

2020 Newport RI City Council Candidates Questionnaire

TO: 2020 CANDIDATES FOR NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL
FROM: ALLIANCE FOR A LIVABLE NEWPORT
SUBJECT: ONLINE COUNCIL CANDIDATES QUESTIONNAIRE
DATE: July 29, 2020

As ALN has done for every local election since 2008, a City Council candidates' questionnaire has been created as a means of assisting Newport voters in making their election choices. The accompanying Word document contains questions for this year's City Council candidates selected from submissions ALN has received.

At Large candidates are asked to respond to six (6) questions and Ward candidates to the same six (6) plus a seventh (7) Ward-specific question. Candidates are urged to limit their response to each question to no more than five hundred (500) words (unless otherwise specified) and to enter those responses online via Google Forms. Candidates can either enter their responses directly on Google Forms or formulate responses first using the Word document and then transferring those to Google Forms.

Responses must be received no later than the end of the day on August 8, 2020. As soon as possible after that date, all responses will be uploaded at the same time to the ALN website (www.newportalliance.org) and made available for public viewing with accompanying notifications to the public through ALN's email subscriber list (approximately 600 subscribers) and through advertising and promotion on local radio, print, and online media.

This year ALN is delighted to be joined with our 2020 Election partners, Newport This Week, The League of Women Voters, The Newport Chamber of Commerce, WADK Radio, Newport Buzz, and Channel 18 Community Television. This collaborative will be conducting live "Zoom" public forums to which you have already been invited.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire or the Google Forms procedures, please send an email to info@newportalliance.org and you will receive a quick response by email or phone, depending on the nature of the question. Do you still need help with the form or process? Contact Chip Leakas ALN board advisor (401)339-0777 mobile generally 9am-9pm

ALN commends each of you for choosing to run and serve for the Newport City Council and looks forward to hearing from you as to the pressing issues and challenges Newport faces today.

2020 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES QUESTIONNAIRE
Questions For All Council Candidates (At Large and Wards)

Email address *

cmholder@gmail.com

First Name, Last Name *

Charles Holder

Elected Council Office you are seeking: *

Council "Second Ward" ▼

1.) Do you support the November ballot question for Newport to issue more than \$100million of bonds to be used to expand The Pell School and replace Rogers High School? If no, explain your reasons. If yes, what do you say to Newport residents and business owners concerned about the impact on their property taxes? If yes or no, what action(s) would you promote if the ballot question is defeated? *

On Nov. 3rd I will be voting yes on the School Bond. Rogers needs a lot of work and we should not expect our students and teachers to thrive in such a run down environment. People perform better in a place where they feel comfortable and safe, a new building will provide that. Better student performance will lead to better school ratings which will make Newport much more attractive to families looking to move here.

I understand that there may very well be an increase in property taxes for residents and businesses, however, that is a small price to pay for increase in quality of life in Newport.

Should the school bond be defeated, I will suggest a renewed effort to rehab both schools as best we can financially. Rogers needs a lot of work without question, and a quality renovation can be just as effective as a new building. It would be great to see the work done by a local contractor as well.

2.) Traffic and parking problems in Newport persist and seem to be getting worse despite being the subject of countless studies and ad hoc committees. What specific measures (other than forming more committees and conducting more studies) would you promote to alleviate the problems? *

There is not one solution to the traffic and parking issues we face. As a business operator on Thames St., I see first hand what the situation is.

From one point of view I see traffic as a positive sign that Newport is still bustling and people want to come here for a variety of reasons. We have world-renowned restaurants, historical houses, churches and mansions that are truly magnificent, and most importantly we have some of the most incredible naturally beautiful sceneries in the country. Why wouldn't people want to come here?!

My first thought would be to push hard for parking garages. The Gateway Center would make the perfect setting for a four-story garage, as would b the North End Urban Development Area. The garages need to be aesthetically pleasing and fit Newport's personality.

A better public transit system would help, actual trolleys that people can purchase a pass for and hop on and off as needed.

Finally, more distinct parking lines on streets like Broadway, Spring St. and Bellevue Ave. so people have to park correctly and not take up multiple spots.

3.) Newport's economy is closely tied to tourism. The risk of that dependence has been made abundantly clear by the COVID pandemic. What, if any, alternatives do you see to the reliance on tourism? Based on your answer, what specific actions should be taken to further promote tourism and/or what specific actions should be taken to expand the economy beyond tourism? *

What has become abundantly clear during this pandemic is just how much perseverance our "tourism-based businesses" have been. We should be looking at strengthening our ties to the tourism and hospitality sector not trying to shut them down. Many jobs in the technological sector have been closed forcing employees to work from home. What would the value of these jobs be to the tax payers in Newport if the majority of workers do not live here? At least with the hospitality industry the City is getting property tax and room & meal taxes.

We would be served well with this vocation being highlighted in the Newport County Career & Technical Center so our children will have the ability to prosper in Newport. Johnson & Wales has a great program that we could follow as an example.

4.) The closure of the Visitors Center was announced recently. What do you propose should be done with the property? *

I mentioned earlier that a parking garage would be ideal in this space and help with traffic and parking issues. Geographically it works well as cars can park before they reach the heart of downtown. Visitors will have an easy walk to Thames St. and Broadway business districts as well.

5.) A Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) template is being considered as part of the North End Urban Plan (NEUP). What would you like to see included in the CBA template? What measures will you promote and support to put the NEUP on a clear path to implementation?" *

I think it is tremendous that the North End community is getting a chance to let their voices be heard on this project. The residents and business owners are the ones going to be directly impacted by any new development. The difficulty lies with the main piece of property, the Newport Grand area, being owned privately. Any large-scale commercial development here will eventually cause more of a divide from the residential areas.

I do not feel the North End needs to be developed to draw visitors away from downtown, but be developed to give the North End residents and businesses a place they can be proud of. A place where it is safe to walk, shop and congregate.

I feel a very important component to any development in the North End will be to have access from the North End to Downtown. Finding a way to reduce traffic going through The Point Section is prudent. The structures and streets were not designed to withstand this type of heavy usage.

A parking garage complex or a transportation hub in this area will allow for a decrease in traffic in neighborhoods and historical districts. It will also allow for visitors an easier way into and out of our great City.

6.) What do you most want Newport voters to know about you? (Limit response to a maximum of 250 words.)

I was born and raised in Newport. I have been extremely proud to call Aquidneck Island my home for over 40 years. I was schooled at Sheffield School, Sullivan School, Thompson Jr. High & Rogers High ('87). I have seen Newport grow from a small sailing and fishing town to the International destination it is today.

As a restaurant operator for many years I feel that my hard work and many hours spent in the area have led me to be in a position to give back to my hometown.

I have been lucky enough to travel to many beautiful places in my life, but there is nothing like that feeling of driving over the Newport Bridge (I still can't call it Pell) looking out over our island and knowing that you are home. I want the people of Newport to be proud that they live here, to know that there is one of their own working hard to make this city a better place.

I am not a politician, just someone who cares enough to sacrifice for the betterment of fellow locals. I am very excited for the opportunity to represent my fellow neighbors.

7a.) Question For Third Ward Council Candidates ONLY ::: Ocean Drive is the scene of traffic problems, speeding, illegal parking, and (primarily at Bretton State Park) loud noise and trash. Although these problems are at their worst during the summer months, they persist to some degree throughout the year. What specific measures would you promote to deal with these problems?

7b.) Question For Second Ward Council Candidates ONLY ::: The intersection of Rhode Island Avenue and Memorial Boulevard is the scene of congestion and multiple accidents every summer. The traffic overflow from the north to Memorial is now affecting Red Cross and Gibbs as well. What measures should be adopted to handle this problem?

I travel this route nearly everyday so I am extremely aware of the issues here. My immediate solution is to make Memorial, heading west into town, back to a two-lane road. This will allow more space for cars to turn.
The problem is that Memorial Boulevard is a State road so we would have to propose this change through the RIDOT.

A more immediate solution is to make the corner of RI Ave. & Memorial a right turn only option. Anyone one looking to head East on Memorial can do so at Gibbs Ave. or Old Beach Road, where getting across is much easier.

Another issue is the intersection of Bellevue and Memorial. The traffic lights need to be timed better. There should be a 20 second crosswalk time to allow pedestrians to cross all four corners at once. This would also allow for traffic to disperse and create a smoother flow.

7c.) Question For First Ward Council Candidates ONLY ::: The preferred plan for the Pell Bridge Offramp Realignment is now known. What measures should the City of Newport plan and enact to minimize disruption to the surrounding neighborhoods both during construction and, more importantly, after project completion?

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