

INTERVIEW WITH ORANGE MAYORAL CANDIDATE DWAYNE WARREN

BY DHIREN SHAH

The Orange Mayoral election on May 8, 2012 will be very interesting. March 7th is the deadline for filing a petition for the nomination. So far, four people have shown interest in running for the mayoral post: incumbent Eldridge Hawkins, Jr., Edward Marable, Jr., Janice Morrell, and Dwayne Warren.

Warren announced in his campaign kickoff on February 2nd that he was running on a team with incumbent councilman Elroy Corbitt, Dwight Holmes, and April Gaunt-Butler for councilmember-at-large. There are three councilmember-at-large positions up for grabs.

The kickoff event was held at Southern Café on Central Avenue in Orange, and I noticed about 110 people there.

On Monday, February 7th, I interviewed the mayoral candidate for our readers to get to know him and make their own decision.



Orange Mayoral Candidate Dwayne Warren speaking at the kickoff event

Dhiren Shah: Mr. Warren, I welcome you to this interview. When did you decide to run for mayor?

Dwayne Warren: A year ago.

DS: As a lawyer, you have to protect your client, as a former judge you have to be a neutral, and as a mayor, if you got elected, you have to make many deals which may or may not be neutral. What is your opinion?

DW: As a mayor, I advocate for citizens. I wouldn't call it deals. That is policy and proposals, and I have to protect the residents who live in Orange. I will be a zealous advocate.

DS: Do you have any management experience?

DW: Yes. I do have private sector experience. I ran my own law business and handled the financial aspect of it. I handled financed of the employees, managed the budget, worked with public sector, and I know how to operate and employ people. I supervised as many as seven attorneys, 6 paralegals, and dozens of outside contractors.

DS: Do you still own the same business?

DW: Yes.

DS: In what capacity are you working with the city of Orange?

DW: As a legislative research officer. I work for the city council in terms of drafting legislation or refusing legislation. I make a salary of \$15,000, which is paid by the council budget. Whenever the council seeks thorough research, I provide the service. I have

attended all council meetings and special meetings, including executive meetings.

DS: What changes can you bring to Orange?

DW: I will bring property tax reduction. That is one way to bring business into town. Businesses have to pay their fair share, and I will propose revaluation and make sure it passes through the legislation. Currently, it was tried number of times, but due to lack of leadership it failed. Many properties that are beyond the tax abatement limit still pay the same reduced rates. I will advocate through the council, and the council can open the books for the tax abatement properties. After 5 years, all tax abatement properties should be reviewed, and re-negotiated if necessary. Before giving abatement, we should check if any property can be developed without tax abatement.

Also, who determines the developed properties on Central Avenue and Center Street are fully rented or not? They have never reported to the council to this effect. If the council does not get this information, then the administration should get that information.

I will enforce to upkeep the properties that are abandoned. The banks who own them should keep up the properties. There are some blighted properties next to the people who take care of their properties very well.

DS: What other services do you want to improve in Orange?

DW: Public safety is very important. I will have a better plan of policing. My chief concerns are senior centers and youth centers.

DS: Do you think there are enough activities in the town?

DW: No. We have to get our pool back. I volunteered as a football coach. We should have fields or centers for the children to practice. There are very few activities, like the municipal chess club and school-wide spelling bee. I will bring more activities for the children.

DS: Can you mention one good thing done by Mayor Hawkins and one bad thing?

DW: Yes. Let's talk about the best. When he was running into trouble for having multiple jobs in the city, he tried to seek advice of their vice council, and eventually giving up the other jobs was a good thing. The worst thing is taking the jobs at first place.

DS: In a bad economy, how has Orange performed?

DW: Tough. Against history it sounds good. Based on the thoughts of individual residents, it hurts. The people that the mayor is hiring at every stage are not good. Door to door, people are hurting. I also saw the economics of the public contracts and the hiring practices for the Orange residents. Orange residents should be hired first.

DS: What is more important in the hiring practice in your opinion, merit or residency?

DW: Choose either or. We have highly skilled people. Merit is given first. Merit or people in the pool of Orange, and choose one of those to hire.

DS: How will you deal with other cities surrounding Orange?

DW: I will go to West Orange and East Orange. I will keep joint border patrols also with the Sheriff's



The Warren Team

Department. Orange is only 2.2 square miles, and if we take out the parks it is only 1.6 square miles. I work with the East Orange Police Department and West Orange Police Department. I have worked with the Sheriff's Department as one of the attorneys. I have experience.

DS: I heard that you were about to announce your kickoff date in September, then on January 15, and finally did it on February 2, 2012. Why did you postpone it twice?

DW: Initially, we started to kickoff with a youth campaign, then campaign for home owners, then with a seniors' roundtable, and finally we had our general kickoff for the entire campaign.

DS: What is the home ownership initiative kickoff?

DW: The homeowners are the hardest hit. It was a huge turnout. There were 75 families from Orange, a rep from HUD, a representative from senior services, representative from the State, and a number of lawyers from the banks which owns the properties. We have a foreclosure defense.

DS: If you are elected as a mayor, what will you try to defend the citizens from, a tax hike, the county tax, the school board tax or local property tax?

DW: I tried to defend the PILOT (Pay In Lew Of Taxes) Program. They do not pay any taxes to the school board. How do we get other money into the schools? We have to raise those lost taxes to the school.

DS: Thank you for your time, and good luck.



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