

PA PAC Questionnaire for
Durham Board of County Commissioners – 2024

Please return the completed form along with your resume or biographical statement describing education, work history, community service, and prior political experience as soon as possible, but by Wednesday, January 3 at 5pm at the latest.

Please also include a high resolution headshot for the PA mailer in case you are endorsed.

Please email your responses to the PAC coordinators at papacboard@googlegroups.com by

Wednesday, January 3, 2024 at 5pm

Please note that following the Wednesday, January 3 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.

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Government and the Public Good

1. Of all the issues confronting Durham County, which single issue is most important to you and why? What would you do about it if you are elected?

The most pressing issue in Durham County that is critical for governance is the rising need for educational resources. Education is a priority because providing a high-quality education to children and youth in Durham allows our children and youth to thrive later in life. We must offer our teachers a fair salary, enabling us to recruit and retain top educators in our county.

2. How can county government use its authority and its resources to direct jobs to those who most need them and to lift the wages of the lowest-paid workers in Durham?

Durham County can leverage and expand its partnerships and work with the Durham Workforce Development Board and Work First Employment Services to enhance employment services for Durham residents. Additionally, the work of the Durham County Commissioners and these boards and offices could strategize and work with area businesses to assess and offer higher wages to those working in low-paying industries in the County. Additionally, it is critical to work with Durham County residents to receive their input.

3. What issues do you see with school construction and student school assignment? What role should race equity play with regard to school construction and student assignment? Please address cost overruns that have reduced the reach of the last education bond.

Durham County continues to grow as international companies establish regional or national offices or headquarters. Our increasing population and the unmet needs of long-time Durham County residents, especially those living in marginalized and low-wealth communities, have compounded the immediacy to repair, renovate and construct new schools.

Schools in Durham County must be first-class facilities for all students to have high-quality learning environments. Thus, the construction of new schools has to be a priority. In today's construction environment, cost overruns are inevitable and should be factored into the budgeting process.

Equally important are student school assignments, and they have to be based upon equity of school curriculum.

4. What are your thoughts about the expansion of the HEART program to schools? How do you envision HEART interacting with the SRO program, both in terms of funding and within schools themselves?

I will always support preventative measures and collaborative partnerships for school safety and Child/Youth Mental Health. Durham County's SRO and HEART programs are inter-governmental agencies that are necessary for a safe, healthy school environment.

5. Library staff have asked for an increased workforce, in part to support Sunday opening hours, but in the bigger picture, to enable one of the highest rated County services to fully function. As County Commissioner, how would you support, preserve, and grow the staff and programs of the library? How would you get input from library staff in the process of doing so?

County Commissioners should evaluate all County offices and departments, including Durham County Library. This comprehensive review would ensure that all departments and offices operate efficiently and effectively for County citizens. As County Commissioners, the group is a governing board responsible for County Administrator acting/governing accordingly. Listening sessions would be scheduled with staff and leadership to hear their concerns, feedback, and ideas on operating proficiently.

Durham County Library plays an essential role for our community's children, youth and adults. Access to their resources is essential, and I fully support efforts to increase personnel and programming for the library.

Housing, Planning, and Neighborhoods

6. What planning policies and priorities do you wish to see emerge from the on-going review and revision of Durham's Uniform Development Ordinance?

I support the prioritization of smart, balanced growth in Durham County. This includes incorporating environmental sustainability into planned developments. There would need to be a shared vision for growth that reflects the community's needs and values.

7. Should the County expand permanently supportive housing? What do you see as the role of PSH in community reentry? What other roles does it play?

As citizens and caretakers of humanity, I believe that, yes, it is essential for PSH to be developed and funded throughout Durham County's budget. I would advocate for individuals who return to our communities; they should be given a second chance, primarily related to housing and employment. I would work to leverage local, state and federal resources to provide supportive funding for such projects.

County Finances, Transportation, Incentives, and Services

8. What is your position on providing public incentives to private firms to promote economic development in Durham? How can county government use development incentives to promote more widely shared prosperity, including better jobs and higher wages for Durham residents?

If legally permissible and in compliance with Durham County statutes and policies, I would only offer public incentives if Durham County residents can benefit first. Company incentives should not be offered if Durham citizens are not employed first and are provided with priority in the interviewing and hiring process.

9. What non-traditional programs (such as public banking, community investment trusts, community development venture capital) could Durham County implement to reduce economic inequality in our community?

Durham County should be innovative and open to exploring non-traditional programs that could potentially reduce the inequity and inequality in our communities by partnering with organizations that represent and reflect marginalized communities. If elected as a Durham County Commissioner, I believe a work group should be appointed to partner with the Commissioners in assessing programs, such as community development venture capital and community investment trusts.

10. What should be the principal components of a new public transit plan for Durham County?

An accessible and affordable public transit plan and system are overdue for Durham County and the Triangle Region of North Carolina because of the area's rapid growth. The principal components of an effective plan need to include a robust system that offers timely connections to major employment areas, Durham's two university and community college, cultural attractions, retail locations and the central transit station. Other components are affordable fares and a scalable system that allows for future development and expansion. A comprehensive transit system would include expanded bus service and light rail. County government would need to work closely with Congressional leadership to secure additional funding.

11. What, if anything, should the county do to distribute the property tax burden with greater equity and fairness?

There should be a continued and intentional effort to ensure that Durham's underserved, marginalized and senior residents have an opportunity for tax relief on property taxes.

Justice and Law Enforcement

12. Explain how you see the County's role in overseeing the Durham jail. Under what circumstances, if any, should the county take intervening action to improve the lives of incarcerated individuals?

Durham County Commissioners' oversight, alongside Durham Sheriff's Office, should be transparent in ensuring that the Durham Jail operates with integrity and justice. It includes proper evaluation, which should reveal whether intervention and which intervention should occur. It is critical that the rights and wellbeing of incarcerated individuals are protected while they are in the custody of the Durham Sheriff's Office.

13. What is your position on expanding the HEART program to be county-wide, fully staffed, and available 24/7? Which of those are your top priorities? How would you work to overcome resistance to HEART from some in law enforcement?

The HEART program is a new intervention and should be evaluated to see if its objectives and goals have been met since its inception. Additionally, program strategies should be reviewed and annual metrics should be determined.

Health Care and Social Services

14. As profiled recently in a 3-part *Assembly/WBTV* series, Durham County has the second-slowest reunification rate in the state for children in foster care. As a County Commissioner, what steps would you propose to help families thrive in Durham County and prevent involuntary family separation?

I believe Durham County's reunification rate can be safely changed and increased with help from community partnerships and additional staffing. Family stability is important, but safety should always be a more important evaluating factor.

15. What do you think about the balance between confidentiality and transparency related to families impacted by involuntary separation in the foster care system? Should these courtrooms be open to the public? What should Durham parents do if they feel their child has been wrongfully taken from them? Would you meet with and listen to a parent in this situation?

Confidentiality concerning parental authority is critical if matters are being judged. All matters of Parental Rights should be handled by Family Court authorities. As a County Representative, I will always be available to listen, but will be slow to advise with an opinion.

Civil Rights

16. What are the principal issues facing the Latinx and immigrant communities in Durham and how should the county address them?

I will work closely with representatives and partners in the Latinx/Hispanic community to listen to and respond equitably to their needs.

17. At a time when the LGBTQ community is under attack by the NC legislature, what can the County do to provide as much protection to this community as possible?

Durham County should provide an active and strong voice to ensure individuals in the LGBTAQ community are protected, whether youths or adults. If elected as a Durham County Commissioner, I would act within the legal and permissible authority to counter any laws, actions or legislation that threatens the rights and protections of LGBTAQ identifying individuals or any other community.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please do not forget to provide us with your resume or biographical statement.