



The GOP Podcast

Episode 6: Tom Toby for County Commission, Part 2

**Patti O'Neill:** What about the film industry? We all of us on this on this podcast, we love our community. We live here for a reason. We think it's fantastic. I get a great kick out of seeing our city on the big screen. Film is ebbed and flowed and ebbed and flowed. There is some benefit, I would think, in pursuing an an attractive environment for the film industry. It supports a lot of our hotels and motels in the off season. It provides work for construction workers. It provides work for small businesses who do catering.

**Tom Toby:** I am a big supporter of the film industry and it's because I used to work in it. I have done I was a set medic at the studios.

**Patti O'Neill:** Holding back?

**Tom Toby:** Oh yeah. I worked. I worked doing picture cars for the studio. I did a lot of transportation work. My towing business. I used to do a lot of work for the studios. The last time all the work was taken out of here and our and our our our studio industry was killed here. I lost \$46,000 in income that year because there was no more movie studio work. And I don't remember who said it, but somebody said, Oh, the studio workers are just transient. They come in, they come out. That was 100% false. I had known people that had worked steady in our film industry here, TV and movie for 20 years straight. They just went from one production to the next to the next to the next. I ended up watching a lot of people I know and really cared about. They had to move to Georgia to be able to follow the work when the studios were killed here and all the work went to Georgia. We lost a huge skilled labor base that left and had to go to Georgia. I'm glad to

see that stuff has been being put in place to get our film industry back. I'm glad to see that it is. It's growing and there are more pictures and stuff coming.

**Tom Toby:** I am a huge, huge supporter of our local film industry. I read a study one time that said one single production can touch as many as 300 separate small businesses in our area. The money. But then a production brings in to our local economy is phenomenal. Just in what you're talking about, it's catering, it's construction materials. It's it's rental. The studios pay to rent properties. They pay to rent buildings. They pay for all sorts of stuff. They they pay. I'm an old car guy. I know a bunch of guys with old hot rods and stuff. I've watched the studio rent these guys old cars, you know, and it's it's a small thing. They make a few bucks on renting their car for a period area of production, but it's money that the studios is pumping into our local economy. And it was devastating the last time that, you know, the left, you know, when when the studios got killed here and everything went to Georgia, it was devastating to watch that happen and how it affected lives. People that had built lives here, they own property here, they own houses here. Their kids were growing up here and going to school and all that had to be uprooted and gone.

**Reuel Sample:** People are coming up to you with hospital issues and questions about health care here in New Hanover County. What are you hearing and what are some of your answers to that?

**Tom Toby:** Like I said, I was a firefighter, an EMT for 26 years in this area. I was part of our local EMS systems and work directly with the hospital on a lot of stuff. Prior to the sale of Novant Health, New Hanover Regional Medical Center was one of the best hospitals in the country, and we had one of the highest cardiac conversion rates in this country right here in our little corner of southeastern North Carolina. I have people calling me almost daily about floors being closed at the hospital because they do not have enough staff. FEMA strike force ambulances being in New Hanover County because and it's twofold. They don't have enough staffing for the ambulances, which I just recently I talked with one of the directors of the local actual EMS system, and he said staffing wise, they're actually doing okay now. So our EMS units are being staffed. Pretty decent right now. The problem is, is when somebody gets to the hospital because they don't have staff in the hospital to process people through the ER and get them to a floor upstairs, those people are staying in ambulances out on the tarmac. I've heard

anywhere from 4 to 6 hours. And these are people that are calling and telling me, I just wanted you to know this because we know where you stand on the sale of the hospital.

**Tom Toby:** This is what happened to me. This is what happened to my mother. This is what happened to my aunt. Because once the paramedics pick up a patient, they can't just drive up to the hospital and drop them off. You have to maintain standard of care with that patient. So those medics are now tied up with that patient until they can turn them over to hospital staff. We don't have enough hospital staff. And I, I have had numerous conversations with employees at the hospital about why there's no staff there. I've had numerous conversations with travel nurses that because of the conditions and the working conditions of Novant have walked out of their contracts, you know, average patient ratio for a nurse should be 1 to 4. Over at Novant, they've been as many as 1 to 6, 1 to 7, and they were trying to push 1 to 9. And the nurses thankfully pushed back and were like, no, that is unsafe. We're not going to do that. And I also want to say this about our staff that is that is currently working there. At no point in trying to make the best of an absolutely horrendous situation, we as a community cannot say thank you to them enough.

**Tom Toby:** They know the situation sucks, but they're staying because they're committed to doing what they do. So we as a community, as bad as things are going with Novant right now, we need to make sure that we're not taking it out on the individual staff, the nursing, those that poor staff is so overworked right now it's not funny. And no one has done stuff like they put out a mass casualty recall for employees because they didn't have enough employees at the hospital to staff the hospital that they needed. And that was it was reported in the news and this and that. But I got firsthand account and information from employees that were recalled back to work, supposedly for a mass casualty incident, to find out that the mass casualty incident was they just didn't have enough staff in the hospital to handle the day to day flow in and out of the hospital. You know, there was been between four and five floors of the hospital closed at any one time because they do not have enough staff to keep those floors open. And that's why the E.R. is overcrowded. That's why the patient waiting room is overcrowded.

**Patti O'Neill:** How did we get here? Like, how do we get to this point? And as a county commissioner, how can you impact that? But how do we get to the point where New Hanover County thought it was a good idea to sell their hospital to Nova?

**Tom Toby:** That's a point I would like to know as well, to be quite honest with you, when all I knew, I had an inkling when that first was announced that it was you know, it was already a done deal before. You know, we right as we were being told that all the stuff now was just going to be making it palatable to the citizens. But the I don't know how we got to the sale hospital. I don't know who thought that was a good idea. I don't know what transpired. The board of commissioners that was in place at the time. That would be a question for those members.

**Reuel Sample:** Tom, I'm going to start wrapping this up here, but there's one other area I want to talk with you about. And it's a light hearted area because and it it just it tickles my fancy because I always like stories like this. You on your Facebook, you posted a story about how you took on the liberal left as they gave a review about a cupcake store simply because they had a sign of your campaign in in the glass. And this is just such a great story about the off the rails actions of those on the left. Can you tell us about that a little bit more?

**Tom Toby:** Yeah, well, I think when I got involved in that, I don't think I was looking at it so much as trying to take on the liberal left is that there was a local small business owner. She owns a cupcake factory or a cupcake store, two of them actually here in town, The Peppered Cupcake. They are absolutely phenomenal cupcakes. If you have the opportunity to to try them, you need to they are melt in your mouth and just absolutely delicious. But this individual posted a review and this individual posted a review on her Google review page, I think is what it was. And she sent it to me. Just look at what this guy did, you know? And basically he praised her business and her cupcakes and everything, but then disparaged their business and said he would never spend another single dime in her place because she supported she had a sign of mine, a conservative candidate, and basically he was disparaging her business over politics

**Reuel Sample:** He gave her a one star review.

**Tom Toby:** One star review, even though he just said the cupcakes were awesome. He gave her a one star review.. And it was his first name and last initial. So I was like, You know what, dude? Come on, if you're going to disparage a single mom, locally owned small business, if you're going to step up and disparage that, you know, be a man about it and, you know, put your whole name out there so that we can see who you are. And so I took that and I kind of took it and called him out.

**Reuel Sample:** You got a lot of support on that.

**Tom Toby:** Yeah. And, and I think I think they sold a lot of cupcakes, too, as a result of it.

**Reuel Sample:** It's it's sort of reminds me of Dan's Bake Sale from Rush Limbaugh is that a guy calls up and says, I'm having a bake sale and Rush Limbaugh says, well, I'm going to help you support that. And and and he made more money and caused. Caused a whole bunch of traffic problems there in his little town. And I think it was Colorado. Actually.

**Patti O'Neill:** It was Colorado. I'm very familiar with that.

**Reuel Sample:** That's Dan's Bake Sale. So it's just it's just a it's just a great illustration of of the things that we're facing from the liberal left is that they just cannot stand a different point of view and they will go out of their way to cancel, demean and decry and even try to close businesses and individuals when they express those.

**Patti O'Neill:** It does become a freedom of expression issue, a freedom of speech issue. I may not like what you say, but you still have a right to say it. But that doesn't mean that that you should be able to tear down a business because they're expressing their view that happens to be contrary with yours. I mean, most people would just shrug that off and walk out the door and say, yeah, whatever.

**Tom Toby:** Yeah, you know. And, you know, in my business, I deal with people from all walks of life, every facet of the community, from the richest to the poorest, you know, everybody. And if we could all just kind of get past all the political nonsense, the the left versus right and all this, and sit down and just have a conversation over this.

**Reuel Sample:** Yeah, over a cupcake.

**Tom Toby:** Yeah. You know, conversations over a cupcake. And, you know, we're not all for that. We all. I think most folks want the same things. You know why I'm. You know, I'm. Running as a conservative. I've always been a conservative. I have a conservative mind set and everything. But that's everything from small business to, you know, my how I spend my money, my bank account, what I do, you know. But most of us are not that far apart in what we want. And if we would stop listening to mainstream media and stop listening to CNN, tell us that we're supposed to hate each other because we're this or that or we're different or that or the other and just have a conversation. You know, we would find that we've got probably way more in common than we have apart. And, you know, things could probably start getting a lot better, but you got to turn that TV off and get to know people. It's it's kind of crazy. And I have this one friend of mine, my our kids were involved and I'll finish with this. But, you know, our kids were involved in a local nonprofit Christian musical theater and gospel choir company. And he is a considerably more liberal individual than I am. But he and I get together and we've been able to get together and hang out and drink a beer and everything because we have a mutual passion for music, you know, specifically older classic rock he plays. I couldn't carry a tune with a dump truck, but he plays. I go listen to his band. His band is phenomenal.

**Patti O'Neill:** Tell me his band.

**Tom Toby:** The Overtown Band, they play all over town, Ogden Taproom Bills, you know, they're they play all over town. He and he is a yeah, he's a phenomenal guitarist. But he and I, you know, politically we're we're a little ways apart. But when he and I get together, we can sit down and hang out and talk and drink a beer and enjoy each other's company. And my wife and I are going to listen to his band and hang out and and everything because it's we have never lost sight of the fact that, you know what, we're grown adults, that we can agree to disagree on some things. And, you know, but we have we have a common ground, a middle ground in that in that music. And that's what keeps us connected and why we can still stay friends, you know, because we don't let the rest of the minutia get in the middle. And, you know, the folks that work for a living here, you know, it's there's a lot of I called buyer's remorse Democrats after the

last election. There's a lot of independents or unaffiliated that all work for a living. They're blue collar folks that you know, they just they want the same things I want. And that's where folks like me that are just local small business, we're not career politicians. We're not looking at this for political. What can what can being a politician do for me? I'm here for the citizens of New Hanover County. I want to see our population thrive. I want to see our population happy. I want to see our population be able to, you know, enjoy our quality of life here in southeastern North Carolina. And, you know, that's where, you know, I'm trying to reach out and I want to talk to people. I want to I want to shake your hand, sit down and hear what you've got to say and see, hey, do we have that middle ground? Because I think we probably do. We just need to find it.

**Reuel Sample:** Tom, when you're not eating cupcakes, where can how can people get in touch with you?

**Tom Toby:** You can find me on Facebook at Tom Toby for NHC or go to our website [www.TomTobyforNHC.com](http://www.TomTobyforNHC.com) and we're also on Instagram at Tom Toby underscore NHC.

**Reuel Sample:** Any events coming up.

**Tom Toby:** We're going to be at the car show at Fort Fisher, the back to the beach car show on I think it's September 15th, October 15th. There's the beach and car show we've got. Like I said, I'm an old car guy. We've got we've got an old Galaxie 500 done up like a race car. You know, we go to a lot of the car shows, we go to cars and coffee, come out and see me. When you come to these car shows, come find my car. It's dark blue. It's got T2 on the door. Come find me. We're probably going to be giving out balloons to the kids and coming. Let's have that conversation.

**Patti O'Neill:** Thank you so much for your time.

**Tom Toby:** Hey, thank you for having me on. I really appreciate it.