



Questionnaire for City Council Candidates 2023

Candidate Name: Dr. Monique Holsey-Hyman EdD. MSW. LCSW- R

Date: 7/25/2023

Position Sought: City Council Durham

Question #1 Why did you decide to run for office? And what do you see as the primary qualities and responsibilities of council members?

In 2022, I applied for the At-Large seat on the Durham City Council and was chosen unanimously from twenty-one other candidates. I wanted to offer my skills in leadership, community organization, and social work that address issues through a "Person in Environment" lens. In addition, I have been trained for over twenty-five years to address community problems that include collaborating with individuals, with communities and diverse populations and groups, and collaborating with Durham's County, city, and educational organizations. I decided to run for city council because I want to continue my service for the people of Durham. I know that this office requires dedication, commitment, and a genuine desire to make a difference in the lives of the people. For over a year, my main objective as a Durham City Council member has been to ensure that the people of this City have access to high-quality living, employment, and recreational opportunities. I have consistently shown dedication to this goal by actively listening to the community's concerns and working towards practical solutions.

The primary qualities of a city council member include integrity, effective communication skills, empathy, leadership and critical thinking skills, commitment to the constituents and of course knowledge of issues that the people of Durham are facing. City council members should act with the utmost integrity in making informed decisions that benefit the city. Being able to actively listen and be empathetic to the issues and concerns of the residents is essential to effectively communicate and clearly convey information or your decisions as a council member. Serving

the city council demands time and effort, so dedication to the role and a commitment to fulfilling responsibilities are especially important.

The Council holds the responsibility of creating overall policies for the City. This includes the appointment of key officials like the City Manager, Attorney, and Clerk, along with members of different boards, committees, and commissions. The Council is also accountable for passing resolutions, ordinances, approving the City's yearly budget, strategic plan, and authorizing contracts. The City Council must focus on engaging with the residents of Durham and implementing policies that improve the well-being of all individuals, thereby promoting the community's interests and long-term planning and development efforts to ensure sustainable growth and progress for the city.

Question #2 What do you see as the City Council's top 3 governing priorities over the next 4 years? And what specific policies or initiatives would you work to enact in order to address these priorities?

I believe affordable housing, safe and protected neighborhoods, and equitable access to green space will be Durham City Council's top three governing priorities over the next four years.

Housing and Neighborhoods: The City's goal should be to approve development that provides affordable housing and development opportunities for all diverse economic populations, in addition to focusing on current residents of Durham and eliminating displacement.

Safe and Protected Neighborhoods: Another priority should be to invest in evidence-based programs, such as H.E.A.R.T, which address the community's needs and bring law enforcement together with other vital players for wrap-around services. The aim of these services is to make communities safer by tackling the issues around mental health, housing, youth engagement, food insecurity, and medical wellness as well as addressing the increase of gun violence in our city.

Equitable Access to Green Space: Support development projects that prioritize sustainable and equitable growth. These initiatives should introduce innovative methods to preserve clean water and safeguard the environment.

Question #3 In 2021 and 2022 North Carolina and the Durham area ranked within the top three in the country for net growth in people moving to the area.

What's your plan to address the housing needs of the large influx of people coming to the city while trying to stem the number of long-term residents that are being pushed to the edges of the county or into neighboring counties?

Access to food and shelter is a fundamental right for every human being. The Maslow Hierarchy of Needs theory emphasizes that human behavior is motivated by five basic needs:

physiological, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Yurdakul & Arar, 2023). When people lack housing, it can hinder their personal growth and development. To support our community in Durham, we need to provide additional resources and support to local builders who are passionate about our city and understand our culture. One typical concern developer raise is the prohibitive cost of affordable housing construction. Therefore, we must

prioritize developing innovative approaches that promote housing production, preservation, and revitalization in Durham.

Reference Yurdakul, G., & Arar, T. (2023). Revisiting Maslow's hierarchy of needs: Is it still universal content? *Journal of human behavior in the social environment*, 1-28.

Question #4 Do you support the full expansion of the H.E.A.R.T. program by 2026 to be fully staffed and offer 24/7 services city wide? Why or why not?

Although I was not part of the council when the Holistic Empathetic Assistance Response Teams were first introduced, I was eager to use my social work and mental health expertise to help assess the community's needs and programs. I also brought together the N.C. Central University Department of Social Work and the City H.E.A.R.T program to provide clinical social work interns trained in human behavior, psychopathology, community organization, and intervention. These interns played a crucial role in the community social work process. I had the privilege of appearing in the H.E.A.R.T. documentary, where I emphasized the importance of the program in serving the community and meeting the needs of each resident.

I also was an advocate for the expansion of the program additional twenty-seven staff will allow H.E.A.R.T. citywide service seven days a week for 12 hours a day, enabling the H.E.A.R.T team to serve three times as many calls as they do now.

Question #5 Gun violence is high on many voters' minds due to the uptick in mass shooting events and neighborhood shootings, both of their reverberating impacts in our communities, and the lack of will of North Carolina's General Assembly to adequately address the issue. Please state your understanding of the root causes of gun violence in Durham. What steps do you believe Durham City Council could take to help curb gun violence and its impacts?

The Durham City Council has given permission for the ShotSpotter pilot program to tackle the surge in violent crime incidents within the city. This initiative has been incorporated into the fiscal year 2022-2023 budget. Although I voted for ShotSpotter, I am awaiting the end-of-year report on the one-year pilot program before making any final decisions. As a result of this report, I will be able to assess its effectiveness. I am, however, inclined to reallocate the ShotSpotter funds to support the H.E.A.R.T. program and introduce another pilot program addressing issues of mental health, physical health, police brutality, and community violence. Using data to drive critical decisions related to the current epidemic of gun violence requires open communication and transparency. With my gift of collaboration and working well with Chief Andrew, she answers any questions and inquiries the council may have. My decision-making process is based on data and its impact on the residents of Durham. My voting history reflects this. We must investigate innovative solutions outside conventional norms to address community safety.

Question #6 When tensions are high in a group of your colleagues, what are the values and practices that guide your interactions with others who have different ideas and stances than yours?

As an individual, I do not follow the majority when it comes to voting. Instead, I execute an informed approach when reviewing all development cases and city business that are presented to me. I start by examining the documents, memos, and supplementary items provided by the city staff. Next, I take into consideration the notes and comments from the Planning Commission, whose expertise I highly regard. Following that, I evaluate the developer's proposal and the community's feedback shared during our meetings. Additionally, I listen attentively to my colleagues' input during the agenda item and ask questions to gain better understanding. For instance, during a regular council meeting on March 20, 2023, I inquired about the extent of community outreach and the potential for blasting. When it comes to controversial agenda items, like advocating for the permanent protection of Ellerbe Creek as a dedicated Nature Preserve, I am not afraid to make a bold motion or cast a vote. In fact, I seconded the motion for this particular issue.

My ultimate decision is based on how it will affect the well-being of the people who live in Durham. My voting history reflects this approach. For example, on April 23, 2023, I seconded the motion for Consolidated Annexation - 2142 E Geer Street (item 17/PR#16110) and made a motion for Ordinance #16125. At a special meeting discussing the prebudget, I raised concerns about the retention of Durham firefighters on March 2, 2023. As a member of the Durham City Council, I understand the gravity of my position and the potential impact my decisions can have on the welfare of the city's residents. That is why I take my responsibilities seriously.

Question #7 In the 2023-24 Durham city budget, \$10 million was allocated to revitalizing Hayti. In the past few decades, many revitalization efforts in rapidly growing cities have become the beginnings of gentrification of historically Black and Brown neighborhoods. How would you ensure that this does not happen in Hayti, and that Hayti's working class Black people and long-term residents will benefit from the revitalization efforts?

The process of gentrification is not the result of public policy but rather a cultural expression of long-established government practices (Lee & Velez, 2023). Gentrification often happens when no policies prioritize community involvement, provide fair rezoning policies, and offer intentional housing options (Lee & Velez, 2023). Without policies that address these issues, the trend of gentrification may continue. There is a pressing need for more affordable housing options for Durham's low- and middle-income households. Many individuals in this income bracket require assistance renting or buying homes in the area, as the cost of new homes is approximately \$410,000 (Durham Regional Association, 2023). This means a minimum income of \$150,000 is necessary to purchase them (Durham Regional Association, 2023). We must take action to prevent displacement and ensure that everyone has access to safe and affordable housing. It is essential to promote and support minority homeownership through education and empowerment. We must collaborate with local organizations to provide Durham residents interested in owning a home education and services. Despite increasing housing costs, implementing more programs that educate first-time homebuyers about the financial benefits of ownership, such as spending over a thousand dollars a month on rent, could enable families to pool their resources and own a home.

References:

Durham Regional Association. (2023, June). Triangle MLS, INC, Market Trends for June 2023. [Press release]. <https://durhamrealtors.org/market-tools/>

Lee, D., & Velez, Y. (2023). Rising Tides or Political Ripcurrents? Gentrification and Minority Representation in 166 Cities

Question #8 Simplifying Codes for More Affordable Development (SCAD) has been a controversial proposed amendment put before the City Council this year. There does not seem to be disagreement about the need to reform Durham’s development codes (zoning, parking, etc.). The main points of contention seem to be how the codes should be amended, what the role and plan for community input is, and who gets to benefit the most from changed codes. The amending of codes will impact Durhamites’ lives in significant ways. How will you ensure the amended development codes will guarantee meaningful community input in decisions about developments?

What will you do to ensure that amended development codes will reduce the negative environmental impact of new developments?

As a member of the council, I am strongly opposed to the SCAD proposal. It is my belief that we should not consider this proposal as it does not demonstrate good faith with the community. Furthermore, I believe that we should wait until the UDO has been rewritten before reviewing the SCAD proposal. It is my sincere hope that the SCAD proposal will adhere to all standards, review mechanisms, and community engagement processes involved in equitable development and planning. If the proposal is approved by other council members and I am still on the council, I will take it upon myself to meet with the planning commission and city staff to ensure that all codes’ standards are followed.

Question #9 Currently, 30 states and Washington, D.C., have raised their minimum wages above the national floor (\$7.25/hour). Meanwhile, North Carolina workers have been stuck with a wage floor of \$7.25 an hour since 2008 and a \$2.13 tipped hourly wage. As the cost of living continues to rise, these wages are not enough to afford basic necessities.

On average in North Carolina, a household of two adults and two children needs to earn a \$33.25 hourly wage to afford the basics—more than four times the current minimum wage. Would you support a resolution stating that the state’s minimum wage should be \$17 an hour and that tipped wages (\$2.13/hour) should be eliminated? Why or why not?

I strongly support an increase in the state's minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to \$17 an hour, along with the elimination of tipped wages that currently stand at \$2.13 per hour. This crucial step will help address income inequality, provide fair compensation for all workers, and create a more equitable and sustainable economy. Raising the minimum wage to \$17 an hour could be essential to ensure that workers can meet their basic needs, lead dignified lives, and escape the cycle of poverty. A living wage allows individuals to afford housing, healthcare, education, and other necessities, without relying heavily on government assistance.

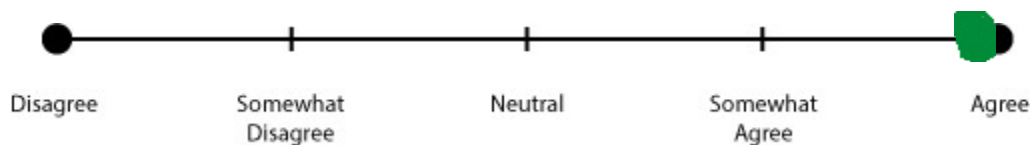
Furthermore, eliminating tipped wages and providing all workers with a fair and consistent wage for their labor will demonstrate a commitment to respecting the dignity and value of every

employee. All workers deserve to be compensated fairly for their hard work, regardless of the nature of their job.

Enacting these changes would lead to significant strides toward reducing income inequality and promoting economic growth. Higher wages for workers mean increased consumer spending, benefiting local businesses and stimulating the economy at large.

Question #10 This past year the Council adopted a budget that included funding for a Vision Zero Coordinator and more than \$40 million in projects to make walking and biking safer in Durham. However, there remain extensive gaps in the networks of well-maintained sidewalks, safe street crossings, and protected bike lanes.

On the following scale, indicate how much you agree to support annual funding to complete city-wide networks of sidewalks, safe street crossings, and protected bike lanes and to bring sidewalk conditions and accessible curb ramps up to standard. Please explain your response.



As a member of the Durham City Council, I have developed a strong interest in pursuing social, economic, and environmental justice. I have gained a greater understanding of this critical issue through my role. Many communities throughout our country have been unfairly burdened with ecological injustices. They have been exposed to toxic pollution, lacked adequate infrastructure and services, and suffered the worst of climate change. In Durham, every individual has the right to breathe fresh air, drink clean water, and reside in a healthy community now and in the future.

The budget for this year has allocated \$17 million for the Equitable and Green Infrastructure process. This funding will be used for over twenty projects to improve green spaces in underprivileged neighborhoods and fund water quality initiatives, new sidewalks in Bragtown, East Durham, and Merrick Moore communities, and projects related to pedestrian safety, access, and traffic calming. However, particular areas, such as parks with allegedly elevated levels of lead in the soil, disproportionately affect communities facing discrimination and marginalization.

My voting history in the city council shows my commitment to promoting a clean environment for healthier living. I aim to push for policies prioritizing responsible building and growth to protect our city and county's environment and natural resources, striving toward a green and equitable Durham. To achieve this, I plan to maintain and improve the current infrastructure and support innovative projects that manage waste and wastewater to ensure clean water for Durham while preserving our environment.

Question #11 The Fiscal Year 2023-24 city budget includes funds to keep bus transportation free which benefits many of our working-class residents. What is your plan to continue lessening the transportation cost burdens on working class residents

and increasing their access to means of moving around the city in a safe and timely manner?

I support further reducing transportation cost burdens on working class residents and enhancing their access to safe and efficient transportation throughout our city. By prioritizing equity and accessibility, we can create a more inclusive transportation system that benefits all members of our community. Expanding and optimizing existing fare subsidy programs for low-income individuals, specifically targeting working class residents, we can alleviate financial constraints and ensure that everyone has access to essential services and employment opportunities. Public transit services, focusing on key routes that serve working class neighborhoods, could be improved, and expanded by increasing frequency during peak hours and extending operating hours to accommodate diverse work schedules. Part of my plan would also include utilizing data analytics to monitor transportation trends, identify underserved areas, and inform evidence-based decision making for future infrastructure investments and service enhancements.

By proactively implementing these measures, we can continue to lessen the transportation cost burdens on working class residents and foster a city that offers safe, dependable, and free or affordable public transportation for all.

Question #12 There are state restrictions placed on the city's ability to raise property taxes on the wealthiest residents in order to increase the city's income. What are ways you'd work with council members to creatively increase the city's income? What would be your top priorities for the money to go towards if the city's income was increased?

As a resident of Durham, my primary concerns would be access to sustainable and affordable housing, ensuring safe and secure neighborhoods, and equitable availability of green spaces. I believe hosting more conferences and fairs would aid in generating revenue for the city and contribute to its growth.

Question #13 Participatory Budgeting is one example of how elected officials can democratize the powers of their office. If you are elected, what is another example of how you would share your power and give more people in the community the ability to make decisions that directly impact them?

As a responsible community official, I would prioritize keeping residents well-informed about the current needs of their community. Effective communication is vital to ensure that their issues are addressed and resolved. One way to achieve this is by regularly conducting community focus groups.

Question #14 Like any other rapidly growing city, Durham is facing complex issues with multiple stakeholders and no simple solutions. What is your plan for seeking input from community organizations on these issues and incorporating their constituency's perspectives in the difficult choices that you will have to make as a council member?

As a city council member representing the diverse and rapidly growing community of Durham, I recognize the importance of engaging with community organizations to tackle the complex issues that lie ahead. I am committed to seeking input and incorporating the perspectives of these organizations and their constituencies in the difficult choices that we must make.

In order to foster meaningful collaboration, I will continue to use an inclusive and transparent approach by actively reaching out to community organizations, recognizing them as valuable partners in shaping the future of Durham. Through town hall meetings and public forums, we can create opportunities for open dialogue, ensuring that every voice is heard and considered. By proactively involving community organizations, we can gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by different constituencies. These organizations serve as essential channels between the council and the community, providing valuable insights into the lived experiences of our residents.

Incorporating community perspectives will be an integral part of the decision-making process. As issues arise, I will continue to conduct thorough research, seek expert advice, and collaborate closely with community organizations to develop comprehensive solutions. I believe that by involving stakeholders early and consistently, we can foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the choices we make.

By engaging with community organizations, we can identify common ground and align our priorities to create balanced policies that benefit the greater good. This approach will strengthen the fabric of our community and ensure that our decisions reflect the diversity and richness of Durham.

Furthermore, I will continue to actively advocate for increased transparency in the decision-making process, providing regular updates on the progress of initiatives and encouraging ongoing feedback from community organizations and residents alike.