

Vicki Almond on issues - Where's the vision?

prepared by Save Baltimore County 2018

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After viewing several candidate forums and debates, Save Baltimore County 2018 observed a pattern of avoidance in Vicki Almond's discussion of the issues. The following chart includes her complete verbatim answers to questions asked on a variety of issues. Video of the forums can be viewed on the YouTube Channel "Save Baltimore County 2018."

Save Baltimore County are community members and activists who want better government in Baltimore County.

Key:

1. Restating the obvious (wants, needs and problems)
2. Defend the status quo
3. One-size-fits all solution: Identify partners and stakeholders; then sit down at the table and talk
4. Inaccuracies or misrepresentations

Issue	Date/Event	Statement
DEVELOPMENT - Open Space, Green Space and commitment to balanced development		
Your support of residential development and for subdivision of existing parcels is the concern. This is an area where we have a real concern for your commitment to the environment and the quality of life that makes Baltimore County unique.	3/19/18 WYPR Midday	I do believe that I'm very committed to the environment. I'm very committed to balance as far as our growth goes, whether it's commercial, whether it's residential, whatever it may be. It has to be balanced. Do we need more green space, absolutely we do. And we can do that. I think it's a matter of holding people accountable when we are building, when we are developing. Let's put these amenities into the plan. And really let's make a serious...that we want green space; we want walking paths; we want bike paths; and we need to make make that a part of the project. <i>The host asks whom she would turn to for expertise. She mentions the planning department and planning board. Then she goes on to say: You have to have a relationship with other folks who are responsible for the growth and for moving into Baltimore County. You have to build a relationship with them of one of trust, one of communication and sit down and say, 'Hey, this isn't going to happen unless you help me out here. When another caller complains about overdevelopment, the host asks if there is any sort of guiding criteria that you have when you weigh the advantages of development against the suppression of development.</i> I

		mean we have zoning in Baltimore County which is one of the biggest jobs that the Baltimore County Council does. And zoning issues come up every four years in Baltimore County unlike some others. And we take into consideration; I believe we do, where residential growth is going, where commercial growth is going.
I have multiple concerns about all the development (in Towson), that its ever going to get built, we're going to have a lot of vacancies, but also traffic. Where do you see this going? What do you see for that area and traffic?	2/13/18 Candidates Forum at the Central Democratic Club	There are some things that we're doing. Towson Row is going to be shovels in the dirt soon. That's going to be happening. But what are we going to do about the traffic? And cyclists? And we want walkable communities. But you can't have walkable communities if you don't have any place for people to walk. We need open space, we need recreation. There's so many things that need to be planned for and we're working on those plans every day, but right now is kind of piecemeal. The vision for Towson changes.
What's your plan for to stop overdevelopment and loss of green space throughout Baltimore County?	4/11/18 CE debate at Towson University	It's a matter of working together and developing partnerships with the environmental community, with the NeighborSpace community. We need that balance, and it's important that we look to everyone for their ideas. We need to pay attention to the details in Baltimore County and I don't think we've done in quite a while. It's all about quality of life issues. I've been on the Council for 8 years. I know what Baltimore County does well and I know where we need improvement and our environment is certainly one of them. But its all about a balance with residences. We need senior housing desperately. Our people are living longer. So we need to figure out how we're going to do all of this and make it work together. I think with the smart people around you and letting people be creative and come to you with their ideas and listen to their ideas, we can get these things done. We really can.
GOOD GOVERNMENT – transparency, access to information, campaign finance, etc.		
How will you reduce or eliminate fraud, waste and abuse?	3/19/18 WYPR Midday	I think there are a lot of ways that we can be more efficient and more effective. And that to me, when we're looking at communities and underserved communities, you know, there are ways to...Baltimore County government is all about quality of life issues. It's about picking up the trash and having good schools and plowing the snow and

having public safety. Those are all things that community people need and want and deserve quite frankly, they're paying taxes for that. And I think that we have to look at Baltimore County as a whole. We have to get out of our little bubble and take a look at all parts of Baltimore County and how regionally we're being affected by other counties and by the city itself. So it's going to take a lot of discussion and a lot of work, but I do think we can get there.

STORM WATER TAX

"Only two years ago when you were council president, the council repealed that precious source of funding to clean up our environment and meet our goals under the Chesapeake Bay consent agreement, do you regret that now?"

3/19/18 WYPR Midday

"One of the reasons that we repealed that fee is that we didn't feel like it was doing what it was supposed to do.* It was putting more of a burden on our business folks and some of our homeowners than it was supposed to. I think that will be probably be revisited at some point, but the way it was set up at the time I do not think it was a benefit for my constituents or my business community."

***Vince Gardina informed a member of the Green Towson Alliance that after the storm water tax was repealed by the County Council all Chesapeake Bay remediation work in the County (community tree plantings and street sweeping) except stream restorations that were already under contract were cancelled.**

SCHOOLS

On Replacing DHS and signing a letter to Kevin Kamenetz stating: any decisions to fund a new high school for Dulaney as well as other equally deserving initiatives must await a considered judgment of the next county executive.

2/13/18 Candidates Forum at the Central Democratic Club

It's all about the relationships, its all about process and planning. That's what I want to see happen in our schools, I want us to... this is a mess! This is a terrible mess. I want us to put this all on the table and figure out how we're going to get you your new school, but we've got to put the brakes on for now. It can't just happen. And I'm sorry but the present administration, they don't have any idea how they are going to pay for it. They're going to put planning money in this year's budget and in 2019 they're going to walk away and go, "Oh well." So let's fix it now. Let's not wait until 2019. Let's figure out how we're going to do this: can we get more bond money? Can we get more money from the state? Can we borrow more money? Let's figure out what we can do to solve this problem. Not just let it wait another five years or ten years because that's not the way to do it. But we have to figure out the proper way to do it. And we're going to have to borrow more money and if we have to do that, I say do it. Let's just get this done. Let's build

		Dulaney. Let's build Towson. Let's take care of the other schools that we've got to take care of and bite the bullet because otherwise this is going to continue forever and ever and ever.
		Everybody talks a bout universal pre-K. Love to have universal pre-K. Where are we going to put them? How are we going to bring in the teachers and assistants for that? What happened to the maintenance money, where did it go? It's bigger questions than just one school and I know there are a lot of issues with our schools. There are a lot of schools that need renovation, there are a lot of schools that need replacing, but what have we done with the maintenance money all these years? Did you let your house go, did you just decide not to paint it or do whatever? I don't know, these are questions that we really do need answers to.
Q. My child is at Towson High, which is now one of the most overcrowded schools in the County with 6 trailers on site. How will this be addressed?	4/11/18 CE debate at Towson University	I am in favor of all these new schools, but they are all over the county. It's not just in Towson, they are all over the county. And when you spend time out of the bubble of Towson and into the rest of the County, you see the inequity all around the county. Yes, Towson needs a school. So does Dulaney. So does Patapsco. So does Landsowne. We have to figure out how we're going to do that.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
On economic development	4/25/18 The Chamber of Commerce Executive debate	We have an excellent economic development department and workforce department, so I differ with my colleagues on that. I think the only thing we need to do is turn them loose and we will see some exciting things happen
Baltimore County has seen some terrific job creation opportunities in the past few years. What will you do to maintain and celebrate this job momentum? What are your plans to increase job opportunities for African	4/14/18 Morning Star Baptist Church	Investors investing in our county is what we need. Our economic development department has not been as forward thinking as I would like them to be. We don't seem to go after big business and sometimes we don't take as good of care of our small businesses as we can. We need to get rid of some of the loopholes. We need to make the process smarter and simpler when it comes to permitting, when it comes to building your business and finding your property and going through all the legalese of everything. That small business, that medium business, it's all important. Tradepoint Atlantic as was

Americans with criminal backgrounds?		mentioned is coming, Route 43 in White March, Red Run Boulevard, Owings Mills Boulevard. There is a lot of excitement going on in Baltimore County. And I think we need to take that excitement and run with it. I think we need to build up our investors who are coming to our County. We need re-development in many parts of Baltimore County. We need revitalization in many parts of Baltimore County. Since I've been on the Council I've seen how diverse Baltimore County has become. We are a very different county than we were eight years ago. Let's celebrate that diversity. Let's offer the jobs to everyone. Let's move forward: talk about job fairs. Our great community colleges that we have. They can be partners with us. In business in job creation and we need to use those partnerships and use them wisely.
What role as County Executive would you play to promote small businesses from tech start-up to small community based service companies?	4/14/18 debate at Morning Star Baptist Church	I do agree that our chambers of commerce are very important for members of the small business initiative. I also believe that Baltimore County can get rid of a lot of the red tape that we expect small business people to get through right now. And that's in the permitting office and we can streamline that. We can use technology. We don't have to make it so hard for people that want to start a small business. I know at our colleges we have some of the incubator programs now, very successful one in Catonsville. I also believe in mentorships in the large businesses actually mentoring those small businesses or those entrepreneurs who really want to start their own business and add to our tax base. And I also believe that Baltimore County has a small business resource center that hasn't been marketed very well, but there is a lot of information through that small business resource center for small businesses just getting started and trying to move on. So I think there are many things we can do to create more of a good, welcoming atmosphere for small business.
OPIOD CRISIS		
The opioid epidemic is an issue facing our Country and our County, what steps would you take as County Executive to address this crisis?	4/11/18 CE debate at Towson University	I'd like to tackle to opioid crisis with some of the same partnerships and vigor that we attacked the Spice issue. Spice is a dangerous drug that was geared toward our most vulnerable young children. And through partnerships with Scott Shellenburger, with the chief of police and other community partners we were able to put legislation together to rid the county of that dangerous drug. We need more resources for opioid addiction. Talking to our local hospitals and rehab centers for opioid treatment and I think it's important moving forward that we talk with our

health officials who are the experts in the field and we set up these centers to help people with addiction – opioids as well as other drug addictions.

ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES

What steps would you take to improve transportation in Baltimore County?

4/11/18 CE debate at Towson University

At Trade Point Atlantic, the folks who are in charge there and have done wonders with the Sparrows Point site, they have busses there now and will be bringing workers to TPA. It needs to be a regional approach with the city and with the surrounding counties because adding another lane to the beltway I don't think is going to make a difference. And I think it's important to begin those talks regionally as soon as possible to see what...and to look at other parts of the country to see what they are doing and how they are solving their infrastructure problems. We have some very aging pipes and water pipes in the city and the county that we need to pay attention to and be proactive instead of reactive. I think it's a very important thing to do.

Traffic is increasing in our most developed areas, how would you address this as County Executive?

4/14/18 debate at Morning Star Baptist Church

We have expanded our department of public works to include walkability to include bike trails to look at different pieces of transportation that our people and our constituents have asked us to look at. That's all drive n by you and what your want us to do and we heard that. Now that's one of the things we are doing in Baltimore County. I do believe that we have an obligation to our constituents to move the transportation piece forward. Right now it's difficult to fix it. We have let it be for a while and I think we need to move forward and really talk to the experts; bring people who have done this before in other counties and other parts of the country and just surround ourselves with the best and brightest people.

***Bill 19-18 sponsored by David Marks proposed a Charter Amendment to modify the functions of the Department of Public Works to include mobility using a variety of transportation options including highways, bike lanes, pedestrian improvements nad transit where appropriate. The Charter amendment will be voted on in the general election.**

HEALTHCARE

What role can you as CE play to expand health

4/14/18 debate at Morning Star Baptist

Some issues that we deal with in local government come from the top from the federal government and the state government and we are kind

<p>care access particularly for our most vulnerable citizens – children and seniors.</p>	<p>Church</p>	<p>of left with whatever they decided to do as it pertains to us. One of the things that I'm concerned about is to make sure that our Baltimore County employees keep their good health care and that our retirees also have good healthcare. As you know our seniors are some of our most vulnerable populations and as you get older you obviously need healthcare more than perhaps you did when you were younger. So my role on the local government is to make sure that our people have good health insurance, that our retirees have good health insurance. And we need to work with our Federal representatives and closely with our state representatives to see how we can make things better. Prices are unbelievable, the drug manufacturers have just gone to extremes. And I think these are all things that we can work on as a team as a group; State, Federal, Local government.</p>
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FAIR HOUSING

<p>Where do you stand on the HOME act and if not the Home act how would you support housing in Baltimore County. Would you cap off rent increases in apartments?</p>	<p>4/14/18 debate at Morning Star Baptist Church</p>	<p>This is a very emotional issue for many people and in Baltimore County we have so many issue in our neighborhoods with rental properties that are not being taken care of properly and it's mostly because of management who have said we'll rent to anybody and that's fine but they don't follow up with making sure that the rental properties are keeping up with the rest of the neighborhood and that we have clean neighborhoods that we have neighborhoods that anyone would want to live in. We need to spread out the poverty in Baltimore County. We can't just keep it in one place or in another place; it has to be spread out across Baltimore County. And I think that working with Social Services, working with the Aging department that we can come up with some solutions on the housing issue. We have some great neighborhoods in Baltimore County and I think getting to know our neighbors, may sound cliché but it's such an important part of what community is all about. And just because someone isn't rich. When I was growing up my mom and I lived in an apartment complex for 11 years and there were many, many different kinds of people who came and went, who were friends and who were not friends but we all worked it out and today we don't seem to be able to do that in a cooperative manner and I think it's a change in attitude and atmosphere in Baltimore County that needs to happen first.</p>
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PUBLIC SAFETY

<p>What investments are</p>	<p>4/14/18 debate at</p>	<p>We do have one of the better police departments in the nation. It is an</p>
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<p>needed to ensure that Baltimore County remains safe? Are there any plans for keeping the current police chief?</p>	<p>Morning Star Baptist Church</p>	<p>incredible police department. it is run well. Are there things that can be improved, of course there always are. When we talk about engaging our youth with more recreational opportunities, bringing back police to the PAL centers, bringing back the PAL centers, having basketball games, having softball games, having recreation with our officers. And also in recruitment, lets have our police department look more like our communities. Let's have some more diversity throughout our police department as we're recruiting. I think it's extremely important that we do that so that people can relate. Resources, cars, up-to-date technology. We have a mental health crisis team that many of you probably don't know about and it is an amazing part of our police department. We're also putting together a crisis team for our school resource officer program. And they will be able to go to any school where they need to be on a moment's notice. And that's something that we're doing moving forward and that I as County Executive will do moving forward. I believe that this police chief is only here for a short time while this administration is here, there will definitely be a new police chief. But I also want to take a moment to talk about fire and paramedics. They are incredibly important. We have a wonderful volunteer and paid fire department and we need to work on the recruitment of those as well. Volunteers are kind of by the wayside these days if you look anywhere; in our schools in our volunteer fire companies. In so many places our volunteerism is down. And we need to bring that back up. We need to excite people again about being a part of their community and being a part of the solution and not just a part of the problem. So we have an incredible fire department, paramedics and one of the best police departments in the nation.</p>
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RECREATION

<p>What would be your plans to increase recreational activities for the youth in Baltimore County?</p>	<p>4/14/18 debate at Morning Star Baptist Church</p>	<p>In my travels around Baltimore County you can see the inequities. When you leave the little bubble of Towson and you go north, east, south and west you can see where there are definitely inequities exist. And I saw this and I passed a bill, the tourism bill. And In this tourism bill we're going to take 8 percent of the 8 percent hotel tax and re-invest it back in our communities. That's how we're going to pay for recreation. That's how we're going to pay for educational things in our parks. That's how we're going to pay for programs for our children and for our adults. Our families need rec time as well. It's not just about our</p>
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<p>MINIMUM WAGE</p>		
<p>Do you support a \$15/hour minimum wage in Baltimore County?</p>	<p>4/14/18 debate at Morning Star Baptist Church</p>	<p>Yes. On the Council we have discussed the minimum wage a lot. It's been one of our topics. We have not come to an agreement as a County Council on how we would implement it. It is something we would like to do all at one time? Is it something that we would do in increments over a period of time? So that is one of the questions that we are struggling with as a council before we put in legislation to implement this, I believe life changing legislation.</p>
<p>DIVERSITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE</p>		
<p>What would you do to</p>	<p>4/14/18 debate at</p>	<p>As I mentioned before with our police department and our fire</p>