

January 20, 2009

The Honorable Members of City Council
City of Richmond
900 E. Broad Street, Room 200
Richmond, VA 23219

I am formally applying for the City Council representative appointment in Richmond's 7th District, where I have lived for more than 10 years. I am currently the managing director of [Leisure Business Advisors LLC](#), a local consulting firm that provides planning services. More details on my employment history are provided in the attached [resume](#).

As part of my local civic duty, I have assisted many community leaders and continue to do so. I voluntarily served as the City of Richmond's Liaison Consultant for the Performing Arts Committee in 2006, and helped cooperatively resolve this difficult issue. The committee's report recommended a scaled-down compromise plan that included City ownership of the Carpenter Center and Mayoral appointment of board members. My efforts at that time were profiled in an [October 2006 article](#) in the Richmond Times-Dispatch. The committee's recommended approach was approved by City Council.

I later served as the City Administration's Consultant for School System Funding, and presented a [summation report](#) of earlier evaluations with additional recommendations at a [March 2007 press conference](#). I advocated a "save and invest" approach to better spending that would shift more resources to aspects that directly benefit students. I also recommended that the City of Richmond provide financial incentives to Richmond Public Schools for increasing efficiency. I was briefly an unofficial liaison between City Administration and the School Board afterwards, but was unable to help prevent the subsequent confrontation from deepening. My formal role in that issue ended in the summer of 2007, and I was not involved with the attempted eviction of the School Board from City Hall or the call for an appointed School Board. If asked at that time, I would not have supported either effort. Instead, I informally advised individual

School Board members and continue to do so. I have personal insights into this important issue, since I have an education degree from William & Mary and was a public school teacher before becoming a business consultant.

As a leisure development expert, I have commented on local issues involving my expertise. In February 2005, I [spoke to City Council](#) about financing aspects involving the proposed new [baseball stadium](#) and commented in the Richmond Times-Dispatch about its [financing](#) and [planning](#). I continue to closely monitor this issue.

I served as an [election officer in my home precinct \(#707\)](#), the largest in the 7th District, and helped handle the strong voter turnout last November. I am proud to have been reappointed for this election year.

I feel that I have work habits that would benefit me if appointed. Due to the nature of my consulting work, I have often needed to quickly learn new subjects and make judgments concerning the best future approach. Typical studies last 6 to 12 weeks from start to conclusion. I am comfortable speaking in public, and I understand the importance of professional conduct and courtesy.

I welcome this opportunity to expand my involvement in local affairs. If appointed to the 7th District City Council seat, I would not run in the special election this November and would not endorse a candidate in that election. Instead, I am committing to spend considerable time voluntarily advising the winner of that election afterwards, whoever that may be. I feel that this is the best way to ensure continuity and fairness in my district.

I am following recent experience in the 7th District. In 1999, Sherwood T. White was appointed as our City Council representative until a special election later that year. [A Richmond Times-Dispatch article at that time](#) reported that it "was White's promise that he won't run for election in the special election that helped get him appointed" by City Council because several members "said they didn't want to give any potential candidates an advantage by appointing them to the seat."

That special election was won by former Councilwoman, now Delegate, Delores L. McQuinn. I am confident that the special election this November will also provide our district with a representative that we will be proud of. Looking back at the previous situation, a [2003 Richmond Times-Dispatch editorial](#) noted that former Councilman White's service was "brief but effective" and that "Ms. McQuinn has received her district's mandates."

When Oliver Rodney Hunt Singleton was earlier appointed to the district seat in 1992, [he too pledged not to run in later elections.](#) Historically, incumbency has been particularly important in our district. In the 30+ years since district representation began in 1977, [the 7th District has only elected three individuals as City Council representative.](#)

I look forward to talking with you about this opportunity, and please tell me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

John Gerner