

PA PAC Questionnaire for Durham Sheriff - 2022

Please return the completed form along with your resume or biographical statement describing education, work history, community service, and prior political experience, as well as a high-resolution headshot of yourself as soon as possible, but by Sat Mar 19 at 5pm, at the latest.

Please e-mail your responses to PAC Coordinators at papacboard@googlegroups.com by Saturday, March 19 at 5pm.

Please note that following the Saturday, March 19 at 5pm deadline, the People's Alliance PAC may publish your responses to this questionnaire and your resume.

When answering this questionnaire, please repeat the questions in your response document with each question numbered and organized as it appears here. Type your responses in italics, bold, or a different font to distinguish your responses from the questions. Do not use colors or shading.

Please try to confine your responses to no more than 300 words unless another word limit is indicated. Do not feel obliged to exhaust the limit for each question.

If you use words or ideas from another person, please attribute your source.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and your willingness to serve the people of Durham.

Candidate's name: Clarence F. Birkhead
Address: 212 El Paso Avenue, Durham, North Carolina
E-mail Address: sheriffbirkheaddurham@gmail.com
Phone: 919-423-6179
Website: www.birkheadfordurham.com

1. What are the three most important issues facing Durham? What are your top priorities in addressing these issues?

The top three issues facing Durham are:

- (1) Addressing Violent Crime
- (2) Creating Opportunity for Equitable Access to Good-Paying Jobs
- (3) Reducing the mass exodus of qualified (government) employees

1) My strategy for addressing violent crime is based on a targeted enforcement approach. I will continue to work with state, federal and local agencies to identify and apprehend the most violent offenders in Durham. We must hold these individuals accountable for their actions - actions that continue to destroy the quality of life in our most marginalized neighborhoods. As such, I have created a Strike Team (similar to a tactical team) that works with our regional partners, identifying offenders who commit crimes across county boundaries, and a Sheriff's Targeted Enforcement Program (STEP) that focuses on being responsive to complaints and

concerns presented by Durham residents and developed from local intelligence-sharing with Durham Police.

2) As Sheriff, I encourage business owners to hire people who were formerly incarcerated. A second chance can provide residents with a life-changing opportunity to earn a living. A job is the quickest way to exit a life of crime and reduce recidivism.

3) Reducing the mass exodus of qualified (government) employees. We must do a better job compensating employees. As the sixth largest county in NC, salary is among the lowest for deputies and detention officers. On average, one Sheriff's Office employee is lost per month to other Triangle-based law enforcement agencies paying up to 20% more.

2. How can you leverage the role of Sheriff to advance workforce development opportunities and access to skills training and jobs?

First, I believe the Sheriff is in a unique position to communicate with elected officials, community leaders and the business community about what we are seeing in those who commit crimes in our community. We need our business leaders to explore alternative applicant pools and to think creatively about recruiting outside of the traditional routes. We also need to improve the transportation network so our residents can reach every part of the county for work and education at our local universities and Durham Tech. While the Sheriff cannot legislate or fund these programs, I can communicate and collaborate to promote ideas and help plan.

Second, as Sheriff, I have implemented and expanded training programs in the detention facility. During my next term, I want to expand the options to include more job skills training and career exploration initiatives. Although jails are intended for brief stays, we have several detainees who have been housed in our detention facility for up to six years. This is more than enough time to develop skills, earn certifications and possibly a college degree. I welcome the opportunity to develop innovative programs in collaboration with Durham Tech and other local universities.

3. What programs and policies will you pursue to ensure people transitioning out of incarceration will succeed in integrating back into typical life?

Currently, the Durham County Sheriff's Office works with several programs to help people transition from incarceration and back into typical life. Our Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program works with Durham County Public Health's Formerly Incarcerated Transition (FIT) program to provide transition services to those battling opioid addictions. The MAT program also partners with community addiction recovery services to either initiate or continue MAT. The Sheriff's Office also works with the Durham Re-Entry Council and offers peer support.

In addition to working with local organizations, our medical personnel work closely with our detainees to address their physical and mental health needs. Many of our detained individuals have untreated and/or unmanaged chronic illnesses. Addressing these medical needs and providing an avenue for medical care outside of the detention facility helps provide stability and reduce recidivism.

Currently, my staff is looking at options to expand our educational programming to address not only literacy or GED courses, but also job skills. The Sheriff's Office recently entered into a relationship with Durham Tech for training detention officers and law enforcement.

4. How do you think of economic justice within the context of the justice system?

The justice system should be fair and equitable for all it serves. From a law enforcement perspective, that means we should not criminalize poverty and should understand the impact adverse childhood experiences (ACES) or trauma has on adult behavior. I am able to encourage the use of citations instead of arrests for certain misdemeanors.

We must recognize that the court system can adversely impact working families in other ways than being detained in a jail. Many residents will go unpaid in order to attend court or may not attend court at all (risking a bench warrant) because of the lack of affordable child care.

With the remote hearing technology we are currently working to implement, individuals will be able to participate in certain court hearings from their home, their desk or on a personal device like a cell phone. Residents will be able to log in at the time of their hearing, participate and then return to their other responsibilities.

5. What are your thoughts and plans regarding the interaction of the Sheriff's office with the District Attorney and the Courts?

In our daily operations in Durham, the Sheriff's Office oversees courthouse security in the entrance areas and provides bailiff services in the courtrooms. As Sheriff, I regularly meet with courthouse stakeholders—judges, the clerk of court, public defender, district attorney and other agencies housed in the courthouse. In recent years, our collaboration has focused upon COVID-19 mitigation policies, court reopening plans, and addressing concerns regarding evictions. Regarding evictions, our group expanded to include county agencies, local advocacy groups and legal aid and the discussions led to providing courthouse space for the weekly eviction clinics and for assistance agencies to provide immediate assistance to those in court for eviction proceedings. Our current projects include working with the Administrative Office of the Courts to implement remote hearing technology.

In criminal prosecutions, the Sheriff's Office investigators work closely with the district attorney's office to provide evidence and information necessary for the resolution of cases (trial, plea bargain or diversion programs like deferred prosecution, mental health court). The detention facility personnel regularly review the confinement information of our detainees and provide length of stay information to the judges and attorneys. In cases where detainees need specialized care, detention facility staff work with attorneys and judges to obtain orders for release (which was very helpful during the early days of COVID-19 pandemic) or safekeeping orders, which authorize the transfer of detainees to other facilities.

For the court system to work efficiently, expeditiously and in the best interests of the community, communication is key. Each of the agencies, which comprise our court system, have different duties and different approaches to their role in the court system. Despite our different functions, we come together to collaborate and to provide good service to the community.

6. What is your position on School Resource Officers? In what ways should the Sheriff department interact with Durham schools? Please explain in detail.

Since taking office in 2018, I have developed an excellent working relationship with the superintendent, school security personnel and school administrators. In 2019, I overhauled and revamped the school resource officer (SRO) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to better define the role of SROs in schools. This MOU has been shared with the People's Alliance and other community organizations. We need SROs to keep our campuses safe and to address serious incidents that disrupt the educational environment. SROs are there to support our students, faculty and staff. They are not there to be heavy-handed disciplinarians.

Nationally, the perception of SROs may be unfavorable. In Durham, we have avoided this perception. In a recent survey initiated by a People's Alliance sub-committee, the SRO program received a positive approval rating of over 90%. Following guidelines, continuing training and ongoing communication and collaboration will ensure Durham avoids problems faced in other jurisdictions. The launch of body worn cameras earlier this year provides an additional resource to promote transparency in the SRO program if and when jointly assessing complaints with school leaders.

7. Under what circumstances should pre-trial detention be used vs. more community-oriented solutions for alleged offenders facing trial?

North Carolina law and constitutional principles govern bail and pre-trial detention options. Through collaboration with our Criminal Justice Resource Center, each pre-trial detainee is assessed to determine bond recommendations and options other than pre-trial confinement, such as electronic monitoring. While I support these efforts, I would like to see our electronic monitoring system provide more real-time alternatives. My understanding is our current system

is operated and monitored by an out-of-state company and law enforcement may not be notified for several days, if at all, when someone violates their electronic monitoring conditions. With people accused of murder and violent assaults being placed on electronic monitoring, we need more robust and accountable real-time monitoring and notifications when violations occur.

I also support pre-trial diversion programs for first-time offenders. I was pleased to see diversion to community resources incorporated into the raise-the-age reforms. The majority of our juvenile offenders may be released to parents or referred to resources by law enforcement or juvenile court counselors without involving the criminal justice system.

8. What do you see as the role of the Community Safety and Wellness Task Force in transforming justice and safety in our city?

The Community Safety and Wellness Task Force was formed to recommend programs to enhance public safety and wellness through alternatives to policing and criminal prosecution. Thus far, their work has resulted in significant engagement with Durham County's residents to get their thoughts and perspectives about various aspects of our criminal justice system. I am a strong believer in communication and collaboration. What's missing from this conversation is the law enforcement perspective. While ultimately the recommendations will be derived from the goals and desires of our community, law enforcement leaders can bring a perspective to the table about what is currently legally permissible, what legislative changes may be needed and what we have learned from past attempts in implementing new programs.

To be successful, insight upon the possible scenarios first responders could face when responding to a mental health crisis should be a part of the conversation as we develop programs. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my work on Governor Cooper's Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice. In sum, I see the Community Safety and Wellness Task Force as an incubator of ideas developed from community discussions and research. The implementation process is where the real work will begin.

9. What should be the balance of visible patrols vs. investigative officers? What roles do each of these play in community safety? Given limited budgets, should the Sheriff Department lean more toward increased visibility or increased investigative roles? Please explain.

Both are required. Visible patrol in high crime areas is a known strategy that has been successful in deterring criminal activity. With modern technology, concerns regarding over-policing, racial profiling must be avoided. Databases and analytical software assess trends and identify focus areas. Patrol deputies are first responders. They respond to calls for service and provide the quick response necessary to address initial complaints, begin investigations, apprehend those perpetrating crimes, and attend to the needs of crime victims. Patrol deputies

are most often the only contact a resident will have with the Sheriff's Office. Deputies are tasked with building relationships with the communities and businesses they patrol. This is the beginning of building and strengthening our relationship with the citizenry.

More complex or violent crimes require seasoned investigators. Modern investigative techniques involve forensic and scientific analysis, assessing technological evidence, such as cell phones (which are hand-held computers), interviewing witnesses, following leads, executing search warrants and other processes to investigate and solve serious or major crimes. Again, we need both.

10. What do you see as the role of the Sheriff's Department in evictions? Please assess the prevention of evictions during COVID. What will you do to reduce and prevent evictions if elected?

The eviction procedures and timeline are very specific and outlined in laws passed by the NC General Assembly. As a result, the eviction process is more than 75% complete by the time it reaches the Sheriff's Office. Currently, the Sheriff's Office attempts to educate those facing eviction about resources available for assistance. This information is included with the notices we post on properties at the beginning of the process. Continued collaboration with judges, advocacy groups, county agencies and legal aid is imperative to develop additional resources to help those facing eviction. Through this collaboration, weekly eviction clinics are held in the courthouse, updated educational materials are distributed by the Sheriff's Office, and personnel at eviction proceedings provide on-the-spot assistance.

The Sheriff's Office also has an open dialogue with legal aid to the extent legally possible in scheduling evictions to allow the court to review last-minute motions and requests prior to carrying out the eviction. Recently, legal aid has raised concerns about "fair notice." Some tenants are receiving notices of eviction in the U.S. mail with only a day to plan for the eviction or to take legal action to stop the eviction. Americans are keenly aware of the recent failings of the US Postal Service. To change these "fair notice" timelines, legislation is needed. I am in the process of discussions with legislators to advocate for needed changes to facilitate a fairer process.

11. What, if anything, should be done to reduce the proliferation of firearms and reduce gun violence in Durham?

A multi-pronged approach is required to address the proliferation of firearms, reduce gun violence, and address gun trafficking in our region and throughout the I-85/I-95/I-40 corridor. The Sheriff's Targeted Enforcement Program (STEP) program allows deputies and investigators to be laser focused on apprehending and holding accountable those who commit gun violence and drug crimes. This targeted approach on violent offenders has been successful.

Additionally, the work and partnership with the Federal Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms (ATF) & Explosives unit targeting gun trafficking and the guns coming into our community has been successful. The Sheriff's Office will continue its regional approach, working with our local, state and federal partners in fighting gun, drug and human trafficking crimes.

Further, I am working with several state legislators to strengthen gun laws, ban "ghost guns", which are untraceable and unregulated, and to pass "red flag" laws that would allow for the temporary removal of guns from persons found to be a danger to themselves or others.

I support universal background checks and sensible gun ownership.

I'm proud to announce that the Sheriff's Office's first gun buyback program takes place in April in partnership with the judiciary and a faith-based organization.

12. What is your position on ShotSpotter technology? If you have concerns with the technology, please explain what those are and how that impacts your position.

I support technology that will help law enforcement investigate and reduce crime – especially gun violence and violent crime. I am aware of the mixed reviews regarding success rates of ShotSpotter technology. I believe it is appropriate for Durham police to use ShotSpotter technology during a pilot period to measure its viability.

13. What improvements, if any, are needed at the Durham County jail in terms of COVID response and other healthcare needs?

The Sheriff's Office developed COVID-19 mitigation policies and procedures prior to the pandemic declaration on March 13, 2020. Upon receiving a COVID-19 alert from NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in January 2020, at my direction, my Chief Deputy consulted with the King County Sheriff's Office in Seattle, Washington – where the first COVID-19 case in the US was detected – to learn more about their preparations. I began meeting with the county's public health director and attended informational workshops through NC DHHS, the American Correctional Association (ACA) and other organizations to learn more about the spread of the disease and mitigation strategies.

During the early stages of the pandemic, I worked closely with the district attorney's office and judges to reduce the detention facility population. I worked with other local law enforcement agencies to encourage the use of citations over arrest for misdemeanor offenses.

First, while there are adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies currently, the Sheriff's Office needs continued PPE funding. Second, In the detention facility, the HVAC

system needs to be improved, and possibly be replaced. Modifying this system will ensure air ventilation systems clean the air flowing through the facility.

Due to the court shutdown, there is a backlog of civil and criminal cases, which need addressing. Technology and equipment for remote court hearings are needed. Incentives to encourage detainees to get vaccinated and boosted are needed. Many detainees are at risk for severe COVID-19 due to chronic illnesses. Many detainees are young adult Black males and people of color who are hesitant to become vaccinated. A comprehensive COVID-19 educational program has been put in place.

14. What are the best and worst things about the current administration of the Sheriff's Department?

The Durham County Sheriff's Office has experienced, forward-thinking staff committed to community service and addressing the needs of all Durham County residents. Through their efforts, the Sheriff's Office has:

- Achieved Triple Crown Accreditation status
- Updated and improved technological needs
- Implemented body worn cameras
- Expanded and upgraded our dash cameras
- Implemented a successful COVID-19 mitigation strategy in our detention facility.
- Implemented a racial equity training program that includes implicit bias training, joint training with our school resources officers and teachers
- Participated in the county's year-long racial equity cohort

As Sheriff, I have been appointed to Governor Cooper's Task Force on Racial Equity in Criminal Justice. Our staff is committed to criminal justice reform. And, the office is laser focused upon combating crime, as well as reducing traffic crashes and fatalities.

As for the worst, the office lacks the resources to carry out the business of the government. My assessment is that for many years, previous administrators neglected to address critical needs and hire staff capable of managing the business of the Office of the Sheriff. I must continue to strengthen the business of the government. I lead this effort with the assistance of a Chief of Staff, who has a master's degree in public administration and more than thirty years of community involvement in the Durham community. I hired a director of Information Technology and Communications with more than 30 years in the field of technology, including time spent working for National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). I added technology to improve asset management and tracking of the vast equipment items in our inventory.

I have recruited qualified, experienced personnel to manage the office of sheriff. Moving forward, the Sheriff's Office requires a director of human resources, and a qualified medical director to expand MAT. In order to recruit and retain law enforcement personnel, I will continue to lobby county and state officials to gain a competitive advantage over Triangle-based law enforcement agencies with respect to compensation and benefits packages.

15. What role does the Sheriff's Department play in gang prevention and reduction? Please detail specific programs you have implemented or plan to implement.

The Sheriff's Office works closely with Project Build and participated in the work of Jim Stuit, Durham County gang researcher, facilitating the recent gang survey. Over the years through my work in the community, I have developed relationships with people involved with gangs, as well as those working to reduce gang activity. Most recently, I have used these relationships to help facilitate conversations with current and former gang members to address gun violence. Other community leaders and elected officials are engaging in similar conversations. Our collective work and collaborations led to a better understanding of why people join gangs and why they stay. Now it is time for the entire community to focus upon addressing the social and economic causes that underlies gang activity and gang participation.

Creating opportunities for young men and women to provide for themselves and their families, by providing access to good paying jobs, access to vocational training, and establishing a robust training and job placement initiative is imperative to the community.

I am mindful that gun violence, shootings and violent crime occurs outside of gangs, too. To address the proliferation of drugs, I am laser focused on the apprehension and prosecution of those individuals committing crimes. These crimes are closely related to social and economic issues underlying criminal activity in the community – such as substance use disorder, domestic violence, and mental health disorders.

16. What additional resources does the Department need that it does not currently have?

- (1) Improved Detention Facility infrastructure and conditions: The detention facility opened in 1996 and the 26 year-old building needs updating and improvement. Several critical systems have aged, ended their life cycle and are due for replacement. A consultant recently identified 9 critical system needs which county management has agreed to fund through the capital improvement funding.

A critical need is to replace the HVAC system for improved air quality. As a best practice, the state prison system implemented new and improved HVAC systems to combat COVID-19 and the spread of other air-borne viruses. Our detainees also frequently complain of the facility's temperature.

- (2) The Sheriff's Office and the County should continue to work on recruitment and retention of Sheriff's Office and Detention Facility personnel. Options include a pay scale with guaranteed step increases, eliminating mandatory overtime, adding more training and professional development opportunities, and working with staff to ensure their quality of life needs are met.
- (3) The Sheriff's Office has unmet technology. The work of every public and private business has increasingly become more technological. When I became Sheriff, several outdated and out of compliance technological issues were addressed. Consistent funding to manage and maintain the technological needs of the agency is needed. I also have a goal of adding more technological tools such as a drone program and expanding lifesaver programs for those with cognitive disorders.
- (4) The business of the government required continuous improvement. An HR director is needed to address the needs of the 485 employees and a medical director is needed to oversee the MAT program and the medical needs of the 350+ detainees. I also want to expand the community engagement department to broaden our capability to interact with the community and crime victims, answer questions and address concerns.

17. In what ways can the recruitment and training of new officers be improved?

Currently law enforcement agencies in our state and nationwide are facing recruitment and retention issues. Compounding this problem in Durham County are retirements of some of the longest-serving detention officers. Over a two-year period from January 2020 to November 2021, 23% or 32 detention officers retired. Over the next five years, 87 people will be retirement-eligible with more than 25 years of service. Approximately 25% of the agency can retire over the next five years.

To address these issues, first, I will continue to lobby the Board of County Commissioners and the county manager, and possibly, our state legislators to undertake a comprehensively salary study of law enforcement officers, detention officers, telecommunicators, IT personnel and other civilian employees of Sheriff's Offices and law enforcement agencies throughout the state. The study should review salaries over the course of a thirty-year career with the goal of implementing a pay scale with step increases for years of service, education and training.

I run my own academies based on curriculum established by North Carolina Justice Academy. As a member of the NC Sheriff's Association and the Governor's Task Force, I have the opportunity to revise our training as needed.

Finally, and most importantly, the image and perception of law enforcement has diminished tremendously over the past few years. And, in our black and brown communities, law

enforcement has perpetually been viewed cautiously due to historical and current interactions and encounters with law enforcement. There are trust issues. To recruit and retain people in law enforcement careers, we need to work on law enforcement professionalism and the perceptions of law enforcement. People want more than just a paycheck for their work. While I cannot fix the national image of law enforcement, I will continue to work on the image of law enforcement in Durham County.

18. Does your campaign have specific policies regarding from whom it accepts donations? Please specifically detail any contributions from corporations to your current and prior campaigns. How do you see the influence of donors on policy, both for yourself and for others?

My campaign is funded primarily by my spouse and me, family, friends and local residents from Durham County and surrounding areas. Most of the donations to my campaign have come from people committed to public safety and criminal justice reform. These donations in no way influence my views. I follow NC's campaign finance laws and rules.

19. For whom did you vote in the 2020 United States Senate and presidential elections?

I am a lifelong Democrat who has served locally as a Democratic precinct chair and member of the NC State Executive Committee (SEC). In 2020, I voted for President Biden and Cal Cunningham.