


**Chapel Hill - Carrboro NAACP  
2019 Council/Alderman Candidate Questionnaire**

*Please type out your responses in full below; take as much space as you need to answer the question in full. We thank you in advance for your participation.*

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| Full Name:   | Amy Ryan   |
| Age/Race/Gender (with preferred pronouns):                         | 59/white/female (she, her)   |
| Occupation/Title/Retired:  | Editor (self-employed)   |
| Position sought:   | Chapel Hill Town Council   |
| Headshot Photograph (published with your questionnaire responses): |  |

## **Background**

1. Please provide an overview of your local civic leadership/organizational affiliations. What specific insights into our local community have you garnered from this service work?

I've lived in Chapel Hill for the last 23 years and served on Town of Chapel Hill advisory boards and committees since 2002. This includes the Community Design Commission, Sustainable Community Visioning Task Force, Central West Small Area Planning Process (co-chair), and the Planning Commission, with two terms as chair.

Through these years of service, I've become deeply familiar with our government and the issues our town faces. I'm ready to take the next step and put my experience to work for our town as a member of Council.

2. What has motivated you to run for the office you seek?

I've served as an advisory board member for many years; now I'd like the chance not simply to advise, but cast a vote on the issues important to our town's future. There are some important Council initiatives coming up in the next few years that will have a huge impact on the way our town changes and grows, and I want a seat at the table to make sure that we get the details right. Finally, I support the work Mayor Hemminger has done in the past four years and want to join in her efforts to continue to make our government more equitable, more sustainable, and more responsive to our community.

3. Have you attended the Racial Equity Institute (REI) training or any other racial equity trainings in the past three years? (Note: This training is not the same as diversity or cultural competence training.) No.
  - If you have, what was the most impactful aspect of the experience?
  - If you have not, if elected, do you commit to register and attend this type of training?
  - Describe instances or situations in which you have applied racial equity frameworks in your work.

I have not yet attended the REI, and would do so if elected. As a Planning Commission member, I have always been supportive of efforts to improve the diversity of board and to encourage the participation of all members of our community, so that equity issues (racial, social, environmental) and all the different voices in Chapel Hill are represented in our decision-making.

## **Housing Affordability and Local Taxation**

4. What strategies do you support for increasing the supply of affordable housing in Chapel Hill/Carrboro?

I would champion fixing the regulations that prevent people from building accessory dwellings on their lots (which helps the main unit be more affordable for the owner and adds a modest-sized unit to our affordable stock). Council should stand firm with developers and allow taller buildings only for projects committed to a significant affordable housing component (or other appropriate community benefit). I would also like to explore options for developing affordable housing with the schools and UNC and other public/private partnerships to leverage our affordable housing

fund to create neighborhoods where more of the people who work in our town—police and firefighters, teachers, service workers—can live.

It's important to remember that affordable housing is about more than housing—it's also about issues like keeping property taxes in check and providing access to affordable transportation. As a Council member, I would work to keep affordability front and center in all of the decisions we make for the town.

5. Do you have specific ideas on how to make affordable housing, both rental and owned (and especially housing accessible to transit) available to people who work and provide essential services in our town?

See previous question!

6. How can we better engage residents of public housing in municipal governance?

In several town planning initiatives I've been part of, outreach has been one of the first issues we've addressed. We've brainstormed ways to improve participation and convened Planning Commission groups to work on strategies to bring the town's diverse voices into our decisions.

I know that the town works hard to include everyone, including public housing residents, but we still don't have the participation we'd like. The town took a positive step and made funds available to subsidize transportation and child care for people attending town meetings, and we need to make sure our public housing residents know that this help is available. After that, it's outreach, outreach, and more outreach.

7. What initiatives or changes in existing policy would you support to make it possible for seniors to "age in place"? How can the town support more affordable assisted-living options?

Aging in place can be facilitated by the town in many ways – keeping a strong fare-free bus system so those who no longer drive can get around town; approving projects like the senior rental housing on Estes Drive to increase aging-in-place housing supply (especially along transit corridors and in walkable districts), and keeping tax rates in check so rising property tax bills don't drive seniors from their homes. It's also important that when the town allocates our affordable housing funds, we keep seniors in mind. The recent development of the 69-unit Greenfield Commons senior housing was a great step in that direction.

8. In what ways would you like to see our town's tax base diversified? How should we move towards that?

I'd like to see more commercial space in town. It would not only help take some of the burden off residential property tax payments, but it also would bring benefits like new jobs. I'd especially be interested in finding ways to build more offices, to help grow and retain some of the hundreds of businesses that grow from innovations at UNC.

9. How should the town address future possible displacement of residents of mobile home parks?

These residents are valuable members of the community, and our town and businesses depend on them. As we hear rumblings of redevelopment plans from owners of the mobile home parks, we

need to be creating a strategy for rehousing these communities. The town Housing Department been working with the county and our housing partners to develop such strategies, and Council has rejected concept plans that would have displaced our mobile home residents. If elected, I'd want to work closely on this issue to make sure that these community members can still call Chapel Hill home.

10. What is your position on the Rosemary Street Vision and its impact on the Northside neighborhood?

I've spent many years on town committees reviewing development plans for the Northside neighborhood, and have been a consistent advocate for doing everything in our power to keep it affordable and a welcoming place for families.

I appreciate that the Rosemary Street Vision was developed by working closely with the neighborhood as planning partners. The document has some great ideas about new facilities (community shopping, spaces for youth, provision for parks, affordable housing, etc.). It discusses in detail buffering new development on Rosemary from the adjacent neighbors and respecting current Northside neighborhood conservation district height and setback limits. Respecting and implementing this plan principle will be critical to making new development a good neighbor to existing Northside families.

11. How can the town address the pressures of rising regional population growth, increased student population, and rising land prices in ways that do not disproportionately negatively impact communities of color and low-income neighborhoods?

Chapel Hill faces a lot of pressure from the sources you mention, and it makes it hard for the town to make sure that as change comes to town, the benefits and burdens are distributed equitably.

We have a few tools we can call on. First, policy – making certain that Council sets as a priority protecting vulnerable communities. Second, funding – allocating our resources in ways that work against outside pressures and to promote equity. Third, partnering – working with public and private groups to make change more fair.

### **Transportation, Infrastructure and Environmental Justice**

12. What can the town do to make public transportation function better for low-income workers, hourly workers, senior citizens and the disabled?

- Describe your own public transportation usage; in what ways has your use of public transportation informed your perspective on our present system?

One initiative I'd like to champion is finding a way to extend bus hours or find other options for better serving those who don't work traditional nine to five shifts. A large part of creating affordability in town is providing reliable transit service to places of employment, but too many workers, especially in service industries like restaurants, are left stranded at nights or during weekends and holidays.

I used public transportation to commute to work when I lived in the Northeast. That was a huge multi-state transport system. In Chapel Hill, I work at home, but I've used the buses to travel to

UNC for grad school classes and to use the library, and for running errands when a car isn't available. I'm constantly amazed and impressed that a town like Chapel Hill has managed to fund and operate such a successful fare-free bus system.

13. Define "environmental justice" as it relates to our community. Do you see any model environmental justice work being undertaken locally?
- Describe how you believe a racial equity framework should be applied to new sustainable infrastructure or greenway projects?

I'm learning more about environmental justice all the time from my Planning Commission colleague Louie Rivers, who works on the issue at NCSU. My first exposure to it as it relates to Chapel Hill was with issues around the landfill and water and sewer service to the Rogers Road neighborhood. I was very pleased to see that Mayor Hemminger made that project one of her first priorities when she got into office.

All the projects we undertake should aim to spread the benefits/burdens equitably through our community, including sustainable infrastructure and greenways.

### **Policing**

14. How would you work to ensure improved relationships between citizens and law enforcement? What suggestions do you have to increase diversity (by race, class and gender) in our police department?

I strongly support making sure the police department has adequate funds for training, so that officers can do their difficult jobs while interacting with all community members in a way that is respectful and appropriate. Outreach efforts like the Chapel Hill Community Police Academy are another way to encourage improved relationships between community members and local law enforcement. Implementing anti-bias measures in hiring (such as mandating a diverse slate of candidates and among the hiring decision-makers) and supporting officers in the minority because of their race/gender/identity can help increase the diversity of our force.

15. Do you support citizen review of police departments? Why or why not? What is your position on citizen review of the UNC police department?

I think that it's important for good community relations and good policing to have citizen police advisory boards, as we do in Chapel Hill. That would also be true for UNC's police department.

16. [If a candidate for Chapel Hill Town Council] What is your present understanding of the co-jurisdictional authority of the Chapel Hill Police and the UNC Police?
- What is your assessment of the current relationship between the two entities?
  - What responsibility should the Town of Chapel Hill ultimately bear for the conduct of UNC-Chapel Hill campus police on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus?
  - Do you feel it is important that the public know the specifics of the co-jurisdictional relationship between the two departments? If so, how do you propose to engage the community on the matter?

My understanding is that UNC and the Town of Chapel Hill have separate jurisdictions but cooperate to insure the safety of the entire community. I think the two groups have a good working relationship, and that it's important for the community to understand the jurisdictional differences

and what each police force can and cannot do, so they can be clear about the powers and responsibility of each entity.

17. [If a candidate for Carrboro Board of Alderman] What is your assessment of the town's response to the racial profiling by the Carrboro Police Department as outlined in the recent Dr. Frank Baumgartner study on race and policing?

### **Business and Labor**

18. What more can our town do within its jurisdictional authority to promote living wages?

I support the \$15 living wage and am proud that the Town of Chapel Hill has been designated an Orange County Living Wage Employer. We also need to continue our policy of choosing suppliers and contractors are living wage employers too.

19. What do you believe are the main reasons or barriers as to why people of color are not attracted to Chapel Hill/Carrboro to start (or relocate) a business?

Cost of rent and/or land.

20. What are the existing governmental policies or programs that harm or promote business development for entrepreneurs and/or people of color?

Under Mayor Hemminger, the Town of Chapel Hill has been working with UNC and local partners to foster innovation and entrepreneurship among UNC students, faculty, and community members. Initiatives like Launch and Carolina Coworking are giving these startups a home, helping these new businesspeople, including people of color, start and grow their companies.

### **Demography and Engagement**

21. In what ways can local governance better promote student engagement?
- What are you doing to engage the student community in your campaign?
  - What should be the role of local elected officials in engaging with student-led, anti-racist organizing on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus?

We currently offer (nonvoting) positions on our advisory boards to members of our local Youth Council, and UNC student residents are eligible to apply for (voting) board membership.

For my campaign, I've been reaching out to the UNC Young Democrats offering campaign positions and training opportunities, and am working to arrange to attend one of the Young Dem meetings as a candidate.

22. Assess the town's response to shifting demographics in our community. In what ways can the town improve access to services and communication generally with non-native-English-speaking populations?

- How can our town do a better job of welcoming immigrants to our community without creating tensions with other underserved communities?

I've been encouraged to see that the town now has the capabilities for simultaneous translation into Spanish for people attending Council meetings and planning events. Where possible, we need to hire town staff who are fluent in the different languages our community members use so that this service can be extended to other language groups.

As a town, we need to encourage openness and inclusivity in everything we do, and be a welcoming home to all our residents, new and old.

23. How would you characterize our town's readiness to ensure a full and accurate count in the upcoming census? How can our municipal government increase citizen participation?

Unfortunately, the current U.S. administration is doing its best to unlawfully discourage certain residents from participating. If successful, this could have important negative impacts on the town's federal funding stream.

To make sure that our residents are fully and accurately counted, the town and other local governments should work to make everyone aware of the importance of participating and distribute reliable information to our residents about why and how the information is collected, how it is used, and everyone's rights under the law.

### **Matters of State-Level Jurisdiction**

24. How should municipalities like ours express our values or policy positions in matters which are generally the domain of the state legislature (e.g., living wage policy, immigration policy, reproductive rights, etc.)?

In the past, the town has issued statements on just such issues, and I think this practice should continue when the legislature is acting in ways that violate the values of our community or the rights of our community members.

We have the good fortune to have state legislators who do a great job of representing our values, and we can work with them, and with the governments of other like-minded towns, to make our concerns known in Raleigh.