

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? *

Yes. The children of this city deserve a safe environment to receive their education. This school was outdated and in dire need of repair when I was a student there from 1997-2001. To the taxpayers of Newport: I want to get creative with revenue so that these projects don't have to be balanced on your backs. I think a seasonal local tourism tax that goes specifically to the public schools would offset any increase in property taxes. I think a tax around 1% on a food bill, or a ticket to the mansions is reasonable and something the business owners of this town should get behind. The tax could run from Memorial day to Labor day or even until Columbus day. Investing in education is an investment in the future of Newport.

If this is defeated the council and school committee will have to go back to square one. This time the city will need the state education commissioner to come in and take a look at forcing communities on this island to regionalize.

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 think we can all agree that the roads in this city were built for horse and carriage. I think we need to take a look at the major intersections such as Thames st and Americas cup. Traffic is always bunched up there and the main cause is the crosswalk 25 feet from the intersection. That crosswalk needs to be moved. There's too much foot traffic at that intersection and people walking on the east side of Thames should be funneled up memorial a few yards and a crosswalk with proper signage and indicators should be installed. Its really not safe the way it is set up now.

Another issue is Memorial Blvd., the state needs to address the mess they created at the end of Memorial at the intersection of Purgatory rd. I know this is in Middletown but the problems it has caused reflect on Newport. That intersection needs to be redesigned as a rotary so that traffic is constantly flowing.

As for parking, we don't have nearly enough and I certainly don't want to see ugly cement parking garages popping up all over town. I do, however, think we should add to the current garage at the gateway center without it becoming an eyesore in the neighborhood.

I think lastly, would be enforcement policies. The police department is doing their best with what they have for manpower to deal with enforcement but it needs to do more. There should be double the amount of traffic aids writing violations. Traffic aids should be trained properly so that they are able to tow vehicles and Scofflaws without having to call for a police officer to come handle the parking complaint where a tow is needed. This is a poor use of resources and the city can improve immensely with an easy fix.

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? *

"Americas First Resort". This slogan says it all. We've become one of the greatest tourist destinations in America and the world. People wouldn't be willing to invest millions of dollars to build hotels and other projects without having the long term vision that Newport will continue to grow. The council will need to better support those who want to invest in our city. The development at Newport Grand property is a great example. The moratorium on that project should have never happened. The planning, and zoning process should have been allowed to play out, which probably would have lasted the same amount of time. Now, the councils poor decision may have lost millions for the city. These decisions reflect poorly and make a statement that Newport doesn't want to change its reliance on tourism.

In order to expand beyond tourism there has to be a change in leadership. We need to have members on the council who can make decisions based on the overall well being of the city. This council needs to be more of a liaison between business that are here already here, business that want to invest in the city and the residents. Right now the council is viewed as those who just want to prevent growth. There is common ground and if you vote for me I promise to be that advocate.

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

I think the city needs to maintain a Visitors Center and a central hub for tourists to come gather information, purchase tickets etc. The city should place a request for proposal for at travel company to come in and run the visitor center. I also think the Save the Bay aquarium should relocate to the visitor center. This would give them much more space than what they currently have at the beach to expand. With the relocation, the visibility would open up a much larger pool of visitors to the aquarium each year.

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 a Community Benefit Agreement should be part of every plan that comes to the city. In the community Benefit Agreement for the North end Urban plan I would like to see plans for living wages, local business contracting and big box restrictions. I want to see plans for storm water diversion so that our water pollution control plants are not overwhelmed. I want to see "green" buildings, parks and other public areas that will fit the charm of Newport. I would also like to see a large percentage of employment by locals.

The city council needs to show unified support for the plans in the North end. All 3 ward representatives need to advocate for the plan with their constituents. Once plans are put forward anything put through the zoning and planning boards should be done as a special meeting. Dedicating a special meeting to deal with these issues would allow for more time for discussion and give residents more opportunity to be involved. Most times the dockets for these meetings are filled and things are pushed to the next meeting. That cannot be the case with this. I will promote community involvement in every step of plan. This project needs to be the most transparent project in the history of Newport, we owe that to ALL of the residents in this great city!

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

Not only was I born and raised in Newport, but I am an active and vocal member of the community. My entire family is deeply rooted in our community, my mother was a clerk for the school department, and both my father and brother are Newport Police officers. I constantly have open discussions with co-workers, and friends, from all different aspects of life. I am aware of how our community operates, whilst knowing what our community is asking for. Not too many of our council members can actively represent everyone in our community, in the way I believe I can. With my experience, I believe I can include every opinion, comment and concern into consideration, before making decisions. My goal is to remove personal beliefs in politics, and to put the interest of the general public first.

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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