

Maurice Neblett responses:

1. How would you work to implement the proposals outlined in RVA Green2050 and the Climate Equity Action Plan 2030? Would you take a different approach to climate planning, or continue the RVA Green2050 program?

As mayor of Richmond, I'd fully support the RVA Green2050 plan and the Climate Equity Action Plan 2030. These initiatives provide a solid blueprint for addressing climate change in our city while ensuring equity is at the center. However, I believe we must also remain flexible and open to new, innovative approaches that meet the evolving needs of our residents. Richmond needs a climate strategy that listens to the community, especially those most impacted by climate challenges, so no one is left behind as we move forward.

2. What proposals would you make to support the Office of Sustainability, and how would you encourage other city departments to adopt sustainable, carbon-neutral and environmentally beneficial practices?

I believe in giving Richmond's Office of Sustainability the resources and authority to truly lead our green transformation. That means increasing funding and making sure all city departments, including Public Utilities and Public Works, align with our sustainability goals. I'll work to encourage every department in Richmond to adopt carbon-neutral practices by setting clear targets and offering support to meet them. Together, we can build a greener, more resilient Richmond.

3. How would you manage the competing needs of DPU gas system customers and city carbon emissions reductions? Would you support a study on the future of the system and ways to move away from natural gas?

I understand the challenge of balancing the needs of DPU's natural gas customers while also reducing Richmond's carbon footprint. We must carefully manage this transition, ensuring that no one is left behind economically while we explore sustainable energy options. I would support a study to evaluate the future of Richmond's natural gas system and ways we can responsibly move away from it. This is about creating a just transition for our residents as we work toward a cleaner energy future. Additionally, I advocate for increasing staff support to ensure a successful and equitable transition, all while maintaining strong regulatory standards and economic balance for DPU's natural gas customers.

4. The city recently restarted its Urban Forestry Commission and formed a Public Utilities and Service Commission. How would you approach working with these oversight commissions?

Richmond's Urban Forestry Commission and the Public Utilities and Service Commission play vital roles in ensuring we meet our sustainability goals. As mayor, I would collaborate closely with these commissions, valuing their oversight and expertise in shaping our policies. Richmond's tree canopy, infrastructure, and utility systems need to reflect a sustainable, long-term vision that both meets the needs of our residents and protects our environment.

5. How would you manage Richmond's heat islands and the growing threat of extreme heat in the city?

Addressing Richmond's Heat Islands and Extreme Heat: Heat islands are a growing problem in Richmond, especially in our most vulnerable neighborhoods. I'll work to expand Richmond's tree canopy, prioritize green infrastructure, and create more public green spaces, especially in areas most affected by extreme heat. Additionally, we need to ensure that residents have access to cooling centers and emergency services during heat waves. I also advocate for creating a bus hub station offering public shelter, similar to those in cities like Washington, D.C., with features such as sheltered waiting areas, real-time transit information, and safety enhancements. This hub would benefit both local residents and visitors by providing comfort during extreme weather, increasing transit accessibility, and promoting safe, reliable public transportation. Combatting extreme heat is about protecting the health and well-being of all Richmonders.

6. How would you prioritize addressing the causes and mitigating the effects of climate change in the context of all the other things city government has to do?

Tackling climate change goes hand in hand with addressing other key challenges in Richmond, like true affordable housing, transportation, and public health. The way we manage our climate efforts impacts these issues directly. As mayor, I'll ensure Richmond's climate policies are integrated into every city department, so we make progress across the board. For instance, when we develop true affordable housing, we'll also focus on energy efficiency and green space. I also plan to form a coalition with organizations like the Sierra Club to combat for environmental justice and ensure our efforts are strong and effective.

Climate action isn't a separate issue, it's a core part of building a stronger, more sustainable Richmond for the future.