

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 *

First Name, Last Name *

Elected Council Office you are seeking: *

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? *

Communities with the highest quality of life invest in education. Every dollar invested in our schools adds value to the economy and improves our community. I support the bond for building a new high school, helping to put the schools on a more secure footing, and developing programs to address the particular issues that face our students. As a former faculty member at the University of Rhode Island, and a teacher with more than 20 years experience, I'm firmly committed to education and look forward to working with the community to meet the challenges and goals of educating our children.

Retirees with fixed incomes and residents concerned about increasing property taxes live together, with children, in Newport. These seemingly oppositional interests overlap more than they conflict. Additionally, children in school today will become the healthcare workers of tomorrow, the stewards of our vast and impressive culture, engineers and entrepreneurs working in new economies. If we want children to grow up to protect our legacy and livelihood, they will need investment. In Newport, we should encourage the old and young to find common value and purpose in shared lives.

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? *

With encouragement from the community and the Planning Board, the Planning Department has embarked on a Transportation Master Plan. The systemic problem of overburdened local streets, unacceptable traffic conditions during peak use and diminishing parking availability, needs a city-wide analysis and solution.

Traffic and parking problems in Newport are seasonal. At the same time, colonial streets and large SUVs are not a good mix. The most direct way to confront traffic problems is to remove tourist vehicles from our streets on the shoulder season weekends and in July and August. The major impediment to achieving this goal is that drivers want to park directly at their destination. The traffic and parking problem in Newport is not one of idle plans, nor ad hoc committees, nor poor engineering; it is a problem of political will. We cannot fix this problem if we cannot find consensus on where to keep the cars. In or outside of the city center?

Nothing animates the public like traffic and parking. We need a frank conversation about the costs and benefits of regularly admitting throngs of traffic onto our ancient infrastructure. Other historic cities like Charleston, SC have employed effective strategies for managing tourist traffic. We need a City Council that will engage with residents and transportation experts to extract a solution that is most beneficial to preserving our quality of life and we need a Transportation Master Plan that provides direction. I pledge to be that Councilor.

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? *

Newport's economy depends on key sectors including defense, healthcare, education and tourism. To thrive, we cannot rely on these sectors alone. We must expand our economy, so that our children may continue to live and work here. The pandemic has exposed our over-reliance on tourism. It yields great returns and it should be supported, but not at the cost of diminished public access to the waterfront, irregular revenue streams, and negative impacts on quality of life. The City should encourage the growth of sectors that provide livable incomes, a more resilient tax base, and enhanced quality of life. The beauty and promise of Newport and its waterfront should be preserved for all.

The Comprehensive Plan makes the case for supporting the growth of new sectors to expand our economy. It specifically calls for an innovation zone in the North End. More recent planning endeavors promote growth in the new "Blue Economy" (any industry, science or research associated with maritime use). We should build on our strengths! Following from this, economic development does not exist in a vacuum. It requires an educated work force, the physical urban amenities sought by start-ups, a cultural environment that attracts innovators and an improved regulatory environment. Economic development demands a comprehensive approach.

Meanwhile, our restaurants need help right now to beat the pandemic. We can improve the tourist experience, as visitors move throughout the city. We can open more streets and sidewalks to restaurants. Most importantly, we should listen to the pandemic business survey results and translate this into meaningful assistance.

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

The closing of the Visitor's Center prompts three important questions that need to be considered before any use is proposed. What do we want our waterfront to look like in the future? Which City services are so non-essential, that they can shut down in a major flooding event? How can the city blunt the damage to commercial real estate fueled by developing technology and exacerbated by the pandemic? Discover Newport understands that "going mobile" is the future. They are considering a truck that will search for the visitors who have left the building and are now on the phone.

The waterfront is re-developing quickly. The new building code, which prioritizes flood safety, is creating a landscape of buildings on stilts. Parking and other waterproof activities are occupying first floors as ground levels become increasingly inactive. There will be consequences for commerce and revenue, not least of all quality of life, if this continues unabated. If the City sells the Visitor Center to the highest bidder, will it be replaced with long-term physical harm? The nearby fire station is also vulnerable to flooding. This threat is obvious, but are there any City services that can completely shut down during a flood?

I would like to see a mobile and highly active new use for the Visitor Center; one that is resilient and adaptable to flooding, one that can support local business and engage residents and visitors alike. On the upper levels, we could build on the shared economy of Innovate Newport. On the lower level, an open-air market where vendors can attract out-of-reach customers with mobile displays and offerings would address many concerns. The revenue shortfall incurred by losing a big tenant might be re-made with many smaller tenants. Locals would have a place to show off their wares and neighbors might find an easy place to get great food.

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 Benefits Agreement (CBA) is a contract between an entity (such as a community group, a coalition of groups or a municipality) and a developer. As developers seek to make changes in a community, neighbors may become concerned about negative impacts. A CBA can help interested parties find mutually beneficial outcomes. Communities may advocate for a variety of benefits including physical amenities and economic support. Every new development exists in a specific physical, regulatory, and community context, therefore any CBA strategy should be nimble. Developers may seek zoning relief. The more relief is sought, the more leverage is held by the community.

CBA's are sought to mitigate the unwanted effects of development; they are essential for any city that seeks equitable outcomes. Newport is in a unique position to leverage development to advantage its residents, throughout the city, because it is a highly desirable location for many developers. Additionally, Newport community groups are vibrant, but they often don't have the resources to challenge well-funded developers. The residents, community groups, and City must work together to create successful agreements.

Participants in the North End Urban Plan outreach have created a wish list for civic amenities, recreational amenities, entrepreneurial and small business support and housing opportunities. A solid CBA should reference this home-grown list. We should prioritize lasting physical improvements to the city, such as improved pedestrian experiences, the greening of walkways, safe intersections and access to the water. I will work with residents to achieve a community focused CBA template that strives for broadly beneficial, equitable outcomes.

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

I've lived in Newport, RI with my husband and daughter for 18 years. I moved here from New Haven, CT, after living and working in Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago. For the past 15 years I've volunteered for many civic activities, most notably, ten years on the City of Newport Planning Board. I've also served on the Historic District Commission and am a member of the Newport Art Museum, the Newport Historical Society and the Redwood Library, and serve on properties committees for the museum and society

I'm the owner and principal of Haven Designers, an architectural design firm. A lifelong learner and teacher, I taught at the college level for over twenty years including the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Rhode Island for ten years. I earned a Bachelor of Arts from Smith College, a Certificate in Painting from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a Master of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania. My daughter, Deirdre Irvine, is entering her senior year of college and my husband, Steven Irvine, is a professor of biology at URI.

I like: making big abstract paintings in my home studio, hiking the conservation areas of Southern New England, and hunting for Early American treasures at local flea markets and auctions.

For more information about my civic work please visit <https://kimforward2.org/home>

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?

The traffic problems of Newport are most pronounced in Ward 2. Overburdening of local streets during peak use harms dense neighborhoods with old houses. With encouragement from the community, the Planning Department has embarked on a Transportation Master Plan to address unfettered traffic on local streets.

I raised my daughter in this neighborhood and worried every time she rode a bike, visited a friend or walked to school. There are more cars on the road today than ever before. Residents and visitors alike want the experience of walking in a tightly knit, small scale urban environment. While walking in Newport is great, driving can be a challenge. Even pedestrians are in harm's way. Recently there have been a string of traffic fatalities in our neighborhood. Two years ago my cat was hit by a car speeding on Old Beach Road (she survived).

We can begin to address the safety problem by enforcing existing laws. Cars should not be driving 40 or 50 miles an hour in town. The problem, however, is bigger than enforcement. Newport has a system of arterials, collectors and local roads. This system collapses during seasonal heavy use. As arterials become congested, drivers seek alternative routes on local roads. The police cannot be everywhere at once, so traffic problems arise.

The solution to the problem is to re-route to and improve capacity of the arterials. This task requires expertise. I pledge to listen to the residents, take advice from traffic engineers (as they will offer alternative solutions), and to make the best choice for our neighborhood.

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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