

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 *

meaganelizabethlandry@outlook.com

First Name, Last Name *

Meagan, Landry

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? *

When I close my eyes and envision things that Newport desperately needs, to be an even greater city than it already is, a new high school is at the top of the list. I personally attended Rogers twenty years ago, from 2000 to 2001. The overall condition of the school wasn't great then. I would love to do a walk through, to personally see what it looks like today, two decades later. Our local families and educators, as well as taxpayers, who don't even have students currently attending Newport Public Schools, deserve better. I fully support the November ballot question. The school conditions are going to continue to deteriorate. By acting now, RIDE (RI Dept. of Education) will reimburse up to 52% of school construction costs for a new high school. Our neighboring community's council members have made it clear they're not interested in consolidation. We can't wait any longer.

Some citizens say to just fix the current school. But last year, Kate Jessup, the project architect, said renovating and upgrading the current auditorium, as well as the current gymnasium, would be more expensive than building new ones. I feel one thing that is crucial, is that we are accurate regarding the size of the school, based on the expected enrollment in five years. Reports can say one thing. But a recent Wall Street Journal article stated that more and more young adults across the country, are moving back home, as they've discovered working from home due to COVID allows for that, versus paying more to live in a big city. I would hate to see a new Rogers built, and then five years later, discover the school isn't big enough to accommodate the students. This is the problem we're now facing with Pell, and it would be a real shame for history to repeat itself.

I feel when it comes to a great school, it comes down to more than four walls and a roof. While a new school will certainly help to motivate students, at the end of the day, it comes down to the teachers, and their curriculum/teaching style. I had some excellent teachers growing up, and it was because of teachers like Dr. Michael Browner Jr. and Ms. Coleen Hermes, that I'm typing this right now. They made me excited to go to class, and made me want to do better. I also had teachers who didn't understand that teaching isn't "one size fits all." Having an IEP doesn't make a student any less intelligent. It just means they learn differently, and they shouldn't be made to feel like they're "different," especially at such a young age.

To those Newporters who are concerned about their taxes going up, I would say to them, my grandparents would pay slightly higher taxes, if it meant their grandkids were receiving a better education, and looking at a brighter future.

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? *

I walk my dog Bailey along America's Cup Avenue, Thames Street, and Wellington Avenue all the time. I see that the traffic and lack of parking has always been a problem, along with trash cans overflowing, which is a whole separate issue. I often think to myself, how many of these folks sitting in traffic right now, could instead be parking in a lot, and walking to their destination? I'm sure it isn't very far, they would probably get there a lot faster, and the city could be collecting revenue. But I know a lot of people will take a parking ticket, as it's comparable to the price of parking in a lot all day. That is why I agree with the city's recent decision to consider increasing the parking fees for tickets in certain areas of town. I know parking is a major problem around our beaches in the summer months, and I feel for the residents who live in those neighborhoods. I heard your concerns in the last City Council meeting, as residents who live on Ledge Road and Rovensky Avenue called in with complaints. No one should have to deal with the general public littering and defecating on their private property, and we as a city can do better, to make sure this doesn't happen. I think additional parking bollards in high traffic areas is a good first step, and a short-term solution, to restrict illegal parking in residential areas, while we look for a more long-term solution.

I spent the better part of my twenties living in an apartment on Elm Street, which was resident sticker parking. I loved that apartment because you could walk to everything in town. But there were times when I did need to use my car, to go grocery shopping, or go out of town. I can't tell you how many times I had to drive around the block several times, or park far away from my home, because there were so many out of state plates (with parking tickets on their windshield) parked on our block. I think we could be using the Mary Street lot better, and the lot at the Gateway Center, and encouraging tourists to park there, to make more parking on local roads, for residents. Privately owned lots in Newport usually have an incentive for people who parked and shopped in that particular area. Maybe our city lots could have something similar, where, if parking has been validated by a local shop, they would receive a discount. Just like residents get up to 3 hours free at the Mary Street lot, for having a resident sticker.

I think what the Planning Board has been working on, as far as Shared Streets, to really open Newport up to pedestrian traffic, during these tough times, is awesome! The more we can do to help our small local businesses, the better! We all have to work together, to support our neighbors!

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? *

If there is one thing the city of Newport has learned from the Covid pandemic, it is that our economy can not rely on tourism. In this new normal, I think we need to be looking at how we can expand certain industries, that can't expand elsewhere, as far as fishing/lobstering, and boat building. We have some of the freshest seafood in the country. There must be local men and women who are looking for jobs, that would find being out on the sea appealing. Our residents are still going to be buying seafood, even with less tourists coming here, due to travel restrictions.

We're so lucky to have IYRS right in our backyard. People come from all over the world to learn how to build and restore boats. Their mission statement is about "empowering students through hands-on learning, to realize their full potential in career and in life," and that is the kind of learning that I can get behind!

We as a city should be doing more to promote and back these industries, as they're vital to our local economy. While tourists may come and go, Narragansett Bay isn't going anywhere. We as a city should be utilizing it more. I think a great way to start, is by partnering these industries with the Newport Career and Technical Center, to give local high school students an additional option after graduation.

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

One complaint I'm constantly hearing from residents, is that there is not enough for the children of this community to do around here in their free time. I remember growing up, my parents would take my friends and I to Middletown, to one of the two local bowling alleys, or WOW Playcenter. We could play for hours, our parents would know we were safe, and it was a lot better than sitting at home playing video games. While we have the Boys and Girls Club in Newport, parks and beaches, and the YMCA in Middletown, I still feel there is a lack of things to do, locally, for the kids of Newport. We all know that a bored teenager, is more likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol. That is why, if it were up to me, I would look for funds to build a youth center where the Visitors Center is.

With a youth center, if they had a swimming pool, basketball courts, and playing fields (that could also be connected with the Newport Gulls and the Sunset League across the street at Cardines), kids wouldn't be "bored" after school, and on weekends. An active kid is a happier kid, from a mental health standpoint. We could all use a little help in that department, especially in these trying times! The kids could also be mentored, and receive homework help, which could be important for those whose parents work second shift jobs. My parents worked full time and weren't home when I got home from school. Which is why I'm so thankful that I had my grandparents to help me with homework. But not every kid has that. That guidance that they could receive from adult volunteers in this community, could help them discover what they want to do with their futures. I had an internship my freshman year at Rogers. If it weren't for Lisette Prince giving me the opportunity to intern at Newport This Week, I wouldn't have believed that I was capable of achieving my goal, of having articles published in a paper! I want that so much for the kids in this community, that they too can make their goals a reality. They just need someone to give them a chance. Local children would not only benefit from internships, as they would receive job experience, but the local businesses would benefit as well. Businesses who are struggling due to Covid to pay their employees, would benefit from having a student working for them, for free, and they would then have the option of hiring that very (now experienced) student during the summer months, on weekends, and once that student has graduated high school/college.

One way to attract young adults to volunteer their time, would be for the city to also explore building workforce housing on-site, as there are so few options for middle-income workers in Newport. This could be looked at more once RIPTA's lease is up, and more land would be available.

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 feel a Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) would be beneficial to the residents of the North End, as part of the North End Urban Plan (NEUP). I would like to see it include local hiring programs, and job training programs, as so many Newport residents need jobs now more than ever. I would want to meet with the groups involved, like the Carpiato Group, to make sure we agree, that it should also include living wage requirements. Minimum wage is not a livable wage. It is my belief that when you take care of your employees, they take care of you, with a stronger work ethic, and a more positive attitude.

I would want to make sure future businesses, and existing businesses in the North End, are in agreement with their neighbors, some of whom have been living there for generations, in regard to things like noise. There's a new hotel, for example, that is owned by a local family. I of course want to see them be successful, as they have been with their other local businesses. But you must look at both sides, when it comes to a neighborhood, and make sure that everyone's quality of life is being respected. While I would hope they get their entertainment license, I would also hope that they have already talked to their neighbors, and have a mutually agreeable plan in place, before the public hearings on the application later this month. It's steps like these, that can alleviate any issues moving forward.

What I don't want to see happen in the North End, and I will do everything I can to make sure it doesn't, is gentrification. My dad lives on Hillside Avenue, so I have a personal interest in this project. One of the things that I love about his neighborhood, is how diverse it is, and he treats his neighbors like family. I would never want any Newporter to feel as though they were being "pushed out," as we all play an important role in this community.

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

When it comes to voting for an elected official, of course there are voters who have done their homework, as you should! But I think about how many people go into the voting booth, and choose a candidate just based on name recognition, or knowing someone who knows them. I only say this because people have told me that's how they vote.

This may be crazy for me to say, but I don't want you to vote for me "just because" my mom worked with you, or because you went to school with my dad, or because we were in Girl Scouts together. I want your vote because I earned it. I want your vote because I'm going to work so hard, to ensure that the people of Newport have the best life. I'm not perfect, and I won't claim to be. I may make some mistakes along the way. But I care about this community, and the people living in it (sometimes too much). If I had to list a weakness I have, it would be caring too much.

I know I have no political experience. I also had no sales experience before starting in sales a few years ago. My managers would tell you today that I'm very good at what I do. They gave me a chance. Now I'm asking you to give me a chance too.

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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