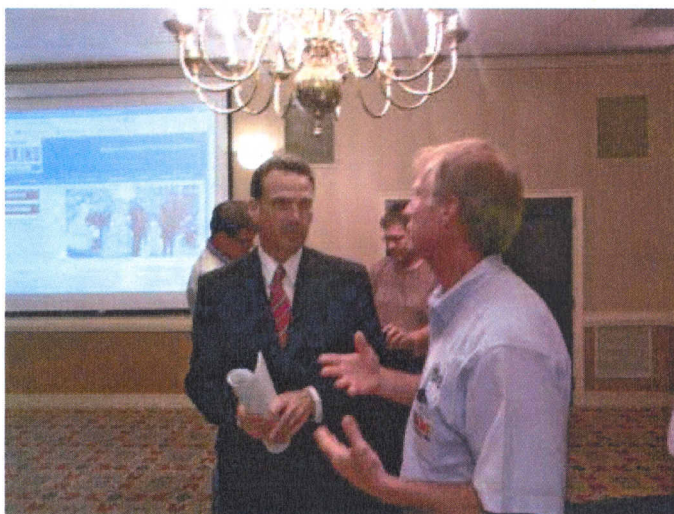




Perkins makes Greensboro mayoral bid official



Greensboro City Councilman Robbie Perkins (left) speaks with a constituent after holding a press conference to announce plans to run for mayor.

At-large Councilman Robbie Perkins announced plans to run for mayor of Greensboro today at the headquarters of the Greater Greensboro Regional Realtors Association, joking that only a celebrated black bear wandering the city didn't know of his intentions.

Perkins has served on city council for 16 years, and last year he acknowledged plans to run for mayor. Campaign Manager Ross Harris said she and her client have been planning the bid for 25 years.

The candidate will face incumbent Mayor Bill Knight and former Councilman Tom Phillips in a municipal election this year.

Perkins made his announcement surrounded by friends in the real-estate industry, including developer Roy Carroll and lawyer Henry Isaacson.

"The realtors and the builders have been my base for my candidacy for 17-18 years," Perkins said. "In fact, before I even got into politics, Trip Brown and I worked to get an organization together that was the precursor of TREBIC way back when. And we started that because we wanted better communication with the city and the county because we knew that we were creating jobs doing what we were doing for a living and we needed to communicate with

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the city and the county as to what they were doing with their regulations.”

Chester “Trip” Brown Jr. is the chairman of the board of Brown Investment Properties. The organization they helped establish, the Triad Real Estate and Building Industries Coalition, or TREBIC, is a prominent player in city-county politics and has been involved with virtually every aspect of city policy concerning land use and housing. Despite the close relationship, Perkins has become a vocal supporter of the city’s proactive rental housing inspection program, which TREBIC has attempted to dismantle.

Perkins is the president of NAI Piedmont Triad, a commercial real estate company.

“If you’ve got a conflict, you disclose the conflict and you abstain,” the candidate told a reporter after the press conference, adding that he believes the benefits of being involved in the real estate industry outweigh the negatives. He pointed out that Winston-Salem Mayor Allen Joines is the president of the Winston-Salem Alliance, an economic development organization.

“He speaks the language,” Perkins said.

Perkins has frequently sparred with more conservative members of the council, and today he sounded notes of unity.

“I’ve got a history of trying to listen to folks from all over this community and trying to incorporate their thoughts and their visions in my decisions as to how I vote on this council,” he said. “I think everybody’s got good ideas, and we’re daggone lucky to have everybody in this community, and we need to listen to everyone and we need to move forward together.”

As mayor, Perkins said he would maintain a focus on downtown to protect its tax base, continue a commitment to revitalize the High Point Road corridor by building on the investment of the new aquatic center, maintain the city’s celebrated parks system and support medians for the purpose of beautifying roadways. He also repeated a common refrain — that the city needs to maintain an investment in its water and sewer system.

“If you don’t have a scheduled maintenance program or a public utility that size, it will fail at some point,” Perkins said. “And if you look around this state, every water and sewer system except for Greensboro has raised their water rates, and they’re doing it for a reason. The federal regulations are expensive to comply with and the infrastructure is aging. And if you don’t stay ahead of it, you will get very far behind in a heartbeat, and it will be much more expensive.”

Perkins cited the wisdom of two former mayors, along with former District 5 Councilman Lonnie Revels. Perkins said he and former Mayor Keith Holliday were once political rivals and he considered running against him a decade ago.

“If I would take one thing away from Keith Holliday, it’s that he would look at someone and they may be saying something that’s completely different from

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Keith's position, but he would respect them, look at them, hear what they said, try to take something away from them and then thank them for sharing their perspective."

Perkins has enjoyed a long political alliance with former Mayor Yvonne Johnson, who was defeated after serving only one term by Knight two years ago.

"What she taught me was to listen to people, say a prayer about it and do the right thing," Perkins said. "And if you do that, more times than not, things are going to be all right."

Perkins said, if elected, his first act as mayor would be to reverse a decision by Bill Knight to put the speakers-from-the-floor segment at the end of the meeting, adding that the decision eroded public trust.

Perkins has been at odds with the council's conservative majority throughout the past 18 months over the reopening of the White Street Landfill. Although it appears the landfill will reopen, Perkins said he isn't giving up.

"I've appealed to our city council, and I have failed in that appeal — they're going to reopen White Street, and I am adamantly opposed to reopening it — don't sign a 15-year contract," he said. "Do it with city forces so that when the regional facilities come online we can all enjoy the cost sharing between Winton-Salem — High Point's only got three or four years left. Winston-Salem's got about 14. When you can combine all of that into one central facility and then recycle, it makes a lot of sense."

Perkins also indicated that he would capitalize on the Obama administration's investment in high-speed rail to advance sustainable development in downtown Greensboro.

"One of the real opportunities we're going to have is there will be high-speed rail between New York City and Charlotte at some point in time," he said. "And it will come right through Greensboro, North Carolina. And we need to be planning for very high-density development in the area of that high-speed rail. It will come right through the Douglas Galyon Depot. That's the area that needs to be very high-density development. Now, you go to other cities that have that type of circulation — there are going to be a lot of people living in that realm because there will be people commuting to Charlotte, Raleigh, Washington DC right out of the center of Greensboro."

POSTED BY JORDAN GREEN ON 5/31/2011

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