


**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.

Full Name:	Renuka Soll
Age/Race/Gender (with preferred pronouns):	52 / Asian /Female / she/her/hers
Occupation/Title/Retired:	<p>Volunteer (Past jobs: MBA Rotational Position at Searle Pharmaceuticals in Skokie, IL as Market Researcher, Sales Rep, and Associate Product Manager; Marketing Manager of Executive Education Programs at INSEAD in Fontainebleau, France; Stay-at-home mom while volunteering in the community)</p>
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 have served my community in the following ways:

- **PTA President at Smith Middle School/PTA Treasurer at Seawell Elementary and Chapel Hill High School/PTA Secretary at Seawell Elementary and Smith Middle School** - Additionally, my neighbor and I wrote and **received a grant for \$5000 from Lowe's Home Improvement store to update the car rider's area at Seawell Elementary**. After receiving the grant, we stained the picnic tables and seats where the children wait for their parents, bought a canopy and installed it to provide shade, and bought planters and plants to beautify the area. From my work with the schools, I had first-hand awareness of how hard the teachers and staff work and how they use their own resources to help their students both academically and socially. When President, I made it a point to prioritize giving enough PTA funds to teachers so that they would not have to spend their own money for their students, to help bring educational programs to the schools by generating ideas for programs and finding the resources to do it, and supporting not only the teachers but the students in any way that I could. Leading the PTA made me aware of the various needs and struggles of the teachers, parents, and students.
- **GED Tutor at Orange Literacy** – I have been tutoring an immigrant. After 6 months, he passed the math section of the GED. I am now working with him on the Science portion. A high school degree can make a big difference in his life, and I want to help him to change his life for the better, especially since he is so motivated. Through the tutoring, I have learned first-hand about the struggles of being an immigrant, learning a new language, being dependent on an hourly wage, etc. I admire how he is so positive through his struggles. I help him outside of the tutoring in any way that I can. For example, he got caught into paying a monthly fee for a product that he had inadvertently bought and didn't want. I spent some time sorting all this out for him. When I see his progress, it gives me true satisfaction because I can see a different life for him with fewer struggles once he gets his diploma.
- **Board member of Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Commission** – I am a fan of Chapel Hill's trails, parks, and greenways. I used to run on the trails and now I mountain bike there. I spent many hours playing with my children in the playgrounds and hiking the trails, and I've participated in many community activities such as the Easter Egg hunt. Because of this, I wanted to participate as a member of the Board. I want to take my bike to the grocery store or on other errands, but I don't feel safe riding them on major roads. I would like to see further connectivity between the greenways and the trails and safe bike lanes throughout our community. As a parent Coach of the Chapel Hill Mountain Biking team, the team rides to University Mall from the high school to eat at their sponsor's restaurant during the practice before their race. We can get through much of the way through the trails and greenways system, but there are points where we need to get on the roads and cross streets. The areas that we cross don't have bike lanes. I watch the students carefully, but the ride always makes me nervous. I would like to see better connectivity so that not only the students but the residents can make it to different parts of our town safely. By being on the Board, I also feel closer to the residents in our

community. I am happy to see neighborhoods or people come to the board to talk about what matters to them. I may not be part of the tennis or the pickleball community, but I like to hear about their needs. It makes me more aware of the diverse interests of our community, and I am happy to serve.

- **Board member of North Carolinians against Gun Violence** – I care deeply about the issue of gun violence that is causing so much fear in our society. As a board member of this group, I feel like I am doing something active to make a difference in our community. North Carolinians against Gun Violence was started by Lisa Price over 25 years ago. They keep up with gun laws that could be passed by our legislature and lobby against the bad bills as well as support the good ones. My specific work with them has been to work with the PTAs. I am asking for them to advocate for not arming teachers in the school and to teach parents how to ask other parents if there is a gun in their house when their child has a playdate. If there is a gun, is it secured properly? If a child sees a gun, to tell them not to touch it and to find an adult even if they don't think that the gun is real. In the Fall, I will be working with the PTA Council to put on some programs to role play these scenarios. It's not easy to ask another parent about guns. Practicing these conversations should help. I feel that we can prevent accidental shootings, and I wanted to help educate our community to do this. By initiating this work, I've found so many like-minded people in our community who have been very appreciative of these efforts.
- **Board member and interest group leader of Duke's Campus Club** – This organization is a club for women associated with Duke. I have served on the board as a Webmaster, Policy chair, and in charge of a social committee. As an interest group leader, I have been in charge of a Morning Gourmet group and continue to be in charge of a book group and another cooking group. Through my work with this organization, I have made close friends with people of different generations, and I feel good about having an organization that empowers women. It consists of strong women who want to make a difference in their community.
- **HOA Board (position of Treasurer)** – I served on the HOA Board of my neighborhood for several years. I took on the position as the Treasurer and was in charge of the social committee. I organized neighborhood parties, including a Halloween party, an Easter party, and a summer pool party. This set a very caring tone in our community. We greeted new community residents and welcomed them to our neighborhood.
- **Parent coach of the Chapel Hill High School Mountain Biking Team** – My daughter joined this team when it first started at the high school. I volunteered to be a parent coach. My daughter has graduated, and I continue to work with the team. I find this team to be very special in that everyone, no matter their level of biking expertise, is welcome on the team and encouraged. We will teach them to ride a bike and use their gears. Luckily, the school has lots of good quality bikes that anyone can use. The other great thing about this team is that it has the largest number of girl bikers in the North Carolina team. Girls are empowered and embraced on this team. Additionally, there are a large number of refugee kids who speak Karen. I have understood the struggles of this community better. I have given rides to and from their houses, brought snacks for them, and paid for their biking shorts. The league has paid for many of them to race. I have seen how this activity has given them self-confidence, pride, and fellowship. I am proud to be involved with this group.
- **Girl Scout Cookie Mom** - When I think of this job, I think of counting the money after the cookie booths, looking for that quarter stuck in the back of their "cash register," driving distances to trade unsold boxes of cookies with another troop, and seeing the smiles of girls learning to be confident as they gain new skills. I feel that this position had me learn more about this community where kids are learning to give back.

- **Battle of the Books Coach, math & reading volunteer helper, art helper, and class parent every year at Seawell Elementary school** – I did all these tasks to help the kids because I value education. I wanted children to get a love of reading, loving art whether or not they were talented at it, and help them with any struggles in math and reading. I know that the teachers have a lot on their plates, and I was willing to do anything that I could to support the teachers. I spent most days of the week assisting at the school system and helping out the teachers. I enjoyed interacting with the students.

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

The first thing that started me on this journey was when I petitioned the Chapel Hill Town Council about a gun buyback program about 1½ years ago. This was after the Parkland shootings. I wanted our community to do something to make a difference to reduce gun violence. The Council unanimously voted in favor of the petition. I didn't hear anything about the status and then started emailing people about an update. By December of that year, I had still not heard anything. I went to a Council meeting and asked about it during the public comment part. I was told that I would get a phone call about it. A meeting was scheduled for the following month, and I found out that not much was done on it. I have now been working to do this event, and I am planning on having it on September 14th. After that experience, I wanted more transparency in the system. The Town Council website does list active petitions and where it is, but I would also like to see some information on the progress of it. For about 6-8 months, I had no idea that little was happening. If this happened to me where there was unanimous consent for the petition, I feel that it must be happening to others as well, and I would like to see this fixed. We need to see implementation.

I have friends who are teachers or whose situation has changed due to a divorce and can't afford to live in Chapel Hill. I have been working with immigrants, as well, through my mountain biking team and my GED tutoring. I believe that this town must be inclusive and be a place for all of us. I feel frustration to see luxury apartments being built with no affordable housing units available. With this dire need of affordable housing in Chapel Hill, we must make it a priority.

Additionally, I've watched many trees being clear cut to make room for development. I don't feel that the trees need to be clear cut. Many can remain along the road, and I feel that some buildings can be built around some of the trees. I find it sad to see that these large, beautiful canopy trees are being replaced with saplings that will take decades to grow to full size. The canopy trees will help our environment by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen into the air. In fact, one large tree can supply a day of oxygen to four people. I would like to save some of these trees, especially since I feel that clear cutting is unnecessary. It would just take a little more foresight from the builder to avoid this.

I then attended the first People's Academy that Chapel Hill offered. I was fascinated to learn about the different parts of our town's government and how they worked together. I also attended the Community Police Academy to learn more about that department. That's when I knew that with my passion and experience of serving the community in various ways, that I would like to serve as a member of Town Council. I've been attending Town Council meeting, as well as community meetings, and various town meetings since December. I am passionate about the

issues and have ideas on what we can do. You can read more about me and my priorities on my website at www.RenukaSoll.com.

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.)
 - 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 did not know about the Racial Equity Institute (REI) and have not attended their training. Whether or not I am elected, I would like to attend this training. Not having studied the racial equity frameworks, I have not had a chance to apply them in my daily life. However, I am aware of the history of racism in this country and about institutionalized racism through college classes from the African American studies department and through my own readings of books such as White Fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism, Waking up white and finding myself in the story of race, and The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace, I want for institutionalized racism and the problems with power dynamics in organizations to be something of the past. I will do my part to fight this.

Housing Affordability and Local Taxation

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

Diversity of income levels needs to be supported in our community with a full spectrum of affordable housing. Our school teachers, police officers, firefighters, town employees, and hourly wage earners should be able to live where they work.

I feel that we need to take every opportunity possible whenever an owner owned or rental is being built in order to increase the supply of affordable housing in Chapel Hill. Affordable housing has become a crisis situation in this area. I feel that we can trade off higher density for more affordable housing units to go beyond what is required by the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance. I would also like to look into changing the ordinance from 10% to 15% required in downtown.

I would like to see into the possibility of partnering with UNC and UNC Health to develop affordable housing for their employees and get a certain percentage of those units for the town's workforce housing to help meet the needs of our residents. UNC owns lots of land in Chapel Hill, and because of our rural buffer, Chapel Hill has limited land on which to build. I feel that this partnership would help the UNC employees to live where they work, and they would also be giving back to our town where we have a dire need.

I also think that we could redevelop some of our public housing units. Chapel Hill's 336 public housing units are distributed over 13 properties which are built with very low density and has an aging infrastructure. We could redevelop some of them with more density to increase our housing units and put mixed use development in those areas to increase business and make it easier for these residents to shop.

People of all income levels should be able to benefit from our excellent school system. More affordable housing will help make Chapel Hill into a place for all of us.

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?

I would like to see affordable housing in the transit corridors. These residents will be able to shop and get to work easier if they are near public transportation. I also feel that this area is a natural place where we can have more density. I would also like to see better walking and biking paths developed there so that there are many modes of transportation for our residents. However, since affordable housing is in such a critical stage, I feel that every opportunity must be looked at for affordable housing wherever it may arise. Because of this, if there is no bus or public transportation available in that new affordable housing area, we must look for solutions. I realize that it is expensive to add bus service, but if there is a large group of people who need public transportation, we must do what we can to make it available to them.

As for rentals where the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance does not apply, we can still negotiate for affordable housing units by trading off density or through another type of incentive. I would still like to negotiate for higher than the 15% affordable housing units for owner owned housing. As we keep doing this, it will be clear to developers that this is what our town values. I believe that they will try to meet our needs.

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

I feel that we need to hold spots on the Boards for various income levels to better represent our town. The community will benefit when diverse people represent the whole community. I would like to see the town pay for transportation service for these residents, if needed (by taxi or a shared ride service). We should also make babysitting services available to those that need it. If we let these public housing residents know that sharing their opinions and concerns can make beneficial changes to themselves and their community, I feel that they would be willing to serve.

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?

The aging population is growing. These people have been vital members of our community, and many want to remain in their homes and age in place. Among the things that we need to think about are mobility issues, affordability, possibility of isolation, and needing “in-home” care. To deal with mobility issues, I would like to see a group help people re-design homes for the elderly by creating ramps (if they have steps), putting bars in the bathroom, or putting levers on faucets and doorknobs. In certain areas, it would be helpful to build houses that have wider hallways for wheelchairs and be a single-story structure. Chapel Hill has started building these types of accommodations for the 55+ age group. Having affordable housing for this segment of the population is needed. I think that having these homes in close communities will help deal with the feeling of isolation. I would also like to see a governmental group check in on the elderly, especially when there is inclement weather and also just to see if they need more resources such as in in-home care or other resources. They can then help get this care for them. By having this segment of the population on Boards and part of committees, we will better understand their needs and what we can do for them.

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

I would like to develop office space, especially in downtown, to encourage start-ups to remain in Chapel Hill. Let's continue to support business accelerators, like LAUNCH and co-working spaces. We need to provide high-potential, small companies with free seminars and expert advice on getting a business off the ground. The town should incentivize developers to create more office space for those 40-70 person companies that will diversify our tax base. This will take a heavy tax burden off our residents.

I also feel that we should encourage tourism by providing historical walking tours in downtown to attract visitors to explore our area and shops. This will help our local businesses thrive which will benefit the whole town. I envision a vibrant town center in our near future.

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

I think that the town has a couple of possibilities. They could use town owned land to use as a mobile home park. This way, they won't have to worry about developers selling the land out from right under them. They should also give support to find places where these displaced residents can move or give support to move into differing type of housing, if they desire. The displacement of residents of mobile home parks has been an ongoing problem, and I feel that a permanent solution of using town owned land would be a good solution. They may have to pay for water and sewer lines, but it would be worth making an investment in this for any displacement that may occur in the future.

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

Northside is a very inclusive, diverse, and family-oriented neighborhood. Rosemary street in that area needs to fit in with the neighborhood, and we should not have that part of the street look like a separate area. I agree with the Rosemary Street Vision in that the businesses should be ones that benefit the Northside community and make it more livable, such as dry cleaners, hair cutting/barber shops, and convenience stores. There should be parks that can be used for community recreation, wide sidewalks and a pretty treescape for a community feel. The buildings on the North side of Rosemary should be height restricted. Rosemary street is a "transition street" between the neighborhood and downtown. It must be integrated in with the northside community to minimize the impact on the historic Northside community.

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?

I think that we can deal with the growth of student population by putting age restriction (such as 21+) on housing in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods. We can also continue to ask UNC to create their own apartment-style housing for their students so that they won't spill over into the Chapel Hill neighborhoods. We can also ask any students who live in these neighborhoods to do community-building work. This will help those students be more sensitive and respectful to the character of the neighborhood. To deal with rising land prices, I would like to see if it's possible to put a cap on income level for people moving into these districts.

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?

I do not live close to a bus stop. In fact, my daughter was taking music lessons from a UNC student who came to our home. She was disheartened to find that she couldn't get to our house easily. She ended up taking a bus to a friend's house who would then drive her to our house, and we would drive her back to campus. I find this unfortunate because I would love to take public transportation more.

However, when there have been festivals or a crowded event downtown, I have made my way to a bus stop. I like how it is free and convenient. Unfortunately, I did run into a problem leaving downtown. I didn't realize that the bus doesn't stop when it's full or will close its door when it is getting full. I had to wait for several buses, which weren't coming that frequently, to make my way home.

The buses weren't coming often enough when there was an event going on. I also feel that the hours need to expand so that hourly workers or low-income workers can get to jobs that may not be a typical 9 to 5 schedule. The hours get reduced in the summer since the students aren't here. This makes it very difficult for those who need transportation to get to work. We should stay on the same schedule throughout the year. As people age, they may need to rely more and more on public transportation. Public transportation should be within a 10-minute walk of senior centers and areas where the population is older.

I do think that the older population and lower-income workers need to be asked directly what they need so that the town can provide services for it.

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?

Environmental justice refers to fair treatment among all people regardless of race, age, or income when it comes to environmental protection. This is very important to our community. I think that there is more justice when you see affordable housing mixed in with market rate housing and not secluded in a concentrated area. We don't want to see the worse part of the land given to affordable housing. For example, the affordable housing shouldn't be closest to the highway where there is noise pollution and possible hazards such as dangerous fumes. In the same way, it shouldn't exclusively be near power lines either. If there is sustainable infrastructure in the neighborhood development, it must also be applied to the affordable housing homes. In other words, there should not be a visible difference between market value housing and affordable housing. People living in those units will feel more a part of the community if they aren't given different type of housing than others. Everyone deserves the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards.

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 think that the Community Police Academy is helping in this regard. We can see how the officers are trained, what they do, and can ask the police chief and the officers any question. They look at statistics to stop racial profiling, and they want to hear feedback from the community to improve how they run. They talked about how they all are trained to de-escalate situations. I do feel that the body cameras they wear keep them accountable at their word. They want a good relationship with the citizens of Chapel Hill. They can improve relationship with the citizens by learning to keep an open mind about people and not to take a defensive approach. I think that it will also help if there is enough diversity in the police force. People feel comfortable if more of the police force reflects the diversity of its community.

I also think that having Chapel Hill's Community Policing Advisory Board creates a link between the police department and the community. This Board gives a way for citizens to come to their meetings to advise the police department on what they see.

After speaking to Chief Blue, I found that the town is struggling to hire police officers. The pay is low, and the job is hard. Because of this, it will be harder to increase diversity. I think that it would be a good idea to try to recruit people from colleges who are studying justice or something of the sort.

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 do support a citizen review of the police department, and if the Community Policing Advisory Board isn't doing that, then they should. It should be open to anyone who wants to participate. Every group should have a review from the outside to make sure that it is functioning in a fair process. I think that a citizen review should investigate allegations of police misconduct and give a recommendation to the department. It would make sense that there is an outside review process to avoid any possibility of corruption to protect colleagues or friends.

For the UNC police department, I think that there should be a group that consists of students, administration, and faculty to review the police department, especially since the college police department only has jurisdiction on campus.

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 the Chapel Hill police and UNC police have separate jurisdictions. UNC police are only in charge of the campus. However, for UNC events that are slightly off campus or very large, they can ask help from the Chapel Hill police department, and the reverse is true as well. I believe that the two entities have a good working relationship, as does the Chapel Hill and Carrboro police department.

I think that the Town of Chapel Hill should bear some responsibility for the conduct of UNC-Chapel Hill campus police on their campus because our town coexists with the campus. I know that the students were upset with the campus police when white supremacist counter-demonstrators came to their campus with a weapon and they said that they saw a UNC police officer shaking hands with that person and shown off campus. The school should handle it, but if there are still complaints, I feel that the town's police department should step in to see if they can help. Half the UNC students live in our town and half on campus. These students are residents of our town for at least 4 years. I think that we owe it to them to help if they are unsatisfied with what is happening on campus after they have tried to deal with it through the UNC system.

I think that the public should know how our town runs and what the jurisdiction is between the town police and campus police. When advertising an event or about a protest, we could also inform them about which police department is in charge. There is power in knowledge.

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?

Not applicable. I am running for Chapel Hill Town Council.

Business and Labor

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

Orange County is certifying businesses that pay their employees a living wage. I think that as it's promoted within our town, there will be more peer pressure for other businesses to do the same. People will also choose to work for living wage employers versus the minimum wage ones. I think that the town needs to promote the benefits of providing a living wage and to promote the businesses that pay it. When I saw that list, I made it a point to frequent those stores. I also think that the Chamber of Commerce should promote it among the businesses that are part of this group.

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?

I think that the cost of rent is high and many businesses fail. It would be beneficial for people to get a chance to start businesses in their homes to get started. As the business grows, they will be more likely to take the risk of renting a building. They also may not see Chapel Hill as having a very diverse clientele. I think that this is changing. The ethnic populations within the town has been

growing. I hope to see a change in how Chapel Hill is viewed and that we will see more diverse businesses coming into the town.

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

I think that our government should zone so that people can have businesses out of their homes. Many small businesses start in the home before they can expand outside. They need the opportunity to develop their product and get started before trying to get a loan and invest in a store. This will allow people of color to start with serving members of their community as they start out. I think that we need to look at Durham to see how they have been so successful in supporting communities of color versus what is happening in Chapel Hill. I think that when businesses for people of color start out, the government can help them to get a loan to get started. Loans are hard enough for anyone, but institutional racism can make it harder for people of color.

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-lead, anti-racist organizing on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus?

I think that having a youth liaison on the town's advisory boards does help promote student engagement in our town's activities. Students have been coaches for our children's athletic teams and work in our community to help build it. Organizing clubs at UNC-Chapel Hill campus to engage in our community would also help with this.

I am planning on contacting the UNC Democratic party to talk to students about the election and to find out about the issues that they care about. I do think that they should be involved with the town's politics. I feel that we should engage the students and give them internships in government. They can help us come up with ideas or make things more data-driven when it comes to how to protect the environment and for our community to have more sustainable living.

In my graduate school, there was a lab class where a team of students would work on a real-world problem. I would like to see if we can collaborate with UNC to do the same thing. We can come up with some issues like affordable housing and the environment that we're grappling with. They can be consultants for the town to come up with tangible actionable solutions. This would give them real world practical experience and help our community.

In terms of student-lead, anti-racist organizing on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus, we should try to engage them in community dialogue. Most things don't get understood and resolved until people talk.

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?

We need to put out pertinent information for our community in multiple languages, which is already happening to an extent. I think that it would also be nice if new immigrant families had “host” families, those willing to help them get acclimated to their new environment. Having an American liaison and a place to go to with questions will help new immigrants feel welcome and have a place to turn to with questions. This would welcome the immigrants and help them succeed without creating any tensions without underserved communities.

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?

The town can get ready to ensure a full and accurate count in the upcoming census by starting to inform the public on why it’s important and how any information that they collect will be kept confidential and will not have a negative impact on the participants. It’s important to get an accurate count because that is how local governments can allocate services. An accurate census benefits the whole community. It could possibly be hard to get an accurate count because immigrants can be afraid to be counted in this political climate. Additionally, it will be taken online this time where certain segments of the population, like the elderly, may not have access or feel comfortable on a computer. I think that we need to reach out to these people to provide help with the census so that families don’t have to figure it out on their own. Additionally, we need to assure immigrants that this is a safe town where we care about them. The information that they give won’t put them in jeopardy. Our government needs to get active in the census and provide help and let people know why an accurate count is important.

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.)?

I think that our town needs to pass resolutions that fit with the town’s values. Even if it’s not state law, this town can still live by a different standard. Encouraging a living wage policy, protecting the undocumented and educating them, allowing people to use the bathroom which whichever gender they identify, etc. are examples of things that are not state laws but ways in which are community wants to live.