

## **Editorial: Perkins for mayor**

For Mayor Bill Knight, “X” marks the spot.

At a televised debate on Oct. 17 at Guilford College, the first-term incumbent dutifully rose from his chair after each question, took measured steps to a big “X” taped to the floor as a staging aid, carefully planted his feet, then had his say.

The mayor is equally steadfast on the issues. He chooses where he’ll stand and will not budge.

His opponent, eight-term Councilman Robbie Perkins, 56, is smoother and more nuanced. But whatever differences in their styles, each man has staked out his position and given voters a clear choice in Tuesday’s general election.

Knight, 71, still defends a divisive and ultimately failed attempt to reopen the White Street Landfill to household garbage. Perkins opposed it from the start and was one of its most ardent critics.

Knight, a retired CPA, opposes a proactive policy for rental-unit inspections that had markedly reduced substandard housing in Greensboro. Perkins supports the policy, which was overturned last summer in the General Assembly.

Knight pledges he won’t raise taxes, period, over the next two years. Perkins says it depends on the situation.

Perkins says the current council is splintered and “dysfunctional.” Knight disagrees, saying that more tough decisions are made out in the open now.

Perkins enthusiastically endorsed the city-funded swim center. Knight opposed it.

Whichever way voters go at the polls, there shouldn’t be much indecision. There certainly isn’t here.

In style and in substance, Perkins, who outpolled Knight by 14 percentage points in the Oct. 11 primary, is easily the more assured, effective leader. He articulates his vision for the city more clearly and thoughtfully. He made valid points during the heated landfill debates that the process was flawed and lacked critical data. Perkins fought, unsuccessfully, to bring more information about solid waste options to the table. Knight and three allies on the council blocked those efforts and seemed not to want to hear all of the facts.

Knight also is unusually reclusive for an elected official. When asked on Oct. 17 about his accessibility, he touted being available in his office, but seems less than eager to meet constituents on their turf — especially those who may differ with him. He also has curtailed public comments during council meetings by relegating the majority of those comments to the very end of the agenda, whenever that comes.

Perkins sees the value of setting priorities and finding common ground on a council that has spent too much energy on its differences. And he wants to play a more aggressive role as “a cheerleader” and facilitator for economic recruitment.

Some see Perkins’ day job as a developer as a potential source of conflicts. And as mayor instead of a council member, Perkins would need to learn greater patience and humility. He’s hardly lacking in self-confidence.

But he’s bright and experienced and fluent on the issues throughout the city. He would make an effective mayor.