

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 *

jeannenapolitano45@gmail.com

First Name, Last Name *

Jeanne-Marie Napolitano

Elected Council Office you are seeking: *

Council "At Large" ▼

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? *

Yes, I do support the November ballot question. After carefully examining this request over the past year as the School Committee provided a number of iterations. I have spoken to members of the building committee, Rhode Island Department of Education officials, and many in our community. I also spoke before the Middletown Council to initiate a discussion on potential unification of the high schools, as I felt we could best serve the students of both communities with a unified effort, however, Middletown Council wanted no part of a discussion. An addition is needed at Pell to properly accommodate the future students. Rogers must be replaced to provide all Newport students a proper facility for 21st Century learning. After conversations with RIDE and our finance department, I believe the 52.5% annual re-imbusement (to include carrying costs) and the retirement of the bonding for Thompson next year, the option of building a high school and an addition to Pell Elementary is doable. If passed I will work to minimize the impact to our tax rate as the new confirmed information has already reduced the initial projections received in January. Council must work closely with our Finance Department if the bond is approved. I also look forward to the presentation from the Schools which will be made to the public to secure passage.

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? *

Parking and Traffic is not a new phenomenon in Newport. Future development in the North End, may present opportunities to develop a parking and shuttle service into Newport. Reconfiguring some City lots for greater visitor parking. Some zoning changes could alleviate parking issues such as a closer study of guest passes distribution, which the Council recently requested. In tight neighborhoods the planning & zoning work carefully with homeowners to provide off street parking. Council will continue to address these problems as presented. This year I have received more phone calls regarding cars and trucks parked for weeks on streets.

A call to the policer department with a description of the car, location, and tag number usually takes care of the problem.

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? *

Council embarked on an initiative to diversify our economy over seven years ago when we established Innovate Newport at the Sheffield School. We have continued to work with small businesses in the areas of technology and resiliency both blue (water) and green (environment) to promote new opportunities for employment in Newport. We are ideally located between Boston and New York with a large government presence of the Navy.

As recognized, the only area for new large development is in the North End. We continue to work with the State, community partners, and residents. The re-alignment of the bridge ramp should open up a sizable area for development of technological businesses, and in many cases allow us to work with one of our biggest employers, the US Navy and government. COVID has adversely affected everyone personally and businesses alike but we must continued to work together toward a more balanced economic future.

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

As the City owns the property, we have not yet discussed our options with staff. As in the past, with any large city-owned property, there may be a request for proposal (RFP) from professionals to determine the highest and best use. More information will be forthcoming after the Council receives all the related facts and options.

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?" *

A Community Benefit Agreement which is being considered as part of the North End Urban Plan is an agreement which must be negotiated by both parties, the City and the developer. Some ideas are tangible such as improved connection with the downtown area. Consideration could be a scheduled shuttle service directly to the downtown area of the City for employment or other needs. Another idea was the potential of a presence of a Library Annex in the North End, which would benefit everyone. The State has incorporated bike lanes in their improvements for connections to the rest of the city and addressing other modes of transportation and parking. An intangible idea such as preference hiring of Newporters and/or specialized training could be considered. Once again, these ideas are good ones and must be negotiated and approved by both parties. I would support these types of efforts and work toward their implementation.

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

Having been on the Council for a number of years, I have had the opportunity to work on many great projects to include the renovation of Thompson, rehabilitation of Tonomy, now Newport Heights, progress on rebuilding Park Holm, revitalization of Broadway, changing Sheffield School into a technology hub, Innovate Newport, and most recently, Pell School. Three of these projects have received National Awards and recognition, Newport Heights, Broadway, and Pell School. Through this work, I realized it takes many people, with potentially different views, moving in the same direction. Big projects do not happen overnight and in most cases it takes years. We have had the assistance and support of our State partners. It also requires our presence in the State House when important issues are being discussed such as Meals & Beverage tax, room tax, changes in the School Funding Formula, and other proposal which impact our community. Over the years I have developed a good relationship with our local legislators but also other legislators around the State which is important.

I've enjoyed my work on Council and for the citizens of Newport. There is so much energy and talent in the City of Newport and I want to continue to make progress for the benefit of all.

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?

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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