

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 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.

Candidate's name: Renee J Vaughan

Address: PO Box 3195, Durham, NC 27715

E-mail Address: vaughan4durham@gmail.com

Phone: 919.451.2893

Website: vaughan4durham.com

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?

Affordable Housing. Is a basic human right and is the single most important issue. Housing for unhoused/ homeless population and affordable housing for all citizens is a policy priority that impact the most vulnerable of our population the most – our children, the disables and the aged.. Focusing attention on affordable housing and the prevention of homelessness has been an issue of importance for many years. Initial service on the Homeless Services Advisory Committee came as a result of the increasing number of unhoused women and children encountered on Hillsborough and Guess Roads. I'm serving my second three-year term as Durham County Faith Community representative where we continue to address unhoused neighbors, and an increasing number of children, families, fragile, disabled and elderly populations. Performance management subcommittee service has provided an

overview of community of care projects and their evaluation for funding. This experience has ignited a passion to see a comprehensive approach to affordable housing initiatives with synergy between County – City governments, DPS, public-private partnerships, faith-based and general public initiatives. There are many disparate projects across the county that are in the pipeline concurrently. But more synergy is needed to bring the community together and communicate opportunities for engagement. Housing affordability and stability is foundational to children, youth and family well-being. I believe this engagement with the issue will bring a unique perspective as the County Commission continues to embrace creative, innovative and novel approaches as solutions to housing affordability in Durham. I believe it to be one of the pre-eminent issues of our time that is impacted by economic parity and safe and equitable communities in which our children, youth and young adults should live. Where and how one lives significantly impacts the ability to take advantage of educational opportunities and provides a springboard for how communities thrive and advance through life.

One way to address this issue is to use public land for Housing First initiatives and affordable housing development for essential city employees, teachers and public safety personnel to be able to live in the city they work in. Also form partnerships with faith-based institutions for tiny-house communities and ADU development for un-housed populations.

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?

Economic prosperity should be available to all of Durham citizens. County government can use it authority as an example of best practices. Expanded opportunities to advocate for living wages and step level increases for long-time personnel to keep pace with inflation are critical.

Education, etc

3. What issues do you see with school construction and student school assignment?

It has been reported that the Durham County bond referendum would fund eight DPS school construction projects. But due to increased construction costs only four will potentially be undertaken before the end of 2024. This will require additional adjustments as plans unfold. The redistricting or growing together plan creates five regions with a base school. It's goal to promote equity, academic access and diversity is a good one, especially as community engagement is to take center stage. Also it emphasizes access to STEM, ARTs and global language for all students. But questions remain about school assignments for siblings. Opt-out processes, transportation and managing the stress of potential changes. Many of the issues were noted in news coverage and by concerned citizens I spoke to.

What role should race equity play with regard to school construction and student assignment?

Race equity plays a vital role in school construction and student assignment to enhance access to STEM, arts and global language programs as reported by DPS.

Please address cost overruns that have reduced the reach of the last education bond. Cost overruns have impacted the planned renovations of Glenn Elementary scheduled to begin in early 2024.

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 think the expansion of the HEART program to schools is a good way to provide mental and behavioral health and resources to students needing that support. Integration of HEART and SRO program should be mutually beneficial to each as they are distinct. SRO programs benefit students in offering greater safety from a law enforcement perspective. HEART can potentially divert students into supportive services. As data is released on the progress of expansion, it will provide information to assess funding needs.

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?

As a County Commissioner I would support, preserve and grow the staff and programs of the library by Reviewing and supporting the Library's strategic plan and goals outlined by Library leadership. I'd get input from Library staff by reviewing any need assessments and budget proposals for County budget requests and annual reports to accomplish those goals.

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?

Based on Engage Durham's outline of next steps, this process will take about 1.5 years to complete. I wish to see more community engagement and diverse voices having input into the process.

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?

Yes, the County should expand permanent supportive housing to assist chronically unhoused and homeless populations. PSH is seen to assist community reentry by providing resources to aid independent living, connections to health care and employment services. It also helps one to have a sense of community and belonging and to find assistance when needed.

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?

Corporate and Business sector programs should include novel ideas that impact growth wages for front line workers as well as expanding entrepreneurial opportunities for access to capitalization and contracts as well as workforce training and development for marginal communities. County government can use the notion of being a "good corporation citizenship" in promoting goodwill in the community in which development occurs.

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?

I've researched a few potential wealth building strategies that have been used to reduce economic inequality. Notably "Wealth Building Models" a paper by Brett Theodos, Rebecca Marx, and Tanay Nunna Neighborhood Crowdfunding: Income-producing business or properties that are fractionally owned. This could be supported by community development venture capital. Occupant Equity: May assist communities concerned with gentrification where "groups of community members pool their resources together or source funding from the philanthropic and public sector to remove real estate from the speculative market." Strategy could also be used to provide "long-term affordable housing or business operating space to community members." Neighborhood Nonprofit Trust or Endowment: Grant making from a pool of resources. Some communities have used community banking as a strategy.

10. What should be the principal components of a new public transit plan for Durham County?
Principal components of the new public transit plan for Durham County includes a transportation system that spans its length, breadth is equitable and accessible in its distribution. It should also ensure safety for driver and passengers alike. The current plan focuses on expanding bus transportation. But I feel we should continue to look for ways to add a light rail system in the next ten years.

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

The use of property tax credits could be a strategy explored by Durham County.

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?

The County has oversight of the Sheriff's office and Durham jail and provides the budget for staffing and services. Intervening action should consist of review of reports and concerns raised by organizations, citizens and families most impacted.

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?

Due to the importance of data disseminated on the success of this program I am glad to see it's expansion, increased staff and 24/7 operation in Durham County. Featuring the importance and success of the program and it's embrace by Law enforcement leadership will help to overcome resistance by some in law enforcement.

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 would begin by proposing the end of separation due to poverty for lack of basic needs. Instead, I'd propose supportive services for families to keep them together by providing resources in the community to assist. My view is that we need to invest in families first with a goal of reunification for those separated.

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?

I would advise families to seek out re-unification resources, follow processes and get legal aid. Continue to seek advocates and share their plight in public and private avenues to assist.

Civil Rights

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

Some issues noted in reports have been housing stability, food insecurity, safety and security concerns. There was a spike in robberies and concerns about documentation or status.

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 can affirm the importance and place of every LGBTQ citizen.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Please do not forget to provide us with your resume or biographical statement.