

# 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](http://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](mailto: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 \*

KateLeonar@icloud.com

First Name, Last Name \*

Kate Leonard

Elected Council Office you are seeking: \*

Council "Third 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? \*

I responded to this question many times publicly. The voters of Newport will determine whether this bond issue passes. I stated that I would have advocated for the expansion of The Pell School. As a former educator I feel that building a new RHS will not provide adequate educational opportunities for students. The world is a different place than when most of us went to high school. I feel my moral responsibility to the students is to help provide them with a quality education—an education that will give them success in life. I am told that this year RHS only had 137 graduates. A school of so few students does not offer the opportunity for a large number of class offerings. Small high schools just cannot compete with larger high schools where students can enroll in many classes. As a high school educator for 25 years, it is important that each student is given the opportunity to reach his/her highest potential to be able to provide for his or her futures. We also need many more vocational/mentoring programs.

I still believe that educational cooperation among island communities needs to happen. This may have happened if there were meetings scheduled with the Newport City Council and the Middletown and Portsmouth Town Councils. We passed a Resolution to request these meetings, but the Mayor did not schedule them. If the bond issue is defeated, we owe it to our community to schedule these meetings.

I am also not sure if Newport can afford this huge bond issue that does not even include the interest cost of the bonding. Many Newporters now feel that taxes are crippling them. Even when they may have inherited their homes or worked hard to keep afloat, they are worried that they can no longer afford to live here. We need to do what we can for the students and the taxpayers. The taxpayers will decide.

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? \*

One does not have to re-invent the wheel all the time. I have promoted and still do promote the Foundation for Newport Plan for dealing with traffic congestion. A lot of time and effort went into investigating and learning about how Charleston and Williamsburg deal with traffic –both large tourism areas. I was part of this group for a while that was paid for with private funding. Bill Warner and Tom Todd, WTG Group, were instrumental in creating the plan with their vast knowledge. Implementing the plan met with obstacles – those wanting no change and those not wishing to help Newport institute a trolley system like other communities.

This plan should have been pursued. It is THE only transportation plan that Newport ever endorsed. Like other tourism communities it required that tourist vehicles be “captured” before entering the center of town. The perfect site would have been the former Jai Lai property. Once vehicles are parked there, a trolley system can move the occupants throughout the city. Minimal fees can be charged. Areas in other communities have been put into zones. Residents receive parking permits for their areas and public areas of town. It alleviates most day visitor vehicles.

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? \*

Tourism is what we have now and need to deal with. I think we have to evaluate what "good tourism" is versus other alternatives. A balance needs to exist. Until Newport can woo other companies/employment opportunities here, tourism will be our business. Many large companies claim that we do not have skilled or educated employees to bring technical, cyber security companies or other companies here. (Again, educational/vocational improvements are needed).

I talk about "good" tourism---tourists who frequent our shops, restaurants, bars, etc. I have found this summer that many who have come to Newport do not spend money. They come with coolers. They bring their lunches. They park in neighborhoods. They exasperate traffic issues. I understand the desire to visit here because it is so beautiful, but most residents have a difficult time dealing with some tourism or party house issues. Airbnb has played havoc here and throughout the world. Party houses are worse this year than prior years because of enforcement issues.

I think we need to realize that the tourism industry provides jobs for our local population. This in turn allows our economy to prosper at this time. People with jobs have money to buy goods, rent or buy properties, feed their families. Tourism brings in tax dollars so property taxes can remain stable. The word BALANCE is important here.

In my ideal world, I would like to see Newport with more full time families. I do not want us to lose our middle class. I want a living wage for people so that City Council does not keep hearing that we need more low income housing – of which our 17% is the second or third highest in the state. Newport is a vibrant, diverse community. We have people of all ages. We are trying to bring young working people here by providing job innovation opportunities and workforce housing.

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

The city owns the property. We have received rent from Discover Newport to the tune of \$40K a year---far below market value. That revenue has gone into the Sister City Program. I am in real estate and want the city's taxpayers to benefit from any increased revenue that we can get. I am suggesting that the city go to a national real estate company to determine the rental value on this property. A RFP (Request for Proposals) may also be used to determine interest and viability for its use. The use needs to be compatible with uses the city residents may want in that building.

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?" \*

Newport has spent \$Millions on the re-development of the North End. We worked with Federal and State agencies to improve housing opportunities by making Newport Heights one of the most desirable public housing developments in the country. We may now have a greater opportunity with the possible bridge ramp improvements to expand even more opportunities to benefit all of our community. We on Council hear about the desire to be "One Newport." To be this, we have to work with developers and city stakeholders for a possible CBA. Can this bring more and better job opportunities? Can it provide transportation opportunities so residents can access jobs in other parts of town? Future development of the North End should incorporate what all residents of Newport want.

I cannot tell you what I will do to promote and support the NEUP on a clear path to implementation until all parties/stakeholders have come to the table for a final plan. This will also depend on financial ability to implement the recommendations.

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

I have the reputation to answer all phone calls, text messages, and emails-- no matter which ward a person lives in. We are one community. The problems of one area are often the problems of other areas. We are one community --- diverse in ages, beliefs, sexual preferences, and all other elements that make us human beings. If want to live in a good community, we have to work at it. I have been doing this for a long time because I care about where I live. I tell people, if you do not want me on City Council, throw me out. I am a no-nonsense person.

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?

These problems are not unique to Ocean Drive. They are the same problems throughout the city. Speeding is prevalent on Harrison Avenue, Ruggles Avenue, Carroll Avenue, and other streets. I get calls regarding safety every day, but mostly during summer season. Trash problems we have all noticed throughout the city also. During this Covid crisis it has been difficult to deal with "normal" issues like this. I have pushed for more police stings to enforce the speeding and motorcycle noise ordinances. I have done my best to enforce our noise/party house violations. Simply said, there is lack of enforcement.

Illegal parking is more prevalent on streets that access the beaches. I have photos galore that show a predominance of MA, NY cars. The City Manager is using his Executive Powers during Covid to put up cones and limit access to some streets to eliminate the illegal parking--again, an enforcement issue.

Years ago, Newport did a comprehensive study on creating a bike lane along Ocean Avenue. The plan did not come to fruition because of a few dangerous areas where a bike path was impossible--near Playhouse and a few other properties. A bike path may have alleviated some of the bike/vehicle slow downs, but it was deemed not do-able.

Bretton State Park is just that -- a park deemed to be State land. Newport has no control over this park. RI DEM staff have the job of enforcement here. They are under-staffed. Trash is everywhere in the park.

Until enforcement of our ordinances occurs, we will still have these issues. I am one of 7 Council members. I am told constantly that I understand and work for the people. That is my job. I feel that I was elected to be their voice. The voters are my bosses. I am one of 7 bosses of the City Manager. By City Charter, Council cannot tell staff or employees what to do. We must go through the City Manager who is their boss.

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?

---

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms