Thanks for having me again at CCR and hope y’all will invite me back next year, here are some responses to the extra questions posed:

John J. Tecklenburg, Mayor, City of Charleston

Q  How do we move away from the rank partisanship you've experienced during your tenure as Mayor?
A  I think by focusing on common sense solutions to challenges that impact all our citizens like flooding, public safety, affordable housing, and quality of life issues. In today's world, I don't think you can eliminate the extreme partisanship, but I think it can be softened by focusing on the basics. I remember when I first ran and someone insisted on knowing if I was a D or an R, and I replied, Hey, I'll tell you what, if I'm Mayor and your house catches on fire, I'm not going to ask if you're D or R, we're just going to get the firefighters there as fast as we can to put out your fire!

Q  How do you view life in Charleston after the pandemic?
A  In some ways more subdued, but I believe we're getting to a new normal, we have to use the tools now available and known to us when appropriate (vaccines, masks, boosters), and be more attentive to our health which is a good thing, but by doing so there's no reason we can't do business and enjoy most of the things we did pre-pandemic.

Q  What type of citizen input is most valuable for you and your colleagues?
A  Constructive!

Q  How are you planning for your succession? What is your next career move?
A  I love my job and serving my home town and happy to serve another term if our citizens concur, but no other career moves planned other than enjoying my family and playing the piano!

Q  How do you see the local politics especially with respect to Charleston's continued growth?
A  Growth is a condition that SC and particularly the coastal region is subject to whether we like it or not, many folks continue to move here and compounded even by the pandemic, so the challenge is to limit that growth to areas that make sense in terms of infrastructure, utilities, public transit, etc., and do all we can with every issue to maintain and improve our quality of life.

Q  How have the learnings from governing Charleston been exported to help other metropolitan areas? What have we learned from other communities that may be applicable to Charleston?
A  I'm active with both US Conference of Mayors and a group that Mayor Bloomberg started called What Works Cities, and we're always sharing info and ideas on how to improve, leave things better than we found them. One example was when I heard at my first US Conference of Mayors meeting a presentation from Mayor Hancock of Denver regarding process improvement and how he created a training program for his employees called the
PEAK academy. Well I asked Mayor Hancock if I could send a few employees to Denver’s academy and of course he said yes. (The cooperation among US Mayors is truly impressive.) We now have a similar training program for process improvement in Charleston called BRIDGE Academy. Which stands for Building Resilient Innovative Data-driven Government Employees. We are gradually reviewing and improving all processes in City Government! And glad to say that a number of cities have borrowed our compilation of affordable housing strategies and resiliency efforts as well.

Q What are the greatest challenges besides climate control facing Charleston in the near future?

A Understanding that we must continually support public safety (police and fire), I think the next biggest challenge right now is addressing affordability of housing for our workforce and citizens.

Q One of our CCR members: “I realize the sidewalks in some parts of downtown are kept with old stones and concrete and uneven to keep a certain distinctive appearance of prior eras. The problem is perhaps especially for older adults, those sidewalks can be dangerous and result in injuries from falling. I do not know if this has come up before and to redo the sidewalks to a modern standard would be expensive. So, the question is: Are there plans to redo the sidewalks? I am sensitive to this issue because two years ago while still in Virginia I fell while walking our dog. It was early in the morning and I did not see black ice. I landed on my left knee and arm and completely tore the patellar tendon requiring surgery and a very long recovery to about 80 percent range of motion. If my left arm had also not hit the pavement, I would have hit my head on the fall. Updating the sidewalks is not as grand as other projects the mayor talked about but it is not trivial.”

A I concur and frustrated when I came into office despite the miles and miles of sidewalks in the city, and the miles where there are no sidewalks but should be, that there was relatively very little funding dedicated to sidewalks. I’ve tried to increase a bit but honestly challenged by our revenue shortfalls during covid. So I have asked Council to dedicate $1 million of our ARPA funds to get a higher level of funding this year. That being said, I wouldn’t recommend switching our bluestone and brick sidewalks, mostly downtown, to concrete. I believe in the historic areas it’s part of our character. And honestly, one of the other challenges over time, is growth and intrusion of tree roots from our lovely street trees. So yes, we need to dedicate more to repairs and new sidewalks where appropriate, but also be careful and live with the charm of the sidewalks with historic materials and amongst the trees.