



THE NHC GOP Podcast Transcript

Season 3, Episode 18: John Hinnant – ActBlue, Accountability and New Hanover

John Hinnant: And the grand total of all 2308 gifts is \$330,000, 200, \$330,298.70. So I'm actually telling people, hey, start on the back, you probably know what you're going to do for president and governor. You don't have to do that. First. Start on the back and start at the bottom.

Reuel Sample: Welcome to the NHC GOP podcast. I'm Reuel Sample. John, as my father used to say, I hope this rain keeps up. We need about.

John Hinnant: Another two inches to get our annual average, that's for sure.

Reuel Sample: That's right. If it keeps up, it won't come down. That's what he would always say. I'm of course, talking to John Hinnant, Republican candidate for New Hanover County Commission. Welcome to the podcast.

John Hinnant: Thank you. Reuel. Thank you for having me.

Reuel Sample: And we were talking just a little bit earlier. Uh, that's that's a new color for you. It's not the blue. It's not the red. You've got the gray going on there.

John Hinnant: Gray on. Yeah. It's, uh, it's the same material. It's light. It's good for summertime. Um, I've yet to get out in the 100 degree heat knocking doors yet, but, uh, I'd like to see if it masks sweat like the red does. Really well, uh, if it.

Reuel Sample: The rain keeps going, you'll be. You'll be knocking on people's doors via rowboat.

John Hinnant: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We're in my, uh, tough boots. My tough, my tough rain boots. Um.

Reuel Sample: Yeah. Well, we're getting together. We're talking about a whole bunch of things, but I. I wanted to start off with an issue that is sort of related to your campaign, but it is of an issue that is bigger than just here in New Hanover County. We know that the Democrats are willing to go to any great length to win this election. We also know that Democrat related organizations like Planned Parenthood and others are funneling millions of dollars not just into North Carolina, but into New Hanover County to get their candidates elected. But in the last 24 to 48 hours or so, we are starting to uncover an issue with one of the largest fundraising arms of the Democrat Party. And that's ActBlue. Uh, what is ActBlue? John.

John Hinnant: So it's their fundraising platform for Democrat candidates and organizations. Um, Republicans use WinRed, and I personally, I use a program called Anedot. And, um, and typically these fundraising platforms are hyper partizan. They only work with one party or the other, and that's fine. Um, but James O'Keefe, who is a citizen journalist, um, with the O'Keefe media Group, previously, when he was with an organization that he founded called Veritas, uh, went through the Federal Elections Commission, uh data, uh, searched ActBlue and then broke it down by, I guess, zip code. And, um, found people who did not realize that money was being funneled and donated on their behalf, using their ActBlue account. It didn't come from them. It wasn't their money. Um, and and so Thursday of last week and we're recording on a Tuesday before, uh, Tropical Storm Debbie, uh, drenches us. Um, on Thursday, uh, I finished up my work projects and, um, thought, you know what? It's. I'd done this thing before and found some interesting data, so I thought, well, let me go pull a new report. We've got campaign finance reports that are of record now from June 30th. And so I did a search in New Hanover County. I ran all the zip codes except for the beach towns. And I, um, went back January 1st, 2024 through June 30th and pulled a whole lot of data and I, I,

um, I what I did was I, um, sorted it by last name and, um, I'm going to share my screen so the viewers can see what we're doing here.

Reuel Sample: And what John's pulling that up. I want to emphasize this is all public information. You're not you're not breaking into accounts or anything else. This is published information. Uh, and, uh, those of you who can't see the the screens, you're just listening to the podcast is that he's got a spreadsheet up of, uh, the ActBlue donations from January 24th of, of this year to June 30th. Just a just a couple weeks ago of this year. And what do you got going? What do you got going on John.

John Hinnant: So so the so I've hidden a few things here. So I've hidden their address and I've hidden their name and and so we found and so this highlighted yellow is one individual that I'm going to showcase. I'll go up to the top here. And so there's a couple in here. These first two are the same person. Um this is one person's contributions. He's an attorney. Um, you can see over here these are the individual donations. And then this column is the cumulative to that organization. So. So this person in six months has made \$945 in donations.

Reuel Sample: And these are small nickel and dime donations.

John Hinnant: \$1 here, \$5 there. I mean, and you can see it adds up, you know, \$0.24 to some organization. In fact, we can go look at that.

Reuel Sample: Who gives \$0.24 to an organization?

John Hinnant: Yeah, for a total of \$11.96. And who does that go to? Uh, it's a contribution to ActBlue. And so you can see who this person's donating to. He's donating to the DCCC, the Democrat congressional Committee. I guess it is. Yeah. Um, Warren for Senate, which is Elizabeth Warren, uh, Kaine for Virginia. Um, Morlando Pridgen for U.S. Congress, whoever that is. So this is just one person. This person I know, this person. He lives around the corner from me. He's an attorney. And that doesn't seem unreasonable for me, for him to make that, uh, contribution. Uh, scroll down and you can see these jobs are not employed. Or their student, their chef, their

manager, homemaker, web technician, physician. Um, and so we get down here, scroll down about number 700. And I think it's going to be 85 year.

Reuel Sample: As he's scrolling down folks, he's right. The jobs that they're mentioning most most often it says unemployed. Yeah. I mean these are, these are these are not employed.

John Hinnant: And I'm seeing I'm seeing this IT manager here. So I need to probably pull that and see who that is. Mhm. Um because they live in Wilmington and 2845. So I might need to check this out. But this is an individual I highlighted this one. Um she's a 74 year old woman. She lives over in 28409. And this individual has made since January 1st, 2308 donations which.

Reuel Sample: Say the numbers aren't are aren't good on audio. Say that number again.

John Hinnant: 2308 individual contributions in a six month window.

Reuel Sample: Six month window.

John Hinnant: And so that's kind of almost physically impossible. But with the app here, with the spreadsheet, it tells us what dates you gave and tells us the individual donations she's made. And then the right column here is the cumulative.

Reuel Sample: So again, those of you who can't see the screen, what we're looking at is that on for example, 5/30 that's uh, she, it's saying that she made a series of what looks like ten donations all at the same time, right at the stroke of midnight. Right. Okay. And it keeps going on and on and on. And this person gave a grand total. I wrote that down someplace. Yeah.

John Hinnant: Let me get down here to line 3096. Like I said, it was 2308 gifts.

Reuel Sample: So you're going to have to share your screen again, John.

John Hinnant: Oh, did I lose it?

Reuel Sample: Yeah that's fine. I'm a professional podcast host, so I can vamp as long with the.

John Hinnant: All right. So. So this is the this is the bottom line here. And the grand total of all 2308 gifts is \$330,000, 200, \$330,298.70.

Reuel Sample: \$330,000 over a period of five months and.

John Hinnant: January 1st to June, 36 months.

Reuel Sample: Six months. And all of these were made. There's just a series of them made all at the same time. And the other thing that we're seeing with these is that the vast majority of of these donations aren't going to candidates here in North Carolina. They're going all over the place. We're seeing people.

John Hinnant: So I did I did a deep dive on this. And there's the Democrat Party of New Hanover County, the Democrat Party of North Carolina, no. Roy Cooper, no Josh Stein, no, uh, the guy running for attorney general, the lying guy, Jeff Jackson, he's he's not on this list. Um, no local candidates are on this list. So, you know, um, here's, uh, Elissa Slotkin, um, the Michigan for Michigan.

Reuel Sample: Michigan. Yeah. Uh, friends of Raja for Congress. The only thing that could possibly be local is where it says contribution to ActBlue.

John Hinnant: Yeah. Here's the earmark for Jane Fonda. Climate PAC, The Squad Victory Fund. Um, you know Jeffries. Hakeem Jeffries, I mean, Montana's for tester. You know, it's just it's all over the country, Bob Casey. So earmark for resist, reclaim, rebuild PAC.

Reuel Sample: The reason why we're talking about this, John, is that if you're a Democrat or if you're an American, you can give to whatever party that you want. But I would lay dollars to donuts that this person does not realize that these things are being given in her name to these various, these various funds. And, uh, we're, we're we've kind of stopped on a series of donations given on July 3rd, 2024, all at 4:00 in the morning. Yeah. And what we're what we're hearing reported on other areas is that unlike Anedot, which the New Hanover GOP uses, unlike WinRed, which is what Donald Trump and others use, is that ActBlue does not require a the CVV from the back of your credit card for donations. And so what this could possibly be is this is international money laundering. It could very well be.

John Hinnant: And I want to caution the viewer or the listener. We I've got a friend who is an independent citizen journalist, and he's trying to contact this lady. You know what? If she has the technological availability to give all these gifts at the exact same time? Hey, good for her. I.

Reuel Sample: I doubt it

John Hinnant: And so we're going to get her on recorded audio or video saying that she did not do this, at which point it becomes a national, national story.

Reuel Sample: Well, okay, let's go ahead and take that off the screen. I'll tell you this, is that if, if, if you, uh, if you're a Democrat and you're listening to this and you give to ActBlue, I would suggest that you do two things. Number one, give ActBlue a call and make sure that, uh, your name is not over, all over the place. And number two, give us a call. If you find that that's the case, we would really like to talk to you. Again the GOP is all about individual freedom. Go ahead.

John Hinnant: And if you've ever given actblue, that's the thing. And here's the interesting thing about that voter who gave 2308 times this year, the first she's lived in New Hanover County since 2005. The first time she voted was the 2022 primary. Then the 22 general and then the 2023 municipal. She's only voted three times in New Hanover County, according to the New Hanover County Board of Elections. So, like I

said, I pulled the MLS data sheets on her house. We've we know a lot about her. It's just a matter of getting her to answer the phone right now Or answering the door, uh, to our citizen journalists and and and telling us, you know, did you do this or not? If you did, fine. We'll leave you alone. And if you didn't, we want to help you. We want to help you clear your name, because ActBlue is up to something, and they're doing it under your name.

Reuel Sample: And again, this all goes back to Democrats will do anything to get into power. And this is actually one of the areas that is is chief amongst your campaign, uh, goals is accountability. Now we're talking about accountability and campaign. But this brings us over into accountability, into how the government spends the tax money that they that they take from us. So. Right.

John Hinnant: And one last thing on Actblue. Actblue is a product of the Obama administration. And and so it's not there. This isn't happening by mistake, but I'll move on.

John Hinnant: Yeah. Uh, the government accountability, you know, one of the, you know, we when I began this campaign, I was trying to alert people to the reality of what Port City United was, and it was a county department that was formed in 2021 after a shooting at New Hanover High School. Everybody freaked out and thought, we need to do something, we need to do something. And and there were some serious issues around that individual and the individuals involved in that shooting that needed to be addressed as well. And so they created this anti-violence violence interdiction organization. And then they built in a bunch of wraparound services through using social service programs and and out of the gate, they hired a guy. Nice fella. Had no business being a department head. They paid him six figure salary. Uh, when they realized after 2 or 3 weeks the guy didn't know how to show up on time, didn't understand professional dress code, didn't understand that he couldn't take the company car, the county car to pick up his kids from school. Didn't understand he couldn't run errands with it. Um, they hired a coach, and they spent a couple hundred thousand dollars on a coach to try and coach him up. Like, hey, you got to be on time to work. You know, you you get whatever amount of time you get for lunch. You can't just disappear for 2 or 3

hours. You got to you got to do your job. You got to get these reports. Um, you know, I'm reminded of scenes from the show The Office.

John Hinnant: I need that TPS, TPS reports or the the movie The office. And and and somebody made that hiring decision, and we need to understand that. Um, the other hiring decision we need to understand is we hired people from the defunct True Colors Brewery who we knew were active gangbangers, we knew had criminal charges that were not fully adjudicated. We knew that they had drug charges and violent crime charges, and some of them had, uh, second degree murder charges. Wow. And they hired those folks, and they hired them without a drug screening. Now, you work at this. If you go to work for New Hanover County at social Services, you're going to get drug screened. And so when they dissolve Port City United, the county manager and I don't disagree with this decision, but where they had availability and openings, they laterally transferred some people over to these other departments, but they moved some of these people into social services, into segments of the department, and to sub departments with a group of people who were all drug screened to get hired. And these folks just got the free lateral pass. Somebody made a decision. And there's got to be some accountability to that. The other thing that drives me insane is we created this multimillion dollar department called Ports City United. And out of the gate. Somebody in our county government said, okay, when Port City United said, we're not going to cooperate with law enforcement, another county department.

Reuel Sample: What are they thinking.

John Hinnant: We're not we're not going to cooperate with law enforcement. You're in violence, interdiction, man. You're working in crime. Yeah. And, you know, they they had they've had two people arrested for accessory after the fact of attempted murder after accessory to murder. Attempted murder after the fact. The first one had it exonerated. The second one was well known. Highly publicized Houston War drove a 17 year old to the scene. 17 year old did the shooting, probably paralyzed. Another 17 year old, then drove the kid away. Um, that shooter's name, by the way, was Virgil Oliveira. I want to come back to that. Um, and then a few weeks later, a third port C9 employee was arrested selling crack cocaine and maintaining a dwelling for the

manufacture of crack cocaine. And on the detectives and the undercover agents hidden body cam, they saw the guy wearing his New Hanover County employee badge. His credential.

Reuel Sample: While he was while he was selling drugs.

John Hinnant: Right?

Reuel Sample: Yeah.

John Hinnant: And so. And then I heard another story that hasn't made made public, um, that there was a, you know, when they when they opened up the courthouse, there's usually a long line of people to get through security. Uh, two port city employees tried to, uh, jump the line. And when they got to the front of the line, they tried to show their credential, their county employee badge, and try to bypass security. And thankfully, the deputies were on the ball and said, oh, you got to get in the back of the line. Poundsand. And so one of the deputies, naturally suspicious, watched him. They walked a block back to their office and then came back, went through the line like everybody else, went through security like everybody else. The reason he was in court was on a weapons charge. He may have had a weapon on him. We don't know.

Reuel Sample: You know, there have been countless programs across the the country, many of them private, where they hire ex-cons, uh, who have who have gone through rehabilitation. They have they have they have changed their lives for the better. Because nobody can can call a con like an ex-con. Uh, nobody. Well, and that's what that's what didn't happen at at Port City.

John Hinnant: Well, in Port City United, it was in name only. They said what they said, and they didn't do it, but they said, we're going to follow the Cure Violence global model, which was based out of Chicago. And supposedly there's a similar organization in Durham which a bunch of community leaders went up and visited and saw. Uh, if you pick up the phone call, cure Violence Global and say, hey, you know, when it comes to these on the street violence, interdiction, community mediators, whatever you want to

call them, what type of people would you hire? They said, well, we look for football coaches and basketball coaches and youth pastors. Maybe, maybe some teachers if they're looking for extra work. And I said, and so you ask them, hey, would you hire a gang member? That sounds like a bad idea to me. And so we we had good intentions. Mhm. We just didn't follow through. We didn't keep asking questions. And so there's a there's an accountability piece to that. And so the reason I brought up the name Virgil Oliver uh, his half sister was also was an employee of Port City United through a third party nonprofit organization called Voyage Wilmington.

John Hinnant: Um, this is all on the Port City United flowchart that they presented to the county commission. Uh, Voyage Wilmington was, uh. Supported by Port City United to provide some of the in school um community resource officers in the schools and okay. I guess they were there to kind of provide the, you know, atta boy out of girl support to some of the kids who come from tough backgrounds and tough homes and tough settings. Um, but, you know, that relationship that the Duke's half sister worked for personally, and then a Port city United employee drives him to an attempted murder scene? There's a lot there's there's a lot of accountability that needs to happen. And there's a whole lot more stories in Port City United that have been just squashed. And it's, you know, it's probably good to just let it go ahead and die, let it go away. But there's got to be some accountability. Somebody in our county made a decision and it's got to be dealt with. So, um, I'm looking forward to bringing some accountability to government.

Reuel Sample: Their budget was slashed. That program was stopped, but the remnants of the program continue. So, uh, something to keep an eye on. But as we continue to talk about accountability and we talk about budgets, and one of the main things that, uh, that Harry Knight and I have talked about on this, on this program is that as the county goes forward, you are surrounding a city that has just raised its taxes and decreased its budget, where New Hanover County is freezing taxes while at the same time didn't. Didn't New Hanover County increase the budget as well?

John Hinnant: So they increased school funding. Yes, but they did cut other areas. And and so they, they, for example, with parks and gardens used to mow on mow grass

on an eight day schedule. And they've moved some areas to nine days and some areas to ten days. They cut funding to a lot of people. The chamber got a haircut. Uh, Wilmington Downtown Inc. got a haircut. Cucalorus got. I mean, a lot of people took a haircut. And you know, the phrase for the greater good. Um, and in this case, it was because you and me, I don't know about you, but I shop with my wife for groceries, and we go together, and it is just shocking. I mean, I took a picture, I do an email newsletter once a month to my supporters, and I took a picture of a jar of mayonnaise that was \$6.99.

Reuel Sample: Well, first off, hang on just a second. You you took a picture of Dukes, which is really not mayonnaise, the mayonnaise.

John Hinnant: And I'm not getting in the debate over which is better, but because I the day they're both priced the same, I'm going to make sure I get a picture of both of them, because, uh, it's not that that's not important, but, um, I got a picture of, uh, Clorox. Bleach. Uh, Saturday, when the grocery store. And it was on sale for \$6.40. Wow. Half gallon, half gallon bleach.

Reuel Sample: Which is mostly water, actually. Right.

John Hinnant: Right. It's diluted to begin with.

Reuel Sample: So in this day and age where prices like that are going up, mayonnaise is just eggs and and other stuff in it and oil. That's it.

John Hinnant: So I got my wife convinced to make her own.

Reuel Sample: So my grandmother used to make her own. Or then she switched to Hellman's, uh, the, uh, at the same time that the prices are going up. You've got the insanity of of government raising taxes earlier this year at the state level, which which would have impacted North Carolina is that the the insurance agencies wanted to raise insurance rates on houses, some of them almost 100%. Uh, here where I live, it would

have been 75% increase. That's what they were asking for in the middle of this economy. That's insane.

John Hinnant: A lot of a lot of New Hanover County was in that target rate of 100% increase. I mean, it was and it's and what's frustrating is, you know, when when I was in college in 1989 and Hurricane Hugo hit in Charleston, my college roommate was from Charlotte. And being a kid that grew up here, I've been through a lot of these storms. I know what it's like I've been through. I don't know how many I can remember, but I've been through all of them. And so I sit up and watch. I watched the TV coverage and I'm. And it's habit, right? You're just waiting for the power to go out. And when the power goes out, you'll get a bed. And, um, it was about midnight, and I woke my roommate up from Charlotte, and I said, hey, Tony, you might want to check this out. Hurricane Hugo is a category one storm over Charlotte, North Carolina right now. And he goes, what? And I said, yeah, when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, when it got up over Asheville, it was a category one hurricane. Wow. And the flooding that happened was catastrophic. If you've ever been to the Biltmore Estate, there's a McDonald's at the bottom of the hill. Yeah, that McDonald's had five and six feet of water in it. Wow. So so it's not a coastal problem. And we've got to do a better job of communicating to the rest of the state and to the insurance providers and the insurance commission and commissioner. Hey, just because we're subject to hurricanes doesn't mean it's an east of 95 problem. This is a statewide problem, and there's only seven providers that work east of I-95, while there's 230 companies that work the western part of the state west of I-95. And I'm sorry, if you're going to work anywhere in North Carolina, you should be able to work all of North Carolina.

Reuel Sample: One of my favorite movies, John, is Dave. I don't know if you remember that that movie where you've got a double that takes over for the president? Well, yes. And one of the the scenes from that is when he calls in his accountant buddy and they go through the government budget and they just go through it line by line. And what you're saying when you talk about mowing, when you're talking about giving haircuts to these organizations, I didn't know that. For instance, the Chamber of Commerce got money from from the from the county. Uh, is that is that that's the kind of accountability

that has to happen is that is accountability is best. It happens best when the dollars and cents are managed well.

John Hinnant: And it's it also helps if we've got good teammates. Right. And so yeah you know the chamber's a great teammate and WDI is a great teammate. And Cucalorus is a fantastic event that brings in international filmmakers and brings in, uh, fans of film from all over the country. And so, you know, and it's hard it's hard on them to take a cut. But you know what? They understood that because then their own households like me, they're having to tighten their belt and and you know, you have to be as an elected official, I think it's hard. I think it's incumbent. I think it's of utmost importance that I have a real sense of what my neighbors are going through. Before I make a decision from a governing dais. I think it's critically important that we have a sense of reality. And, you know, I don't plan to quit my job when elected. In fact, I'm going to make sure my schedule is tightly managed so that I can continue to produce for my family. Because this is not a lifestyle. You know, I'm trying to serve. I'm trying to be a public servant. And it's not that a career I'm seeking. It's I feel like we can do better. And, you know, I've been frustrated with some of the decisions. And watching a Democrat, Jonathan Barfield, bang his fist on the desk, demanding we keep, uh, Port City United in business, demanding we maintain funding, demanding we raise taxes. And it's like, do you have a have you been grocery shopping? I mean, the gas pump. Have you seen your insurance bill? I mean, come on, man, let's tighten our belt. You know, just this year, let's tighten our belt and let's try to keep keep our service level high. And I'm proud of the the effort that, uh, Chairman Rivenbark, vice Chair Pierce and Commissioner Scalise did. Uh, and I want to get up there and help them.

Reuel Sample: One of the the main issues or one of the main expenditures of government and it's a valid one, is schools. Uh, and you have talked on this podcast before about the overcrowding in schools, and the school budget is a big one the school board gets the gets their budget from you. How are you going to. How are you going to keep the New Hanover County Board of Education accountable and and and help them with the overcrowding and everything else that is going in their schools?

John Hinnant: That's a great question. And it's something I just the question I just had last week, and I think there's I think there's a couple of key important factors that the school board also receives funding from the federal government. Mhm. Uh, they get some state funding. And so we are responsible mostly for capital, but we are supplementing their operations. Uh, to the tune of a 2 or \$3 a student. Um, to 2 or \$3000 per student for the purposes of creating a supplement for teacher pay. Um, so New Hanover County teachers are in the top five statewide, which is great. Yes, nationally we're still abysmally low. We have to do better as a state, but we can continue to lead until the state steps in and helps steps up their game. Um, so so there's so there's a little over \$100 million of New Hanover County citizen taxpayer money that goes to the schools. And so the main thing we have to do is, is to address overcrowding, is take advantage of where we've already designated for new schools to be built, and we have to figure out a way to pay for it. But the needs of the school system are so great that it would take hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars to solve it.

John Hinnant: But we can't do that. We can't do that. No, we have to take a 5 to 7 year approach. And I think while we take that 5 to 7 year approach, um, we we have an opportunity, I think, in 2026 to, to work together in a bipartisan manner to consider a bond referendum. For me, a bond referendum is great so long as we don't raise taxes. So we have to continue to tighten our belt to make room in the budget, and that room will be created by the natural rate of growth where growth has slowed. And as all real estate cycles are cycles, we're in a down cycle right now, but rate of growth has slowed, and that rate of growth will cover the gap that a bond referendum would slide into. So we won't have to raise taxes. But in the mean, in the while we're doing that, we also have to take a capital and the capital improvement plan and make it address the problems with New Hanover High School. That's a historic structure. It's important to our community. There's 102 classes have graduated from there, so we have to honor those 102 classes, multiple generations of wilmingtonians. We have to honor them by fixing it. It's a it's a foundational issue. We've got structural problems. And so that that's one problem that's just got to be addressed separate from the bond referendum.

John Hinnant: But I would take a look at our first two projects for me would be the Riverlights community set aside land for an elementary school, build that right away. Yeah. The second project is a middle school on the C tech campus at the North Campus of Cape Fear Community College. So there's a sequence of events that happens here. Okay. You build riverlights and then you tear down when you once you finish that, you tear down, uh, Mary C Williams, because it's old, it's functionally obsolete. You move the Mary C Williams kids over to Riverlights. Mhm. You rebuild Mary C Williams, then you tear down Pine Valley, which isn't too far away. Right. The kids from Pine Valley at Mary C Williams while you tear down, rebuild Pine Valley. Similarly, once Pine Valley is built, you tear down alderman, which again is very close, as close as three miles. You put the alderman kids at Pine Valley, you rebuild Alderman Merritt with the Ctec Middle School. You got to build it big enough 1000 1200 student capacity.

Reuel Sample: You don't you don't build it for what you have now. You build it for what it's going to be in five years. Right?

John Hinnant: And at the rate of growth in northern New Hanover County and with the county installing water and sewer along Holly Shelter, Sidbury and the Greenview Ranches property, which is something else we're going to talk about, um, that's going to open up the northern part of the county to development. That has not been possible because the soils aren't suitable for septic. It's just the bad soils, but you can build on them so long as you have utilities. When you build that school, what you do is you relocate the Trask middle school kids to that campus and then let Laney flow into Trask. They get the additional athletic facilities, they get the additional cafeteria, they get the additional classrooms, and they get the additional parking. So Laney just becomes a bigger campus with additional buildings. Um, maybe we can add another project or two I know Moseley needs. Moseley was on the list of tearing down and rebuilding. I don't know if Freeman or Snipes or Forest Hills has the ability to absorb those kids, but the point is, is we've got to make we got we got to we got to develop a 5 to 7 year plan. And I think the key to that is understanding our role as county commission and the role of the school board. And the question that I got was, how do you do that?

John Hinnant: Well, it's simple one. It starts with the relationship. We have to have a good relationship with our school board. And as you know, I ran in 2022 and I became very good friends with a handful of the foursome, the Fantastic Four that got elected in 2022. Um, Chairman Wildeboer, uh, Jesse Barnhart, Pat Bradford I consider Pat and Jose personal close friends now. Uh, I've really gotten to know the three Republican candidates running now. And and the way I explain it is, once we get attached to the head on a mutually agreed upon set of expectations, County commission handles overcrowding. School board handles performance. Yes, attached to the head. We've already got a relationship at the heart. So we're attached to the head and the heart. Now we can work together. And if you have a need, ask for it. If you have a want, explain what the benefits are. So I think having a connection at the head and the heart, having a relationship, having a professional demeanor. And I think one of the things about the school board for the last six years or eight years that I've really been paying attention to it. Voters have to really pay attention to make sure we're not electing toxic personalities. I don't know how. I don't know how else to say it.

Reuel Sample: We've had a couple on there, haven't we?

John Hinnant: Right, right. And and it's it's it's really about professional demeanor. Um. Uh, civil discourse. Um, no place in society needs civil discourse more than our school boards.

Reuel Sample: Yeah. So, uh, in addition to to Pete, Jose and Pat, you've got Melissa that's on there. And then and then we've got, uh, three really strong candidates running, uh, this year as well. You've got Natosha Tew, uh, David Perry and, uh, Nikki Bascom. And so, uh, it's, uh, that's another podcast. Now let's uh, and just to round off this discussion, one of the great things, uh, about using a bond instead of a tax increase is that it really gives people the opportunity to literally invest in the growth of New Hanover County instead of a tax increase, because there to to misquote Ronald Reagan, there's nothing so permanent as a temporary tax. Is that, uh, is that, uh uh, you you are literally investing in New Hanover County and getting a return from that as well, because it's a bond.

John Hinnant: The current tax rate in Hanover County is \$0.45 per thousand. Mm. The, um, out of that \$0.45, two and a half cents is voter approved debt. Wow. That's that's a really good fiscal position to be in.

Reuel Sample: What is our current bond rating? Do you know?

John Hinnant: A it's among the best you can get. Yeah. Triple-A. Nice. Yeah. We're not. There's only a handful of counties in the nation that have that. So it's it's it's rare and we're to be commended for it. I think the city just had theirs decrease because, um, of the debt that they took on with the acquisition of the Thermo Fisher building.

Reuel Sample: Yes. And then real quickly, your last, uh, your last platform that you're, that you're running on and it comes up a lot is workforce housing and and you have, I think, redefined properly what workforce housing is, is that most people look at workforce housing as a type of dwelling, and that's not your definition or the proper definition of workforce housing.

John Hinnant: Yeah, workforce housing is a price point, not a product type. And I think that that's the big thing. It's also it can be I think the best type of workforce housing is not publicly subsidized. And I've I'm in commercial real estate. I've been involved in two projects that have delivered workforce housing units to the market and didn't cost the taxpayers a dime, so I know it can happen. I've done it. It's achievable. But the reason workforce housing is so important is it comes back to an issue that's really near and dear to a lot of people's hearts, and that's traffic and congestion. People are concerned about traffic and congestion. The county doesn't own roads. We don't build roads. We don't maintain roads. Um, and we have very little to do with traffic flow. In fact, the state dot manages the traffic signals. Um, but but why that's important is, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and New Hanover County, there's 95,000 primary jobs. So that's your primary job. That's the thing that you pay, you earn your living with. That's how you pay for your living expenses. Out of those 95,000 jobs, 50% do not live in New Hanover County.

Reuel Sample: So that surprises me. I thought I was thinking as 20% max come in, it's 50%. 50%.

John Hinnant: If you think about it, the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge has, what, 70,000 vehicles a day? Yeah.

Reuel Sample: So what that translates is, is that is that. Yeah.

John Hinnant: 35,000 coming in and then 35,000 leaving in the afternoon.

Reuel Sample: And that's 35,000 people who aren't living here and helping to support the county that we're in.

John Hinnant: They're taking what they earn here. It's called retail leakage. They're earning their money here, and then they're taking it outside the county and spending it.

Reuel Sample: What kind of jobs would be living in workforce housing?

John Hinnant: So great question. Um, before I move on, though, out of that 95,000 jobs, 28% of them live on the other side of our MSA. So that's outside Pender. Other side of Brunswick. Wow. So you've got people in cars for 30 to 45 minutes in the morning trying to get to work. So think about the the choke points in our community. 17 and market through Hampstead, Scottsville, Brogden, I-40 North College Road, Castle Hayne Road 421, 7476, highway 17 and Wheatland and those those are your workforce coming in in the morning and workforce going home in the afternoon. If we can get those folks living closer to work, it should reduce traffic congestion because they'll be on the road less. Yeah. Uh, your typical workforce housing tenant or or occupant. And again, it doesn't have to be a tenant. Um, there is a way to do homeownership. Um, is oftentimes thought of as first couple year police, fire, first responder teachers, nurses. But there's also this important element hospitality, food and beverage, tourism. Yeah. Uh, these people make between 80 and 120% of the area median income. And I like to tell people like this, think about that teacher and her first two, three, five years of business of industry or police officer or fire. In their first five years. They don't have the

benefit of having a working spouse helping them with living expenses. So they need a place to live and a great project. Um, a lot of people are shocked when they see it.

John Hinnant: It's called the range. It's on Oleander Drive. It looks big and pretty and kind of shocks you when you think that there used to be a driving range there, but that project has workforce housing units in it, about 34 or 35 units. And so at this point, the city and county need to be working with their employees as well as other major employers. And like, hey, you can easily identify who makes 80 to 120% of Ami and encourage them. Hey, if you're looking for housing, there's a number of projects in town where you can walk into the leasing office and say, do you have any workforce housing units available? And you automatically get a discount? And the rent is based on HUD's annual rent survey for the MSA. They do it every year. I print it out every June. It's got every community in the country, and Wilmington's right on there with everybody else. And so, um, it's it's the biggest and most important piece to me because, um, we want to continue to grow jobs in this community. And if people can't find a place to live, and I know the school system runs into this problem, people can't find a place to live. Um, we've had people walk away from, um, the police department and fire department and the the hospital, some of our large employers, because of it's difficult to find housing and that's just unacceptable.

Reuel Sample: And having people live here and work here, there's so many good things. It's a it's an increased tax base. It's a decrease in travel cost. Uh, it's it's a net benefit to our community in so many ways. And the county helps with this because you're the folks in charge of the planning. You're in charge of the zoning, you're in charge of helping developers find the places to go and to map these areas out. And that's what you do. That's one of your big jobs as as a county commissioner.

John Hinnant: Right. And I think that that's a great, um, segue to, uh, the county's working on the future land use plan. I think they're calling it project 2055. And the idea is to paint a picture, a vision for what we want the unincorporated areas to look like some 30 years and so 25 years. So get involved. There's there's a public input sessions. There's one later this week. Um, you can find it on the county's website. Uh, please get involved. Um, the more people who participate, the better it is.

Reuel Sample: It is a Republican controlled, county commission, and that's one of the reasons why it is doing such good things.

John Hinnant: Uh, it's only about one. And it's very fragile

Reuel Sample: It's only by one very fragile. You've got John Hinnant running, we've got Dane Scalice running, and we've got Bill Rivenbark running. The three of you can get on there and cement this planning, because this 2055, that's 30 years away. But it takes that kind of forward looking to to make sure that things get done. John, how can people get in touch with you and how can they support you? Sure.

John Hinnant: Uh, elect John. Com uh, that's my my my name, elect John. Com. Uh, you can email me by using info at elect john.com. Um, and then if you want to donate, you can hit the donate button right there on the website. And that does.

Reuel Sample: Not go to ActBlue. That goes to Anidot.

John Hinnant: It goes the antidote, which I get an email right away that I got. And then you get an email that says you gave, um, which I guess antidote. I guess ActBlue does not do that. Nope. Um, because these people would have seen the email that said that they gave money to somebody.

John Hinnant: But Reuel I want to mention, um, I know later this month we've got a clustered meet and greet up at the Porters Neck Plantation. Um, for the H precinct. So if you're in landfall. Middletown. Um, Bayshore. Uh, Ogden. Torchwood. Uh, porters neck. We've got a meet and greet coming up. Um, I want to say it's the 15th. Nope, not the 15th. Do you have it in front of you?

Reuel Sample: I don't have it. In front of me. But keep an eye out on the, uh, the New Hanover County GOP org website. We always put those things up. John posts these things on his Facebook account and on your.

Speaker3: Actually, I.

John Hinnant: Lost my Facebook, I got hacked.

Reuel Sample: You got hacked.

Speaker3: I got hacked, no good.

Reuel Sample: That's what happens when you when you criticize ActBlue. But you're still you're still on X though, right?

John Hinnant: I am on X and I'm on Instagram with just my name. JohnHinnant no space. We're at Porters Neck Country Club on August the 14th. It's a Wednesday at 630.

Speaker3: And hey, we're back.

John Hinnant: All right, all right. I was talking about porters neck event, I guess.

Reuel Sample: Yep. I hope I hope everything that, uh, that we had before was all uploaded. I have a feeling it is. So, um, for those of us who are who are still with us, uh, my power went out, so, uh, we're back. And, uh, John, go ahead and finish up on that Porter's neck meeting.

John Hinnant: Yeah. So we're having a meeting. Um, uh, it's open up to anybody who wants to RSVP. Republicans, unaffiliated voters. Um. Wednesday, August 14th, 630 to 830. Porters Neck Country Club you have to RSVP so that you can get through the security gate. Um, all of your local candidates are going to be there. We may see a statewide candidate or two, uh, show up. And this is going to be like an expo. It's not a rally. There's not a lot of speeches. Uh, each candidate is going to have a table lined around the room. And so you'll be able to walk up, introduce yourself to the candidates. We'll have materials there. Uh, hand to hand combat. Let's go. You know what I'm saying? It's going to be great. Yeah. Um, and so it's a face to face interaction. And then

there's the, uh, in September 5th, the Thursday after Labor Day. Monday, uh, for the folks in the southern part of the county, Monkey Junction south all the way to Pleasure Island, we're doing a, I call it the Make Waves rally. Similar thing utilizing the aquarium at Fort Fisher. Um, same thing, not a rally. Tables, candidates standing at each table with their materials, and you get to go up and introduce yourself and meet the local candidates for school board, county commission, the DA, judicial races, the state House races. Senator, state Senator Michael Lee is going to be there. And Hal Weatherman is running for lieutenant governor is going to be there as well. And I don't know if you saw from the Trump rally and Charlotte, um, Hal Weatherman shook hands in the line for six hours.

Speaker3: Yes.

Reuel Sample: Hal Weatherman his ground game.

John Hinnant: Is not weather.

Reuel Sample: The only the only other person that I know who's ground game is as good as Hal Weatherman is yours. John, is that you appreciate that. You've got you've got you've got a ground game that is second to none. Uh, as I recall, you went through three tennis shoes, uh, for your other campaigns.

Speaker3: So we're a.

John Hinnant: Whole slam.

Speaker3: Through one. Yeah.

Reuel Sample: Uh, but, yeah, these these meetings for these local candidates, we've got two challenges ahead for Republican voters is that there are some Republican voters who are only going to vote for top of the ticket, and and then they skip the rest. And then you've got folks who don't like the top of the ticket and just vote for local candidates is here in New Hanover County. Our job is to get local candidates elected,

but what we are telling everybody at all levels is complete that ballot. Make sure that you vote Republican all up and down because we want to get you elected. And if we have a Republican legislature at the state level as well as the federal level, it makes your job all that much easier.

John Hinnant: Yeah, we heard in the primary, and I think this was on the Democrat side, that after the Democrats voted for president and governor, some 400,000 statewide didn't finish their ballot. That's why they stopped. And so, um, that's a big number. So I'm actually telling people, hey, start on the back. You you probably know what you're going to do for president and, governor. You don't have to do that first. Start on the back and start at the bottom. And you know, your school board is going to be right there at the bottom with the county commissioner and the registrar of deeds. And and there's a lot of really important. I mean, all the races are important this year, I think. I mean, if you look at the the lawfare that's been performed, uh, uh, executed against Donald Trump, um, and if you look at the way they manipulated the ballot and, I mean, we've never had a major political party change their opponent before a convention and just say, oh, the votes are counted. We're done. They they haven't gone to Chicago yet.

Reuel Sample: And yeah. And they, they might not even go to Chicago or, you know, who knows what the Democrats are going to do.

John Hinnant: Oh, please. You know. Raise up the big tent. It's going to be a show. It's going to be a circus show. Let's go.

Reuel Sample: Uh, John, we are less than we are less than 90 days away from. We're 96 days from the actual election day. But, uh, early voting starts when.

John Hinnant: Uh, October 17th. But we are 31 days from absentee by mail votes for.

Speaker3: 31 days.

Reuel Sample: From absentee. That's right.

Speaker3: So there's a lot of.

John Hinnant: People that do that.

Reuel Sample: Folks. Uh, John Hinnant it for county commission. John, I'll give you the last word.

John Hinnant: Hey, thank you so much, Reuel. You know, ladies and gentlemen, it's this. This has proven to be the most important election of our lifetime. And if you don't believe me, just relive everything that happened in July. The first presidential debate. Earliest presidential debate in history. We had an attempted assassination of a past president and leading candidate. We had a presidential nominee, an incumbent president and presumptive nominee resign. And then they appointed a the vice president who was anointed with nothing. And it's just we're in unprecedented times and, and and for folks that don't vote every election, what you need to know that is most important is your local and your state offices. Your elected officials have the most impact on your life. And if you don't believe me, try to figure out who close down your stores, taped off your playgrounds, and shut down your boat ramps during Covid. Those were your local county commissioners, and it's important that you remember that because you got to stand six feet apart, even though it made no sense. Vote for people who will ask hard questions and I hope I've earned your vote. So thank you.

Reuel Sample: John, thanks for joining us tonight. We're going to probably get you on the podcast again, but thanks for all the work that you're doing. And thanks for joining us tonight.

John Hinnant: Thank you. Look forward to talking to you again.