jobs, and without that, the cycle of poverty just keeps perpetuating. And it all comes down to who do you want in your neighborhood? And if you decide who you want in your neighborhood, going beyond the cliches, are you willing to afford enabling them? Are you willing to enable them to live in your neighborhood? Are you willing to subsidize housing? Are you willing to build housing in, you know, neighborhoods that have one acre each and so on? Are you willing to provide affordable housing, so you have an inclusive, diverse—economically diverse [inaudible 0:52:47.1]? And that is the—and it's as you say, Justin, that's, you know, that's the critical thing. And the far—the most difficult challenge from a public policy standpoint.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:52:57.5] We have—we were just talking about this in Richmond. But we have—our population is now 57 percent renters. Of that 40—

**Jim Moran** [0:53:05.4] Is it?

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:53:05.8] It's 57 percent of the city rents their home.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:53:09.2] Really?

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:53:09.9] Of that 57 percent, 40 percent of them pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing. And of that something like 20 percent are one like car accident or emergency away—

**Justin Wilson** [0:53:21.6] That's right.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:53:21.7] —from being evicted.

**Justin Wilson** [0:53:23.2] That's right.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:53:23.8] Our shelt—

**Jim Moran** [0:53:24.0] Or a health emergency.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:53:24.8] Yeah. A health emergency. All of our shelters are at capacity and have waiting lists of over 100 or 200 people.

**Jim Moran** [0:53:33.4] Wow!

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:53:34.1] We are—like the of those who own their home, something like 30 percent are paying more than 50 percent of their income—

**Jim Moran** [0:53:43.0] Wow!

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:53:43.6] —on that mortgage or what they're paying. It's like it's really hard in terms of housing and the challenges we're facing. But on top of that, when you were talking about kids, every year we do that—well, every few years we do the Developmental Assets Study. One of the lowest numbers—it's now in the teens—is "Do you believe somebody in this community cares about you?" It's like—last year it was—the last time we did it was like 16 percent.

**Jim Moran** [0:54:08.5] 16 percent felt that—

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:54:10.2] Of our young people. I have to get you the exact years. It's middle and high school, they do. I can't remember which years. But we have a lot of kids who—it's not the same where you have the same mentorship programs, same activities, all of the where, you know, your teacher lives in your community. All of these things. You've got parents who are working multiple jobs. You've got kids who are having to raise their family and work multiple jobs to be able

to help Mom and Dad. It's this—a lot of issues get compounded when you're dealing with economic insecurity and uncertainty.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:54:42.2] What's the statistic? It's 16 percent believe—

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:54:45.4] If the question is like, "Do you believe that there's a caring adult or someone in the community that cares for you?"

**Lonnie Rich** [0:54:50.9] Including your own family?

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:54:52.2] I can look at the data. I just know it says that, but I assume it's probably your own family. It just says, "caring adult," so.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:54:57.7] And so 16 percent said, "Yes?"

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:54:59.7] Mm-hmm.

**Lonnie Rich** [0:55:00.9] That is astonishing.

**Jim Moran** [0:55:02.2] It's shocking.

**Justin Wilson** [0:55:03.3] So most—

**Jim Moran** [0:55:03.7] All of these statistics are shocking, Alyia, but the fact that you know them—

**Justin Wilson** [0:55:07.1] That's right.

**Jim Moran** [0:55:07.1] —means it's a priority for you to address them.

**Justin Wilson** [0:55:09.8] That's right. That's right.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:55:09.8] I try. I just—

**Justin Wilson** [0:55:10.8] Yeah. Why don't you solve this? Come on. Come on.

**Jim Moran** [0:55:12.3] Yeah—

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:55:12.7] I thought you were starting!

**Justin Wilson** [0:55:13.0] Get on it!

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:55:13.6] I want to have it!

**Jim Moran** [0:55:13.6] It's on you!

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:55:14.1] What happened?

**Justin Wilson** [0:55:14.5] Get on it!

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:55:14.6] What happened? Let's hear it?

**Allison Silberberg** [0:55:15.6] You've been here for a year.

**Justin Wilson** [0:55:15.9] We can all sit back and talk about it.

**Allison Silberberg** [0:55:17.4] You've been here for a year.

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:55:18.1] I [inaudible 0:55:18.4].

**Justin Wilson** [0:55:18.4] Yeah. What's going on?

**Jim Moran** [0:55:19.8] Let us know when you've worked it out. [Laughter]

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:55:20.5] I think you all guess—guess your greatest challenge. Can we do—

**Justin Wilson** [0:55:24.0] Greatest challenge!

**Alyia Gaskins** [0:55:25.5] Still think [inaudible 0:55:26.3]?

**Justin Wilson** [0:55:26.5] My greatest challenge. It's my turn now? All right. I'll give you—I'll give you one that obviously went on for a long period of time, and one that was a more momentary time. You know, when I came into office, I thought my greatest challenge was gonna be, you know, we had spent the whole year talking about this Metro shutdown. Metro was gonna be shut down—our Metro station shutdown for the entire summer of 2019. This was gonna be this huge crisis for the city, and, you know, we spent the staff, community, everyone, business community, everyone spent the year getting ready. And it wasn't the end of the world. We were okay. And I was like, "Great! We made it through this." And then March 2020 hit, and the pandemic showed up. And, you know, that was clearly the most challenging time of my tenure, and it was something that really continued until—till the end of my tenure in some ways. We were still dealing with it up until December of 2024 in different ways. And, you know, it's one of these things where, you know, I kind of think back now to the, you know, the beginning and just kind of how we were all—and we were all—you all—I mean, everyone was collectively experiencing this as a country, as a people. But, you know, for me it was an opportunity to understand our community in a way that I don't think I ever quite appreciated—positive and negative. You know. I saw some of the best of our community in that period. I also saw some of the worst. And, you know, it's interesting. I sent Alyia the other day because I was telling her how bad snow is, [laughter] and I—in my exit interview in the *Alexandria Times* when I left office, I talked about the pandemic. And I said, you know, I said, "When it snows, and you're mayor, it's horrible. And, you know, day one is fine. Everyone enjoys it. Day two, it's pretty snow. Everyone is out looking at it. Day three, all hell breaks loose!" And the pandemic was like day three of a snowstorm for a year and a half, you know, where everyone just wanted to get back to normal, and wanted the government to do everything that the government could possibly do to fix it and get us back to normal as quickly as we can. And then on the government side, we had a limited scarce resources before—obviously before vaccinations, but even once vaccinations came out, it was a limited thing. And again, drawing the parallel with the snow, you know, you've

got the—you got the law partner who lives on a cul-de-sac off of, you know, five residential streets, who's convinced that his street is the number one priority and should be plowed before everyone else. And the same was true during the pandemic. You had the white-collar worker who has been working from home for a year, who was convinced they should get their vaccine before anybody else, including the frontline workers who were helping us get through this. And it was just kind of fascinating to watch human nature, but you also saw incredibly amazing things in our community. You know. People who just, you know, without being asked, kind of came together and found ways to help people in the community, found ways to be a part of it. What was fascinating to me was the way I think the community better understood where they lived. You know. And the story I always told about this was I live in 22305, and our zip code—22305—which is a substantial portion of Del Ray, a little bit of North Ridge, and then Arlandria, was for most of the pandemic, was among the top 10 in the Commonwealth of Virginia for deaths and vaccinations—sorry deaths and hospitalizations from COVID. And I used to get these calls from folks in Del Ray or emails, and they'd be like, "I don't understand this. I keep, you know, I'm staying home. I'm doing everything that everyone tells me to do, but I keep looking on these lists, and 22305 is up at the top. What are you doing wrong? What's wrong? Like, I don't understand this?" And I would explain to them, I'm like, "Well, yes. You have a white-collar job, and you are able to stay at home and work from home. But you look"—

**Lonnie Rich** [0:59:53.7] Lives in Beverley Hills.

**Justin Wilson** [0:59:55.0] —"you live in Beverley Hills, or you live in Del Ray, but a good chunk of the 22305 zip code are Arlandria.

**Jim Moran** [1:00:01.6] Arlandria.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:00:02.4] It's Arlandria.

**Justin Wilson** [1:00:02.7] You are multigenerational families. You have folks who are working in frontline positions that cannot be done—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:00:12.7] From home.

**Justin Wilson** [1:00:13.2] —virtually from home. And when they're getting infected, they're coming home to, you know, three generations in a home and infecting the entire home. And also, by the way, you know, from, you know, the comorbidities with COVID or associated with a lot of those health risks that are present in those communities. And I would get these kind of "aha" moments with folks. Where they'd be like, "Oh my gosh? I didn't quite understand that. I didn't quite get that." And—

**Jim Moran** [1:00:42.9] Good for you.

**Justin Wilson** [1:00:43.6] —so it was a really interesting moment in that way. And even at the beginning I, you know, I remember a certain civic activist that all of us know sending me emails and say, "I don't understand why we're reacting the way we are reacting. This is just—this is just old people. This is just old people." And I remember the email, and he said, "Isn't it true that everyone who's been hospitalized or injured or, you know, not, you know, because of this just older people?"

We need to stop and then get everything back to normal." And so, it was just—it was always fascinating, kind of how people processed, and certainly the vaccination effort was a very, you know, immensely proud of the work that all of our folks did: the Health Department, and partnership with the hospital, and all of our first responders throughout that moment. The staff was endlessly creative, but it also and, you know, you were talking about your videos, Alyia, you know—it was also a way we pioneered a lot of different ways to communicate with the public. You know. I started doing the Facebook Lives weekly at the beginning of the pandemic and continued those. You know. Every week, especially in the Spring and Summer of 2020, you know, I was having two or three hundred people that would join every single week the same time, and they were just asking questions. And we were just kind of providing updates, and it was just a—it was a wonderful experience, and it was cathartic for me. I'll be honest with you as someone who was trying to lead during that period. The other—the singular experience I would say, is one of the most difficult times, was one day, and it was January 6. And, you know, just from a kind of as a mayor having the obligation to make decisions that I had never thought probably any of us have had to make or would have to make. You know. I was, you know, my day job is at Amtrak, and I was actually—we were—just opened Moynihan Station in New York—the new train station. So, I was up there for the day helping open the station. In the afternoon, I jumped on a train and started heading home, and my boss texts me, and he's like, "You see what's going on in D.C.?" And I kind of looked, and I was like, "Oh yeah. Looks like some, you know, protests, whatever." I wasn't really paying attention, and I said, "Hey, I'm on the train heading back to Alexandria now." And he's like, you know, "I don't think you should take the train into D.C." I said, "What do you mean?" I was like—I looked again, and I was like, "Oh, looks like some stuff going on." And he's like, "I think you should get off the train." And so, I call my wife"—

**Jim Moran** [1:03:26.8] So your boss that's?

**Justin Wilson** [1:03:27.9] Yeah. It was my boss, and so I called the other boss, my wife, [laughter] and I said, "Hey, can you—my boss is telling me I should not take the train into D.C. going right next to the Capitol, Union Station, saying like things are too crazy there." I said, "Can you come pick me up at New Carrollton?" And so, my wife drives around the Beltway. I get off at New Carrollton. And by the time she picks me up, I'm on the phone now with the Governor's Council. And we were discussing—cause everyone's concern was that I guess we had determined that a bunch of our hotel rooms were filled with people who were protestors in D.C. And so, we were getting constant emails all throughout the day from residents and from business owners who were concerned that as that broke up, everyone was gonna come back here, and this was gonna be a big problem. And so, we got on the phone with the governor's chief of staff, governor's counsel, and I was on the phone with my counterpart in Arlington and trying to navigate what we do. And finally in consultation with my counterpart in Arlington, we decided that we were gonna ask the governor to issue a curfew and shut down the city. And, you know, we have a lot of debate about whether this was a good idea, and this was all happening while I'm on this train and while I'm in the car [laughs] with my wife picking me up from New Carrollton and driving me back. And we're all debating kind of whether we do this, and this was a good idea. And so finally I get home. We had decided—the governor was issuing the order now to close down the—to basically for Alexandria and Arlington to essentially institute a curfew effective 6 p.m. I ended up getting on an executive session meeting of the Arlington County Board to talk about how they were gonna basically adopt the same resolution we were doing. It was just an extraordinary, extraordinary moment, but one that just kind of I think back at, and it was kind of surreal till it all happened. And then as 6 o'clock rolls

around, we had run out real quickly and grabbed a pizza at 5:45 [laughs] right before the curfew had gone into effect. Cause I didn't want to violate the curfew I had just asked the governor to issue. [Laughter] And so my wife and I were sitting there in our living room, and just like—and she of course had been driving me home. So, she had been listening to all this happen, of course, on the many phone calls and all this. And it was a surreal evening. So, and luckily uneventful in Alexandria.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:06:03.3] I want to pick up on something that Jim said a minute ago about one of his proudest moments was related to the protection of gays in the city. And I have to say that in my whole nine years, and you were successful with yours. I was not successful with mine, but it was still my proudest moment. And that was when I proposed same-sex marriage, but we included that in the city legislative request. And I lost it on a 4-3 vote.

**Jim Moran** [1:06:38.1] Really?

**Lonnie Rich** [1:06:38.8] And—yep. And it was the boys against me and the girls.

**Jim Moran** [1:06:43.0] Is that right?

**Lonnie Rich** [1:06:43.5] Anyway—yeah. So, it was Kerry [Donley], David [Speck], Bill Euille, and Bill Cleveland against—

**Jim Moran** [1:06:50.0] Against same-sex marriage being—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:06:52.4] Being put into our now—

**Jim Moran** [1:06:53.6] Yeah.

**Justin Wilson** [1:06:53.9] Our package, yes?

**Lonnie Rich** [1:06:54.3] —now I don't begrudge them their vote. Their vote was not a bad vote, and it really had nothing to do with same-sex marriage. What it had to do with the legislative package.

**Jim Moran** [1:07:03.8] Oh.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:07:03.8] If we had put that in our package—

**Jim Moran** [1:07:04.8] Oh, I see what you're saying.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:07:05.4] —their concern was we had other things in the package that were important—

**Jim Moran** [1:07:08.4] Right.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:07:08.5] —to the city. And they were afraid that we're—

**Jim Moran** [1:07:10.1] Gotcha.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:07:10.9] —gonna use this to get—we were gonna be called the "People's Republic" again and not get anything. That was a legitimate argument, but I was proud that I had at least put the issue on the table. I think and I've done the research, and I can't find anything. I think it was the first actual legislative proposal for same-sex marriage in the country.

**Justin Wilson** [1:07:31.5] What year was that?

**Lonnie Rich** [1:07:33.3] 1996.

**Justin Wilson** [1:07:35.1] Wow, wow.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:07:35.5] Cause I did—I wanted to do it right before an election because I didn't want to do—I didn't want to do it—have it be done something after an election when it would be three years before somebody would have to vote on it. I wanted to do it right before the elections in October, before the May election. And cause I wanted to—if people wanted to—if I—they want to vote me out, that's fine. But I wanted to get that—I wanted to have the debate. Well, and there was a lot of concern about how the debate was gonna go. But part of what made me proud was that there were a lot of people who came down to the City Council for that public hearing, and I would say probably—it was probably 50/50 for and against. And it was—and the thing is, is that it was a civil debate. There were concerns raised about it. There were religious concerns. There were moral concerns. There were tradition concerns. There was, you know, all in—there were just people opposed to it. But it just—it was kind of a shocking thing for a lot of people. And it would have been to me two years before. And but it was just—it ended up being a very civil debate. And the thing that I took away from it was that we can bring controversial items before us, and the sky is not gonna fall. We can have the discussion. We can have the debate, and then we decide. And it was—it was not—it was just—it was good.

**Justin Wilson** [1:09:03.6] Well, can I just say, cause I want to tie it together with something Alyia said earlier and something you're saying, Lonnie. You know. I know it's one of your later questions, but I'm gonna tee it up now. One of the things that I think has changed even in, you know, I was in elected office 14 years, but it was three years in between. So, it's like two decades I've been involved in this business here, and it seems like the civility has waned. And our ability to have kind of a passionate, informed debate about issues has gotten so much harder. And it's—and there is more of the insult stuff. And it, you know, I—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:09:49.6] I think the 1996—I think it was before cell phones.

**Justin Wilson** [1:09:53.6] Yes.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:09:54.0] And before there was a lot of Internet. It was—

**Justin Wilson** [1:09:56.5] Yeah.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:09:56.8] —beginning. I think I had one of the first Facebook—

**Justin Wilson** [1:09:58.9] It's before I graduated high school, Lonnie. [Laughter]

**Lonnie Rich** [1:10:00.1] —Facebook pages—

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:10:01.1][Inaudible 1:10:01.1]

**Lonnie Rich** [1:10:01.8] —for campaigning.

**Justin Wilson** [1:10:02.3] It's before I graduated high school. [Laughter]

**Jim Moran** [1:10:05.7] Please don't rub it in. You know. [Laughter]

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:10:07.9] I was headed off to [inaudible 1:10:09.2]. [Laughter]

**Justin Wilson** [1:10:09.8] She wasn't alive! She wasn't alive!

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:10:11.1] I was alive! I was born in 1989. But I do—I do think, though, it has been interesting when people no longer have to see your face.

**Justin Wilson** [1:10:21.7] Yes.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:10:21.8] And when they don't have to see the work that you're doing. It is much easier to say anything, and I think that has made a lot of these debates harder. I will tell you, with the snow, I had a moment where it like the emails like—many profanities, many things. I told Justin I got called a frigid bitch, which I was like [laughs] this is a great one, given the weather. [Laughter] But there were many things that started with like, "You incompetent—you this, you that." And so, at one point, I started calling. Anybody who wrote something like crazy I called. And I was like, "Hi, it's Mayor Gaskins." And most people, the minute they heard—they were like, "Oh, I didn't mean to send it like that. I was just [inaudible 1:10:59.0]."

**Jim Moran** [1:10:59.9] That's something.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:11:00.1] And I was like—"Well, no"—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:11:01.0] I think—I think that's true.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:11:01.1] —"like you—you said it.

**Justin Wilson** [1:11:02.1] That is [inaudible 1:11:02.1].

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:11:02.2] Tell me what the problem is, and I'm gonna try and get somebody out there to fix it."

**Jim Moran** [1:11:05.4] Good for you.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:11:05.6] But their tone—

**Justin Wilson** [1:11:06.3] That is fun.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:11:06.4] —completely changed. I had people who it was like, "Well, you don't even live here." [Laughs] I was like, "Yes, I do. Yes, I—I do live here. It's by function of the law." But like [laughter] "I may not have been here as long as you do, but I care. I want to get out of my house, too." And I think having to talk to people has changed that. I've even noticed that with our public hearings. Like, there are people who send testimony advance, which is a lot. Those who actually have to be there when we engage in a dialog, it changes. Like it completely changes. And so, I don't—I mean, I don't know what it takes to do that. I realize I couldn't call everybody. [Laughs] But like, somehow, I think we have to see them. Like you're human first. You're mayor second. You're council—you know what I mean? Like you are a person first before you got on the council, and we're all trying to work together.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:11:54.8] Oh, this is—

**Jim Moran** [1:11:54.8] You've handled it—oh, excuse me.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:11:56.0] No. Go ahead. [Inaudible 1:11:57.0].

**Jim Moran** [1:11:57.8] I was just gonna say you've handled that masterfully, Alyia, because most people will not take—they don't have the courage. They don't take the initiative. They don't—it's just too difficult to call people who, you know—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:12:11.6] Who have called you names.

**Jim Moran** [1:12:11.6] —have said nasty things. Huh?

**Lonnie Rich** [1:12:12.9] Who have called you names.

**Jim Moran** [1:12:14.1] Yeah!

**Lonnie Rich** [1:12:14.7] Yeah.

**Jim Moran** [1:12:15.1] Yeah. Absolutely. So, credit to you. I do think, though, that Lonnie has put his finger on something—I've noticed not the last meeting I was at. But, you know, sometimes I would turn on the TV on Saturday when you get some of the worst stuff, of course. And I really was struck at the animosity, the vitriol that comes from people. But I think I had it easier than almost anybody because there were three Republicans and three Democrats. And then I was an Independent, although I was probably more liberal than the three Democrats. But it was balanced. And what happened was the Republicans felt that Connie Ring and Bob Calhoun and Marlene—"well, they're gonna represent my—so I don't really need to go, and then, you know, I'm content with them representing my point of view." And the Democrats felt that, you know, trusted the Democrats on the board. So, because it was balanced it was fine. But now I do think that—although a lot of them have moved out of the city, frankly, but there are people who feel they are not represented on the City Council. That this, you know, and the City Council have gone too far left or whatever, you know. And a lot of small business people and so on, and so when they come down to council, they just kind of vent. And it's nasty. It's kind of hateful, but I don't know what you do about it. To some extent, Arlington has a similar problem because they're all Democratic as well.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:13:55.4] I think it starts with the national level.

**Justin Wilson** [1:13:56.8] I agree.

**Jim Moran** [1:13:57.2] Yeah. It is. Yeah.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:13:57.2] The nastiness.

**Jim Moran** [1:13:57.3] Yeah. [inaudible 1:13:57.3]

**Justin Wilson** [1:13:58.6] It's filtered across the river.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:13:59.4] And to say anything to anybody about anything.

**Justin Wilson** [1:14:01.6] Yes.

**Jim Moran** [1:14:02.5] Yep.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:14:03.3] Wow.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:14:05.5] It's people are emboldened.

**Justin Wilson** [1:14:06.8] Yes.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:14:07.2] I want to make sure we get to—

**Allison Silberberg** [1:14:08.0] I just—can I—

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:14:08.9] —hear. Yeah.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:14:09.4] —Francesco?

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:14:09.9] Okay.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:14:10.3] Just one thing is I think that I'm sorry first of all, Alyia, that anyone would—I'm sorry to hear that. Although I certainly got a lot of—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:14:25.7] I'm sure you did, yeah.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:14:26.1] Yeah.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:14:26.9] —difficult, hateful—well, a lot of antisemitic emails and letters, and while I was vice mayor. But it ratcheted up exponentially when I became the mayor and then became death threats. And the FBI got involved and caught the guy. He was actually also challenging and threatening Stacey Abrams. And so, I felt at least I was in good company with someone like Stacey Abrams. [Laughter]

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:14:58.2] No, no, no.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:14:58.8] But it was a very odd thing, and I didn't want to talk about it because I didn't want the city to become alarmed. I thought it was, you know, isolated towards me, which is how I feel about it right now. But I think the—there's frustration that people want to be like you said, Jim, represented, but I do think they want to be heard. And I think that authentic civic engagement is really important. And I think that limiting the open mike tradition, limiting that time, you know, in the morning—on Saturday morning was just once—I guess once a month. I think people felt, you know, frustrated by that. I certainly didn't support that change. To me, there's—it's important to go into the meetings with an open mind and to listen to what's being said and discussed, rather than have your, you know, mind made up I think beforehand. And trying to find common ground as you listen. Trying to figure out if there is common ground, and also trying to see like what is the difficulty involved? So, I know that when I became—when I was elected as mayor, it's kind of a source of difficulty for me, even though I did a lot of outreach, that there were some who were frankly also elected who were, you know, there was a longtime mayor that I was replacing. I didn't have any animosity towards Bill, actually. I was his vice mayor, and I was deferential and respectful. But I—we ran against each other. Well, I ran for mayor, and I think that there were some at City Hall—city manager, city even attorney, and a few others who were, you know, owed their careers to Bill in many ways. And I can understand that intellectually, but then there was also some pushback from some, you know, let's just say in the community. And, you know, trying to build that bridge was extremely difficult, if not an impossible task. And so, the hostility and, you know, trying to find that common ground with colleagues as well as, you know, in the community, but always keeping in mind that we are here. You know. My mantra is, you know, I'm here for the people. That is—was and really still is that, you know, public service, and but I'm here for the people. And I think one of the great challenges, since that's what the original question was, is this push and pull and tension between, you know, maintaining what is special about our city in terms of the old and historic district, which draws millions of tourists and millions of dollars to our economy. But it's also the right thing to do to preserve and protect it. But we also have other historic districts in the city, and, you know, finding that balance of maintaining that quality of life that also maintaining the historic preservation work that we've inherited and can pass on. I mean, that is sacrosanct to me. It's really the—I chose Alexandria because of I love the historic preservation work here. Here we sit in Lloyd House, a very historic building, Francesco. So, I think that tension between, you know, development or let's just say overdevelopment, if it's not fitting in well with the established historic districts or historic district in Old Town in particular, then I think that we're, you know, really shooting ourselves in the foot if you will. And I think that for me, that was an ongoing challenge—trying to listen to the concerns of the Board of Architectural Review and understanding that that took decades of work to establish those rules and guidelines. And that these people are donating their time, and it's very serious work.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:20:14.6] Great. So, I have two last questions just to keep that in mind, how you respond. The first one is who's a colleague that stands out to you during your time? And why do they stand out to you? Like what about them stood out to you? And we can start [inaudible 1:20:34.6].

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:20:34.8] I think we're over there.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:20:35.3] Yeah?

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:20:35.7] [Inaudible 1:20:35.7] circle.

**Justin Wilson** [1:20:39.1] I mean, I've had, you know, I've had extraordinary relationships with a bunch of my colleagues. Some of gone on to be some of my closest friends and remain some of my closest friends to this day. And, you know, even a year out of office, you know, I still talk to a lot these people like multiple times [laughs] a week still to this day. You know. Clearly I think, you know, just because of tenure, Del [Pepper] was a—was someone—you know, I used to joke with Del that, you know, Del could change her hairstyle, and I was—be far more likely to notice it than if my wife changed her hairstyle because I just saw her more [laughs] on a regular basis. And it was just a—we spent so much time together.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:21:33.8] I hadn't heard that one.

**Justin Wilson** [1:21:34.7] Yeah. It's true. [Laughs] It's true. And it's, you know—

**Jim Moran** [1:21:39.8] Not sure I believe it.

**Justin Wilson** [1:21:40.7] Oh, it's absolutely true. You know. We served together for 14 years, and it, you know, it's funny because at the beginning of my tenure, Del drove me insane. And she knows this. And, you know, now she's like a, you know, she's like a grandmother figure to me at this point. And I just called her last week, and we had a long talk. And if you haven't gotten her Christmas card this year, it's hilarious.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:22:18.6] Del and the girls.

**Justin Wilson** [1:22:19.2] It's Del and her cats, so. [Laughter]

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:22:22.8] It's really funny.

**Justin Wilson** [1:22:23.3] It's the funniest thing. But yeah. I mean I think she—but I remember vividly my—one of my earliest meetings on council in 2007. Me and Rob [Krupicka] were trying to do something as it relates to—we were trying—I remember—we were trying to expand Metrorail in the Eisenhower Valley. And Del had decided to connect it inexplicably, I think. Del had decided to connect it to the Connector issue. She thought it was connected to the Connector issue, and Del was using the Connector issue as a political wedge at that point. And so, I remember she said, well, she was opposed to what we're doing, and she said, "And that's something that two guys from Del Ray would never understand!" And she said that on the dais, and I didn't talk to her for two weeks. I was so angry at her, and I told her that. And she called me, and she's like, "You're mad at me, aren't you?" And I said, "Yes, yes, Del. [Laughter] Yes, I am mad at you, Del." [Laughter]

**Jim Moran** [1:23:23.3] You had every right to [inaudible 1:23:24.4]. [Laughter]

**Justin Wilson** [1:23:24.5] Yeah. I was so mad and yeah. But we got to a very different place by the time I left office and the time she left office and became very close.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:23:38.4] And we're talking about Del Pepper.

**Justin Wilson** [1:23:40.0] Yes. Del Pepper. The Del Pepper, so.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:23:43.5] Cool. That's great.

**Jim Moran** [1:23:48.1] The people that had the most profound influence on me were not members of the City Council, but the City Manager, Vola Lawson.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:23:57.1] That's what I was gonna say.

**Jim Moran** [1:23:58.0] Oh, I'm sorry.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:23:59.6] That's alright. No. That's a good thing.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:24:01.0] You can plus one it. [Laughs]

**Jim Moran** [1:24:01.9] But also the City Attorney, Phil Sunderland. Vola had a real vision for the city. She had the right values, and she was tough.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:24:17.9] Yeah.

**Jim Moran** [1:24:18.6] But she—you always knew that she had the welfare of the city in mind. I remember when Nelson Greene, who, you know, he would have been a runner-up for having a lot of influence because he gave me the background of the city and how it had developed. And particularly from the, you know, the perspective of being a black man and watching as he was, you know, a good 25/30 years older than me. And he really had been through the Civil Rights struggles. But he had convinced me that we should take the Confederate soldier statue down. Now Sonny Jurgenson had hit it three times, and those are just the times—

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:25:12.0] Oh my goodness!

**Jim Moran** [1:25:12.2] —that it toppled over. Always—it was always the same time, about 2:30 in the morning on a Sunday morning. So, in other words, he had—

**Justin Wilson** [1:25:22.1] Was drunk.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:25:22.4] He was drinking at [inaudible 1:25:22.6].

**Jim Moran** [1:25:22.7] Yeah. He was drunk and—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:25:23.8] He had just left Joe Theismann's?

**Justin Wilson** [1:25:25.2] Correct.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:25:25.7] Oh my goodness?

**Jim Moran** [1:25:26.0] No. Because Theismann's didn't exist then. There was a—

**Justin Wilson** [1:25:28.1] Oh, so it was a different bar! [Laughter]

**Jim Moran** [1:25:29.7] Yeah. It would have probably been, but he—it was the bar down at the southern end of the city, there on Washington Street. There was an old bar that—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:25:42.3] Nicky's?

**Jim Moran** [1:25:43.0] Hmm?

**Lonnie Rich** [1:25:43.5] Nicky's?

**Jim Moran** [1:25:44.5] No. I don't think—anyways, it didn't matter because I was never there at the time. But whatever, [laughter] he would come, and he would drive straight into it. And those are just the times it toppled over. But the last time I got a call on Sunday that that statue had been knocked over again, and it was some kid that hit it. And the kid's excuse was, "Well, I thought you were supposed to drive under it like other statues." You know. So, he drove straight into it. Anyway, that—I think he had been fully inebriated, too. But so, I said, "Well, this is a—let's not replace it. I want to"—they said and, you know, being the jerk that I was, the reporter from the *Past* said, "Well, what would you do with it?" I said, "I think you ought to take it down to the Potomac, and just dump it upside down into the Potomac," which they printed, of course, obviously they were going to. But that had been Nelson Greene's idea, and I—anyway. She—this gets back to Vola. She said, "You're wrong on this, you know. We need to put it back, keep it there. I want you to get out of your car and stand there and study it. And what do you see?" It was a Confederate soldier. But he was looking South with his head down, and he realized that the Civil War was wrong. That it was a—he regretted what had happened. But you wouldn't know that, you know, if it—and she said, "We have to be respectful of everybody that from their, you know, their perspective. And so, I want you to introduce a resolution where we're gonna extend the divider and plant flowers in it," and so on. And she turned out the—she was right, ultimately. I got a lot of flak on that, see, cause the one big thing was it had a picture of this big boot urinating on the headstone that said, "Jane Fonda." You know. But that we got a lot of pushback anyways from the idea of moving the Confederate statue, but Vola was right. And, you know, it was just one more instructional thing. And then Phil was a great city attorney, and he—then he became city manager. And he lost his job because he defended staff. He basically defended Suzanne Chis, who was wholly neglectful, negligent, but she wouldn't accept it. And so, he accepted the blame for a child under Social Services who'd been—

**Justin Wilson** [1:28:36.3] Katelyn Frazier.

**Jim Moran** [1:28:37.2] That's—good for you.

**Justin Wilson** [1:28:38.2] Yeah?

**Jim Moran** [1:28:38.8] Wow. But he did the right thing. He had nobility about him.

**Justin Wilson** [1:28:44.2] Which is why Debra [Collins] was brought in. Debra was brought in as the cleanup after all that.

**Jim Moran** [1:28:51.0] Yeah. So, it—and I want to give honorable mention too to Michele Evans, who was just terrific. She was so conscientious in preparing all of our, you know, the material that we needed for our council meetings. But I was blessed with having a terrific staff, and that made an enormous amount of difference.

**Justin Wilson** [1:29:13.8] Michele sat next to me when I was first elected as a—I was in the new guy's seat on the corner, and Michele was invaluable. I mean, she would elbow me. I didn't always listen to her, but she would—she would be like, "You shouldn't do that. That's not what you should do." [Laughs]

**Jim Moran** [1:29:30.9] She usually knew those [inaudible 1:29:34.0].

**Justin Wilson** [1:29:32.6] She knew what she was talking about.

**Jim Moran** [1:29:34.0] We still—

**Justin Wilson** [1:29:34.0] She was usually right. I just had to let her [inaudible 1:29:35.2].

**Jim Moran** [1:29:35.4] We still get together once a month. Michele and Phil and Janet Barnett and the, you know, just to—

**Justin Wilson** [1:29:40.9] Janet—

**Alia Gaskins** [1:29:41.3] I'd say you can't forget Janet in this career.

**Justin Wilson** [1:29:43.0] No. Never forget Janet.

**Jim Moran** [1:29:43.6] No. She wouldn't let you if [inaudible 1:29:45.0]. Yeah.

**Justin Wilson** [1:29:46.1] No, no.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:29:48.1] Well, I was gonna mention even though they weren't serving with me. I was gonna mention not only Vola Lawson, who was our longtime city manager, but not when I served in office. But also, Patsy Ticer, who had served on the council and then served as mayor. And then was our state senator. And I would spend I don't know how many hours with either one or the other, Patsy or Vola or together—the three of us at meals and saying—so they say, "Well, what's going on?" And I'm like, "Well"—and they're like—I just, "Do you all know anything about blah, blah, blah?" And just off the top of their heads, give me the whole history and the pros and cons of it all. And it was—it was really incredible history lessons, really, but also life lessons. And it was fascinating to hear their take on the issues, also to learn about how in the middle of the night, they removed all the ashtrays from the back of the pews in the Council Chambers and got rid of smoking. They had both survived breast cancer, and so they felt really strongly about the smoking that was going on all around them. And so, it wasn't really a discussion or a vote. It was just handled by them [laughs] in the middle of the night. And I love those pews, by the way, and—

**Alia Gaskins** [1:31:29.4] I'm keeping one.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:31:30.7] Well, I would have supported at keeping [inaudible 1:31:32.7].

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:31:33.0] Well, many are saying, but the front ones are moving. So, I've asked that they be preserved for the Mayor's Office.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:31:37.9] They're extremely comfortable to sit on—

**Jim Moran** [1:31:39.7] Good.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:31:40.0] —long term.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:31:40.7] Yes.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:31:41.1] I think, but so I, you know, really salute them. But in terms of you mentioned some staff, I was gonna mention Michele Evans. But really, Coco Sermaine McLean, his chief of staff to the city manager, provided enormous support and help, as did Debra Collins, Deputy City Manager, and Kate Garvey, DCHS Director, and so many staff I wouldn't even be able to list. But the staff really pulled more than their weight and provided a lot of institutional knowledge. Because, you know, the electeds to some extent we come and go, but the staff who are long-term, at least, you know, have a lot of knowledge and ability to help make things happen. Jean Kelleher is another. So, but as far as the statue, just a couple of months into my term as mayor, the city manager let me know that in September the statue vote would be coming up. And there would be a public hearing, and so here had been discussed or thought about or weighed and debated for what—50 years. But nine months into my term as mayor, we were going to take it on [laughs] head on. And there was this advisory committee, but they had said to leave the statue alone. And I'm really proud of the fact that we came together as a—on the dais, and we listened to the community. People were careful and measured with their words, which I kept saying that I wanted everyone on the dais and in the community to do. But I was really glad that we came to a unanimous decision to ask the General Assembly for permission. We couldn't just move it. So, but it was done—we didn't have, you know, the violence that other cities had, and I was really proud of that that how the community reacted and that we kept the peace.

**Jim Moran** [1:33:48.7] Vola thinks that in looking at the face that the face is saying, "We lost this war, and we should have lost the war." That was her—

**Allison Silberberg** [1:33:58.0] But I have no way of knowing—

**Jim Moran** [1:33:59.8] —interpretation.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:34:01.0] —what others might say about it. I think that's open to interpretation. But I never thought, you know, I think that there's—that's one—that's definitely one perspective. So, after that vote, I don't know if I ever mentioned this, but I told a number of people this. I had gotten a letter, and I think all of us on the dais got this letter from the United Daughters of the Confederacy. And it was a—it was a full page letter, maybe two pages, and I reached out to—I didn't know how to respond to her letter. I just—I just couldn't—I didn't know what to say. And so, I called her personally and left a message right after the vote and after the meeting ended. And I left this quick little message and, "Please call me back. I'd love to have coffee or a bite with you and talk about, you know, just reach out and blah, blah, blah." Anyway, the phone rang. We ended up

meeting at the Museum of the Confederacy, which I'd never been to. And I'm a history nut, and, you know, we had—I said, "Look, we don't agree, but we can always talk." And she actually said, like that she was just grateful that someone from the city had reached out. But we did kind of, you know, in Richmond—it went—the fight went to Richmond immediately. But eventually we did persevere, but that vote was that day, you know, had a lot of, you know, the Council Chambers were packed and a lot of input from the public. And it was done, you know, I'm proud of how we came together as a community.

**Jim Moran** [1:35:41.9] I loathe the Daughters of the Confederacy. I loathe them. Terry McAuliffe put me in—I was chair of the Fort Monroe Authority, where the first contraband movement started, and first, you know, emancipation of enslaved people. And Jefferson Davis was held there during the Confederate War. And they in the—they had put up this big arch to Jefferson Davis at the fort. And it turns out they had put it up in the 1950s as a reaction to—

**Justin Wilson** [1:36:18.9] That's right.

**Jim Moran** [1:36:19.3] —the Civil Rights Movement.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:36:20.1] Right.

**Jim Moran** [1:36:20.9] And so I ordered it taken down, and they were—they couldn't have been more bigoted and arrogant and spiteful. And I know it was their heritage, you know, they were the great-great-granddaughters of plantation owners and stuff, but I loathe them.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:36:45.9] Well, we all agree about—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:36:48.3] Really played out on the issue—

**Allison Silberberg** [1:36:49.1] —well hold on, hold on for just—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:36:50.0] —[inaudible 1:36:50.0]

**Allison Silberberg** [1:36:51.0] —just hold on one sec. I think we can all agree that the statue had to go at this table. But at the time, in September of 2016, it was not that the advisory committee said to leave it alone. Okay. So that was our citizens who were serving on that, and but we voted to remove it. And so, I'm in agreement that it had to go, but getting from Point A to Point B and keeping the peace—

**Jim Moran** [1:37:20.3] Yeah. No, I was just making a random comment that wasn't appropriate.

**Justin Wilson** [1:37:22.2] Well and then—and I'll tell the other end of the story—the conclusion of the story—the coda. So, in the 2020 General Assembly session, that was the year the legislation was enacted or was moving in—was enacted. And when it was moving, the governor—there was a lot going on at that period of time, especially for the governor. The governor had announced he was gonna support this legislation if it was enacted. And so that would have gone to affect July 1, and that would have essentially allowed the city to remove the statue from the right-of-way. So, the daughters owned the statue. The land was owned by the city. And so, in advance of that, and I think

with Allison's goal in mind, we were trying to avoid what had happened in Charlottesville. We were trying to avoid it being a big thing. And so, when I knew the legislation was gonna pass, I decided, "Okay. Let's see if we can do this the easy way." And so, I reached out to the daughters, and I said, "Let's have a meeting." And it was by far the shortest meeting that I've ever had of any kind, but they came to my office at City Hall. The two ladies sat down, and basically, I said, "Listen," I said, "we want the statue to go. We're happy to have a conversation around, you know, potential other locations. It could be moved into the museum, whatever. Like we can talk about different options." And I remember she looked at me and she said, "Eh," she's like, "No. We want nothing of that." She said, "If you move it somewhere else, you'll just tell us to move it in the future or some other time. And so, we'll take care of it." And so, we then started a coordination—a close coordination with the daughters and our staff to figure out when it would be removed that would not be disruptive. And this was only—there was only three or four people on the staff that were aware of the exact time and date that it was going to happen and me. And this was some source of tension with a couple of my colleagues, one in particular who was very, very upset that he did not know it was going to happen when it was going to happen. And—

**Jim Moran** [1:39:53.5] What was he gonna do?

**Justin Wilson** [1:39:55.1] Oh, that's a long story. [Laughs] I don't have enough time for all that. But—

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:40:00.1] [inaudible 1:40:00.1]

**Justin Wilson** [1:40:00.7] So this was on—it was on June 2, 2020, and we had decided before the law even went into effect that the daughters would come and take it. Great. And they had a place for it. They wouldn't tell us where. We still don't—I still have no idea where it is. And so, they said we were gonna—they were gonna pull it out early morning. And so, for those who know me, I run all the time, and I run in the early morning. We usually run at 6:30 or 7:00 in the morning—or 6:00 in the morning. And only one of my running buddies showed up that morning, and I told him, I said, "Hey, we're gonna have an interesting run this morning." And he said, "What do you mean?" And my normal route is down King Street in the morning, and I said, "We might see some history on the morning run." And he was like, "I don't know what you're talking about." I said, "Just let's go." And so, we took off. We came down King. We got to Washington, and we turned the corner, and the crew was out there. And Bennie Evans, who had just retired, was there with another police officer, and Bennie, I'm sure, volunteered for this assignment. [Laughter] He was standing there at the corner just to secure the intersection, and I was trying not to be noticed because the daughters were there. They were on the corner watching it, and I was in running gear, so I wasn't as—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:41:15.9] Weeping?

**Justin Wilson** [1:41:17.5] They were watching it come down. I can't describe their characterization. We can't characterize what they were doing, but they were pulling it down. I snapped a picture while it was happening. And Bennie saw me, and he was in the middle of snapping his own pictures. [Laughs] And then I just took off and sent it to the council and everyone else after it happened. But I looked at the time and date. I tweeted it out, and I looked at the time/date stamp. It was 6:43 in the morning, and that's when I sent my tweet. And so—

**Jim Moran** [1:41:55.6] Did they know you were there [inaudible 1:41:56.8]?

**Justin Wilson** [1:41:57.4] I don't know that they knew I was there cause I was just—I was on my run.

**Jim Moran** [1:42:01.6] Yeah.

**Justin Wilson** [1:42:03.2] But it was interesting to watch it. It was also of any tweet I ever sent, it had more comments and retweets—thousands of them that kind of went viral. Horrible, hateful stuff from a lot, unfortunately, in response, including some stuff that ended up the police handling. But yeah. It was an interesting moment. Of note to your point, Jim, if anyone has ever been to Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard, there is in Oak Bluffs, obviously, one of the most prominent African American vacation spots. In Oak Bluffs, there is a statue that looks almost identical to ours. It is the only Confederate statue north of the Mason-Dixon Line. It is—it was erected by Confederate veterans who had retired to Martha's Vineyard. And they, along with Union veterans who lived in Oak Bluffs at that time, worked together, [laughs] raised money, and erected this statue—

**Jim Moran** [1:43:07.6] Wow!

**Justin Wilson** [1:43:07.8] —at—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:43:08.0] It's part of the Great White Reconciliation—

**Justin Wilson** [1:43:10.1] Yes! Lonnie knows his history.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:43:11.1] —between northern whites and southern whites.

**Justin Wilson** [1:43:12.9] Yes! Lonnie knows history.

**Jim Moran** [1:43:13.7] Wow!

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:43:14.0] Interesting.

**Justin Wilson** [1:43:14.3] And when Alex and I and the kids went on vacation there, this is probably 15 years ago, and we came off the ferry. And we start walking around the square, and I'm like—I'm looking at the statue. It looked just like ours. And I'm like, "What is happening here?" [Laughs] And I took a picture, and I start texting people back in Alexandria. Like, "What happened?" Sure enough, same—

**Jim Moran** [1:43:34.7] I had n—that's a great story.

**Justin Wilson** [1:43:35.5] Yeah. It's still there.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:43:35.8] Maybe that's where the daughters moved it to.

**Justin Wilson** [1:43:37.6] What? Yeah, they did it! [Laughs] No. This is before they—that's not ours. [Laughter] But it's—

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:43:41.4] [Inaudible 1:43:41.4]

**Justin Wilson** [1:43:41.6]—sure enough it's still there. It's still there, so.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:43:43.7] It's like sending immigrants to New York City.

**Justin Wilson** [1:43:43.7] And they've had a debate up there, but the history is different, so they had a different debate. But anyway, there you go. Sorry. I just wanted to conclude the story of the statue.

**Jim Moran** [1:43:51.7] Thank you for sharing that. That's fascinating.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:43:54.2] I want to make sure you get to [inaudible 1:43:54.3].

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:43:54.5] I'm up? Okay.

**Justin Wilson** [1:43:55.5] Yeah. Sorry, Alyia. I kind of got—

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:43:56.9] Oh no. It's funny that you were talking, cause I was gonna say you were the colleague that had the most profound impact on me.

**Justin Wilson** [1:44:03.1] Oh! [Inaudible 1:44:04.2].

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:44:04.9] I remember when I was running for city council. I got an email. You were mayor.

**Justin Wilson** [1:44:08.6] Oh yeah. Remember this story.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:44:09.1] And it was just like one sentence, like, "I hear you're running for council. I'd like to talk to you." I'd never spoken to Justin. I know nothing about him. I don't know anything about him.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:44:16.5] Didn't know who he was? [Laughs]

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:44:17.2] No. And I knew he was the mayor, but that was it. [Laughter] And I remember—so the first part of the story is gonna start out bad, but—

**Justin Wilson** [1:44:23.7] I know. [Laughs]

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:44:24.2] —I remember [laughs]—

**Justin Wilson** [1:44:24.7] I know this. I've heard you tell this story. [Laughs]

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:44:26.4] —I remember being like very excited. Like the mayor is contacting me. I'm running. This is the first time I'm running for office. Before I get a word out, he was basically like, "So there's a lot of other qualified people in the city who are running, and I'm not sure, like, why you're running?" Like it was just [laughs] like—

**Justin Wilson** [1:44:42.1] I don't remember saying that! [Laughs]

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:44:43.0] It was—it was if—

**Justin Wilson** [1:44:44.0] I'm sure I did, but I don't remember! [Laughs]

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:44:45.9] —I remember—

**Jim Moran** [1:44:46.5] [Inaudible 1:44:46.5], Justin!

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:44:46.9] —I put it—it was so bad. I put it on speakerphone for cause I was like, "Greg," like to my—I was like, "Listen to this man." Like basically go on and on and on about how I'm not supposed to run. I remember Greg muted it and was basically like, "You're so worried that I won't say it, but you can." [Laughter] And I was so—like I was so furious. And I was like, "That's fine." And I think somehow, we just ended it, and you were like, "Best of luck." [Laughs] And but it was from that moment on that I was like, "If I get on this council, I'm going to find a way to outsmart Justin Wilson, and I'm gonna do more work than he does, which is impossible." But I tried to like be the most prepared. I tried to read everything. I tried to anytime he was gonna ask a question, I want to figure out like a counter question [laughs] to push back on him. And I remember we had a talk about me running for mayor, and you said to me, you said, "We don't always agree. A lot of times, I think you get it wrong, [laughs] but you understand the work." And you understand the work that has to go into this role, and I think that's always stayed with me. I think like I can have such a good debate with you. You push me, and I see things that sometimes I don't want to see or deal with. [Laughs] But I think being in this role, if I hadn't spent so much time doing the work and like learning the work of how everything moves and how like what goes into every staff report, every question to think through, I would be so not prepared. So, I call you a friend now. I don't know [laughs] [inaudible 1:46:10.8] it there.

**Justin Wilson** [1:46:11.3] Thank you. Thank you.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:46:12.6] But that has definitely changed the way I do this work.

**Justin Wilson** [1:46:15.4] That talk about you—

**Jim Moran** [1:46:16.0] That's a great introspective insight.

**Justin Wilson** [1:46:17.6] That talk about you running was in Del Ray. We were walking in Del Ray.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:46:21.3] Yeah.

**Justin Wilson** [1:46:21.7] We were walking, and I think, "Well, why would?" I don't know why we were walking, but we were walking—maybe cause we didn't want to be in a place where people could hear us?

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:46:27.7] Yes. No. I picked like the busiest spot in St. Elmo's.

**Justin Wilson** [1:46:30.2] That's right.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:46:30.4] But you were like—

**Justin Wilson** [1:46:30.4] That's right. Yeah.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:46:31.8] No. It's a long walk.

**Justin Wilson** [1:46:32.4] We were walking around Del Ray over and over again.

**Jim Moran** [1:46:34.3] Wow.

**Justin Wilson** [1:46:34.6] Yeah.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:46:35.3] Yeah.

**Jim Moran** [1:46:35.9] That's a great story.

**Justin Wilson** [1:46:37.1] Yeah.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:46:38.1] So yeah.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:46:39.4] Well, my—I didn't really have any influencers on council particularly, other than just generally, which I appreciated. But probably the two people who influenced me more than anything on my tenure on council were two authors. One was Gaebler, who wrote "Reinventing Government." That was at a time when the DLC [Democratic Leadership Council] and Clinton—Clinton was running for—what year he ran—yeah, he won in 1992. And I—it influenced me to write a paper, and most elected officials don't write papers. I wrote a 25 page paper called reinventing—"A New Course for Alexandria," was the name of it. And in it, I proposed a number of things that were extremely controversial for a Democrat. I mean, I got called everything but a child of God from a whole bunch of people because of that paper. But that was a big influence on me was realizing that you can be one way and you can read a book and take something away from them, have an "aha" moment. And it can have an impact on what you do. The other one was a book written by a *New York Times* editor. The name of the book was "Normal," and I can't remember his name. He's a famous writer or editor for the *New York Times*. But it was—and it was on—he was a conservative writing in favor of gay marriage. That was what I read in like 1994 and 1995 that caused me to come up with a proposal in 1996. I had never thought about the issue one way or the other. I mean, I didn't—I mean, I knew that there was civil unions that had been approved by a number of states and some cities, and there was a Hawaii Supreme Court decision. But I do think that our proposal in Alexandria was the first legislative proposal for same-sex marriage in the country. And that book was what did it for me, cause it—when I wrote my proposal to council, I basically did not take it from the liberal point of view. I took it from a conservative point of view. I took pro-family values was basically the argument and the need for government to create more couples who are obliged to each other, have legal obligations to each other. That is in all of our interests so that those people don't become wards of the state at some point. Cause somebody is legally responsible for taking care of them, which is the way it is with heterosexual couples. We have legal obligations. And anyway, it was—but it was just a fascinating adventure for me, but I did

have—but my closest personal friend on City Council was the Republican that I sat next to for nine years.

**Justin Wilson** [1:49:56.5] Don't believe it.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:49:56.5] It was Bill Cleveland.

**Justin Wilson** [1:49:57.5] Yeah.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:49:58.1] I love that guy. We disagreed on a lot of stuff, and most of his stuff was very sort of traditional conservative Republican stuff, and I was on the other side. And it mostly didn't come up in Alexandria, but we were just good friends. And I got to know a lot about him and hear a lot about him. And he was—he taught me something about quiet generosity. He was one of these guys that he would hear that somebody was in need of food. He would go to the grocery store and buy food for them. He didn't do it with a camera showing or anything else. He just helped, and he helped a lot of people. And I heard it a lot, and he and I just became very close friends. And we're still friends. I don't see him a lot, but we had coffee two weeks ago, and he helped me locate one of the kids that my kids went to school with. And, you know, 20 years ago.

**Jim Moran** [1:50:58.8] He and Ruth were very religious. They really that—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:51:01.3] Yeah.

**Jim Moran** [1:51:01.4] —I mean, they read the Bible every morning.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:51:03.3] Yeah.

**Jim Moran** [1:51:03.4] A fascinating guy. And that is something that we will probably remember, you know, as we look back on our lives. The things we do recall the most, that are most vivid, are the times when we had an individual vote. You know. That we were not one of five or six or seven but, in the Congress, you know, two hundred or whatever. Those are the times when—and so thank you. They understood why people opposed the same-sex marriage, but, you know, you push the envelope, which is something that I think distinguishes Alexandria. I do think, you know, Alexandria is traditionally, and the legislature always felt that way. That's why they called us the "People's Republic" that oh—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:51:56.3] You know what the issue was? You probably were around. You were probably on council when they did it. You know. It may have been before you. It was requiring landlords to put a safety latch on the inside of the door. It was a rule that Alexandria wanted to require that landlords put a safety latch. And I don't know if it was public housing or just general all apartments or whatever, but the legislature went wild. [Laughter]

**Jim Moran** [1:52:20.6] Yeah. But they do.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:52:22.1] We're so controversial. [Laughs]

**Jim Moran** [1:52:22.1] But, you know, the—it brings to mind that they—how fast things move, that issue particularly. There was a whole cultural shift because a few people, including Republicans,

stood up. The first vote on the House Floor, which was called the Defense of Marriage Act, you know, to prevent same-sex marriage, there were only five people who voted for it. It was Nancy, Neil Abercrombie who later became—

**Justin Wilson** [1:52:52.3] Hawaii.

**Jim Moran** [1:52:52.8] —governor of Hawaii, Barney Frank, Rosa DeLauro, and myself. And then, but each year, sometimes it was only six months, that number kept escalating. And within three years, it wasn't—it was no longer an issue.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:53:08.7] And you know what it was?

**Jim Moran** [1:53:09.6] Huh?

**Lonnie Rich** [1:53:10.4] Do you know why the gay marriage—the gay issue generally moved faster than other Civil Rights Movements, Women's Movement, or race? It had to do with people realizing they had somebody—

**Jim Moran** [1:53:25.6] Yeah.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:53:25.8] —in their family. Whether it was Barry Goldwater or Cheneys or a lot of conservatives who had—you have a gay child, and you begin to look at it differently. Not many people had, you know, white people had a black child or and—I don't know how to explain this, why sex was so slow. But it was just—but anyway—

**Jim Moran** [1:53:48.3] Biggest issue we had was with the African American community. And so, I approached John Lewis about it, and his, "You need—I need to teach you some things." The black Baptist churches, which was the kind of the glue that held the community together for so long, they—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:54:11.5] They were adamantly opposed.

**Jim Moran** [1:54:12.3] Adamant. So, we didn't get—

**Lonnie Rich** [1:54:13.6] Yeah.

**Jim Moran** [1:54:13.6] —one black vote, and it was some of the last holdouts. But that again was cultural, religious, you know, and understandable.

**Lonnie Rich** [1:54:21.4] Yeah.

**Jim Moran** [1:54:21.7] Felt totally understandable. Anyhow, I'm talking. Would you just let me [inaudible 1:54:24.2].

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:54:24.2] [Laughs] I was gonna say, Francesco said—

**Jim Moran** [1:54:25.2] You got to go!

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:54:25.5] —one hour.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:54:26.0] I know.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:54:26.1] We heard [laughter]—

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:54:26.9] We're a little over. But I will—

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:54:27.8] —we got stories.

**Justin Wilson** [1:54:28.6] It's one hour council time.

**Jim Moran** [1:54:30.0] Right, right.

**Justin Wilson** [1:54:31.6] [Inaudible 1:54:31.6]

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:54:31.7] It's we need to vet when—

**Allison Silberberg** [1:54:32.6] Can I volunteer?

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:54:32.9] —women end a Council meeting?

**Justin Wilson** [1:54:34.1] Alex without a fail when she would text me. She's like, "When are you gonna be home?" "I'd say an hour." She knew to add three hours to it [laughs] to like it was never going to be right.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:54:42.2] Oh, and this is—this is interesting.

**Jim Moran** [1:54:44.2] I have a date at Del Ray Cafe with Deborah, my wife.

**Justin Wilson** [1:54:47.7] Oh. Well, that's important.

**Jim Moran** [1:54:49.2] So it started at 7. So, she—

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:54:51.3] Yes.

**Jim Moran** [1:54:51.5] —she just texted me—

**Justin Wilson** [1:54:52.3] Go, go, come on!

**Jim Moran** [1:54:52.3] —"I'm on my third glass of wine. [Laughter] So if you expect me to drive home tonight." [Laughs]

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:54:58.4] Oh gosh. You need to go.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:54:59.5] But and I think this is a good place—

**Allison Silberberg** [1:55:00.8] Oh my God!

**Jim Moran** [1:55:01.8] They're funny.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:55:01.9] —to end for this. But yeah. I want to thank all of you—

**Justin Wilson** [1:55:05.3] Yeah, thank you.

**Francesco De Salvatore** [1:55:05.7] —for what you've done for the city, you know, for residents here. And yeah. I really enjoyed hearing all your memories tonight. So, thank you guys.

**Jim Moran** [1:55:14.8] Thank you for giving us the opportunity.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:55:14.8] Thank you.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:55:14.8] Yeah.

**Alyia Gaskins** [1:55:16.3] I learned a lot.

**Allison Silberberg** [1:55:17.1] Thank you so much.

[End of interview] [1:55:17.1]