

Endorsement from Yes! Weekly – October 5, 2011

The mayor of Greensboro gets one vote that counts no more or less than any other council member. The role is supervisory — the mayor sets the agenda and runs the council meetings. He's a quarterback. A leader. And though he gets just a single vote, he is expected to guide the council through the most pressing issues the city faces.

We quickly narrowed our list down to sitting at-large Councilman **Robbie Perkins** and former at-large Councilman Tom Phillips. Challengers Chris Phillips, who was formerly homeless, and Bradford Cone, who is the only registered Democrat in the race, have good ideas but are still unformed as political leaders. And current Mayor Bill Knight has basically been incommunicado with our paper since he took office two years ago; he ditched our candidate interview request as well as the *News & Record's* news and editorial board interview invitations, and has been conspicuously absent thus far in forums and debates. Let's be real: There is no way this guy would get our endorsement on pure principle, regardless of his votes and views, many of which we also disagree with. We could do a lot worse than elect Tom Phillips as mayor. He understands the issues and the mechanisms of municipal government. He is on the right side of the landfill debate, and seems to make sound decisions, albeit with a decidedly fiscally conservative bent. He's not conservative enough for many GOP voters this time around — not a big concern to us but it will cost him a few votes that will likely go into Knight's column.

A bigger problem for him is his competitor, Robbie Perkins.

Perkins has been in the game a long time, and he is easily the best politician of anyone running this year. He has connections in state and federal government as well as county and city associations that reach into every neighborhood and demographic. Some deride Perkins' deal-making prowess by saying that his fingers are constantly chapped from trying to see which way the wind is blowing, but we don't see political awareness, necessarily, as a negative.

Fact is, Perkins understands Greensboro like few other citizens — where it's come from, where it's headed, its geography and economic currents, its role in the state's evolution. He's got his hands in land use, transportation, education, regionalism, urban planning... plus he placed third overall in this year's Run for the Greenway. And Perkins has vision. He spoke to us about economic growth in the east after the urban loop comes in, sensible and long-term water and sewer developments, the significance of the Piedmont Triad Regional Airport and the High Point Road corridor.

"In 50 years," he said to us, "I want those guys to look back [on what we put in place] and say, 'Man, those guys were smart.'" For these reasons and more, Robbie Perkins gets the nod.