

# Rick Wood

## Candidate for Colonial Beach Town Council

**We need to build bridges, not burn them.** We have many of the same aspirations for our community, but our backgrounds and experience have helped to form different opinions on how to get what we want. These different points of view make us a stronger community. I don't believe there is a benefit to a town where everyone thinks and functions the same. Effective leadership knows how to work together to harness the energy and the benefits of our backgrounds, experiences and skills. Disagreement with discussion makes us stronger. Discord makes us weak and unable to function. Let's build a bridge based on divergent ideas that meet in the middle. I am not interested in tearing down other candidates. I am interested in sharing with you why you should vote for me.

Throughout my career, I have led many teams and learned two important lessons:

- 1) The best way to come to an outstanding solution is to assemble people of goodwill with widely divergent views on the subject and allow everyone to speak without being talked over or shouted down. Through discussions, the best idea inevitably emerges,
- 2) I can only expect excellence if I provide the tools and training people need. If they are unsuccessful because they don't have those tools, then their failure would be mine.

Leadership comes from the front, not the rear. I have always led by example and will do so once I have joined the Council. Being an independent thinker who works in the best interests of the town will be my posture from day one until the day I leave. We have significant challenges but we can overcome them together. There is nothing wrong with Colonial Beach that can't be solved by what is right with Colonial Beach.

*Question #1 – What is the one area that you feel strongly enough about to champion the effort to address during your term? Please be specific about action items you intend to take and your desired outcome.*

Like most coastal towns, we may be sitting on a ticking time bomb when considering our situation with water and sewer, roads and sidewalks, shoreline maintenance and restoration and government structures. We need to map all of our infrastructure so we can be proactive, taking care of potential problems before they become a disaster. Fixing after a disaster is more expensive than proactively maintaining. I want to work with mapping professionals and use the GIS software we already have, assess our current situation and identify potential problem spots.

This will provide an accurate inventory of assets, improved maintenance plans, reduction in breakdowns and improved budget forecasting. Disaster averted is money saved.

*Question #2 - What is your assessment of the infrastructure in town? What do you think are the next steps for improvement not only to support the existing population but also to position Colonial Beach for growth?*

I have summarized my assessment of the infrastructure in my response to Question #1.

Our next steps to support the existing population or for growth should be:

- 1) Digital mapping of all of our infrastructure with a system we already have access to
- 2) Agree on standards to measure asset condition (these standards already exist with many organizations)
- 3) Identify the assets that are in a state of good repair
- 4) For those that are not, develop a plan to improve their condition to operate at a full level of performance
- 5) Develop a financially constrained capital plan and an unconstrained needs assessment
- 6) Explore innovative financing strategies
- 7) For new development, seek proffers that will be sufficient to take care of the newly created needs for infrastructure, safety and schools.

*Question #3 – How do you view the Town’s progress over the last several years? Are you in favor of the development that has taken place to-date and will you support further growth going forward? Have you given any thought to Colonial Beach becoming a city as it grows in the future?*

Unfortunately, none of us has access to a time machine that would allow us to correct perceived mistakes of the past. It’s easy to look back and criticize the people that made the decisions before us. That accomplishes nothing. Going forward, we must consider how development will affect our infrastructure, safety and schools. I support controlled growth, with careful attention to proffers that provide sufficient resources for a potential increase in population. Proffers are voluntary commitments from developers to reduce or eliminate the impact of new development. More residents and businesses contributing to the town’s revenue will keep our taxes under control and ensure that our citizens on fixed incomes can afford to stay in their homes.

Regarding the matter of Colonial Beach becoming a city as it grows in the future, we need to ask, what problem are we trying to address by becoming a city? Of course, there are pros and cons. There could possibly be more federal funding available, but to be able to advance to the position of meeting the criteria for a city structure, we need to develop a consensus among the residents as to the benefits of the change and assure that we have the funding needed to provide the services expected of a city structure.

We may be able to do this, but do we want to? I believe most of us that made Colonial Beach our home, didn’t come here because we wanted to live in a city. We came here and stayed here because of what it is today.

*Question #4 – If you currently hold a seat on Town Council, what is an initiative or win that you are most proud of? If not on Council, what is your key initiative/win that will be your contribution/win?*

I will work in close coordination with the Economic Development Committee to attract new businesses to town. There has been an enormous amount of progress in promoting our town and we want to keep up that momentum under the new leadership of the Economic Development Committee. For instance, the grant money that was obtained to promote Colonial Beach has led to getting over 2,000 hits a day regarding our upcoming Bike Fest. We have a true gem beside the Potomac River. We need to ensure that vacationers throughout the Eastern seaboard are aware of all we have to offer. There is also an exciting new program that will bring mentorships and scholarships to students who don’t want to go to college but would instead like to learn a trade. This will be rolling out in November and I want to be a part of creating new opportunities for our young people.

*Question #5 – Do you support the school system remaining independent?*

I wholeheartedly support the Colonial Beach Schools remaining independent and continuing to be one of the most valuable assets and joys of our town. My support is not because I believe it will get the votes but it is because of my experience.

I grew up in a large rural county and travelled one hour to school. When I started playing football, my father took time from work to pick me up, but he had to stop. Consequently, without football, I had too much free time. So, I started hanging out with knuckleheads and did what knuckleheads do. My father put an end to that quickly. I could have gotten myself into a lot of trouble but not everyone has the luxury of having the parent I did. A well-educated community makes us safer and more prosperous and insures that children spend more time in sports and studies than they do getting into trouble. It also means that our future leadership is homegrown with ties to the community so that when we grow older our leadership remembers our contributions and respects who we are.

Before considering any changes, we must determine what problems we are trying to address. I know there are some members of our community that feel that they should not have to pay the taxes that go to the Colonial Beach schools, and if the children in the community attended the County schools, taxes would be reduced. I cannot in any possible way, see how that could happen. I believe our taxes would just be going into a different pocket. Why would we turn our schools over to the same people who tried to take our rescue squad?