



**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:	Nancy Ellen Oates
Age/Race/Gender (with preferred pronouns):	63 / White / Female (she, her, her's)
Occupation/Title/Retired:	Freelance writer
Position sought:	2nd term on 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?

Chapel Hill Town Council Member: Front-row seat to the racial (and often gender) imbalance of who drives change and shapes town. Developers presenting projects are almost exclusively white men. Expert testimony (scientists, engineers, finance experts, lawyers) comes from white men. Proposals for arts or children's projects typically come from white women. People of color usually address council in connection with affordable housing.

As a council member, I serve on or am liaison to boards and committees that amplify voices that often aren't heard: Civil Rights Task Force; Justice in Action; Community Home Trust; Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness; and Orange County Food Council. I continue to see ongoing obstacles that people of color face in living their lives.

My volunteer work and contributions over the decades have been with organizations that typically help low-income people, and I see how black and brown people are over-represented among the clientele. Habitat for Humanity; IFC; TABLE; A Helping Hand; PTA Thrift Shop; and ride-alongs with Meals on Wheels. My general takeaway is that everyone wants to live a good life, regardless of circumstances, and how doors open more readily for those who are white and have even modest means. And how often decisions are made for low-income people without including them in the decision-making process.

As a former probation and parole officer, I have long been aware of our two-tiered criminal justice system and am dismayed that there has been almost no progress made to rectify that in the past 30 years.

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

To ensure that a wide range of voices and viewpoints are included in the decision-making process. I go to many community meetings and events and committee meetings to hear the discussions to understand the impact various decisions have on individuals' lives, and I bring that information and understanding to the council discussions.

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.

Yes, in 2016. Most impactful was learning the history of discrimination and how an undercurrent of bias exists even when people think they are completely color blind. I've applied the framework in having a heightened awareness that other people bring very different societal experiences and expectations to situations than I do, and how people of color are not afforded the same benefit of the doubt that white people are given and are not always treated with the same respect that their white counterparts would be given.

## **Housing Affordability and Local Taxation**

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

Having spent time in housing projects in New York City, I'm a strong supporter of dignity over volume. Often people will argue for cramming as many affordable units as possible onto a parcel of land without regard to whether we are creating a neighborhood where people want to live, that they are proud to call home, that treats them with respect. That pervades all of my decisions on affordable housing proposals.

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?

All below-market-rate housing has to be subsidized, either by taxpayers, donors or developers. My votes over the past 4 years on council have been to hold developers to the standard of our Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance, 15% of total units affordable, half to people at 80% AMI and half at 65% AMI. I have pushed for units over payment-in-lieu. I have pushed for a PIL formula for rental units. By law, we can't mandate AH for rental units, but an applicant can volunteer to contribute to AH before we approve a rezoning. I understand what a valuable gift a rezoning is, so I am dogmatic in expecting a contribution from a developer that is equivalent to our IZO. I have also dug for answers as to why Trinity Court is empty and pushed for us to make a decision on whether we are going to rebuild or renovate, how many units will we get in the end, and how are we going to pay for it.

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

Our director of housing and community, Faith Thompson, has done an excellent job of getting public housing residents engaged in improving quality of life in public housing. Getting people to see that their efforts have an impact encourages people to get more involved in municipal governance. No one wants to spend time and effort in meetings if their input is ignored. Having a positive experience of effecting change encourages people to participate more in town government.

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?

Give more money to A Helping Hand, a unique service that helps folks age in place. Expand EZ Rider, perhaps using individual vehicles, similar to an Uber service, if they can accommodate wheelchairs and have drivers trained to help people with mobility issues get in and out. People sometimes avoid EZ Rider because the wait for pickup after an appointment is so long. Add service to make it easier for seniors who don't drive to get to the senior center and the library, gathering places, because isolation is a serious problem with seniors who age at home. The state dictates how many assisted living facilities they will license in an area and says Chapel Hill has enough. Work with state senators and representatives to demonstrate that with our growing population of seniors, we should qualify for more. We need more affordable 55+ communities, similar to Greenfield Commons. Of course, push for health-care reform so that help with bathing and healthy meal preparation are covered by Medicare.

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

Give people who work in town the chance to live in town. Encourage a variety of subsidized housing options, homeownership as well as rental, and don't expect everyone to live in an apartment. Publicize the county program that gives a property tax break to seniors making less

than \$30K. Recruit businesses that attract young employees, because a young workforce tends to be more diverse.

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

Respect their housing choices, rather than making decisions for them, such as expecting residents to move into a subsidized apartment. Federal grants have restrictions on helping people who don't have a Social Security number, so look at what our options are.

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

Feedback I've received is that many longtime Northside residents approve of the Rosemary Street Vision. Our task is to make sure it is followed, and to present tradeoffs (more height for more affordable units; more density for age-restricted buildings) to Northside residents to get their feedback.

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?

Growth is inevitable. Housing costs will continue to rise. That's one of the reasons I keep pushing homeownership: You have more control over costs. As years go by, you are paying your mortgage in dollars valued at the year of purchase, not the inflated dollars of 10 or 20 years later. We can manage the impact of student growth somewhat by working closely with UNC leadership to plan for where to house students as enrollment grows. We have rezoned the Rogers Road neighborhood concomitantly with water and sewer coming in to preserve a neighborhood feel. We must be mindful of decisions we make about the development of the Greene Tract so as not to undo what the RENA residents spent so much time shaping. We have protected Northside as a Neighborhood Conservation District, and we have plugged some of the loopholes, but we must be ever vigilant for new ones.

### **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?

As a member of the Transit Partners board, I have pushed for bus hours to be extended to be useful to people who don't work traditional 9-5 hours, by expanding hours and concentrating serve at the hospital, campus and downtown, where our biggest employers are and where people often work nontraditional shifts. My own experience is that I can't use public transit much because the meetings I go to end later than bus service. We can't cost effectively provide bus service convenient for everyone who works nontraditional hours, but the town does offer deeply discounted parking passes to restaurant workers who arrive at work after 4 p.m. [For senior citizens and the disabled, see my answer to #7.]

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?

An example we'll be facing in the coming 4 years is what to do with the coal ash under the police station. I strongly believe we should not truck it all to a low-income community where people rely on well water and that would have fewer resources to deal with a pit breach that might contaminate wells.

Another example is how we plan affordable housing projects. I strongly believe they should not be in areas susceptible to flooding or next to highways that expose residents (especially children) to excessive noise and heavy metals such as lead from car exhaust.

A third example is access to parks and greenways. We need areas where people can be in nature for free at any time, not the model of "we'll let poor people in for free on Sunday afternoons; anyone with the means to pay can come at any time they want."

### **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?

Our police chief has made a concerted effort to increase diversity of officers, and it is paying off. Our police officers build relationships with individuals in higher-crime areas and in neighborhoods where residents typically have less trust in police helping them. Our officers generally seem to want to find the balance between keeping a neighborhood safe without having a heavy police presence.

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?

Review, yes; decision-making authority, no. CHPD officers are well-trained and put their lives on the line for us. We can hold them accountable, but we should not second-guess their judgment in a life-or-death situation. Perhaps UNC police do not have the training and experience that CHPD officers do. Rather than have untrained citizens giving advice, we would be more effective if our CHPD chief and officers built a stronger relationship with UNC police so they work together rather than be adversaries.

That said, I'd like to hear from residents who feel they have not been treated fairly by police. When I was the council liaison to the Community Policing Advisory Committee, we did not hear many complaints about police, other than traffic stops. And the CHPD took that seriously and have made improvements.

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?

UNC police have authority on campus; CHPD has authority everywhere else in town. We have a memorandum of understanding to help one another as needed, and the authority of who runs a police operation depends on whether the incident is on campus or off campus. We can strengthen CHPD's relationship with UNC police and effect change that way, but legally we can't tell UNC police what to do on campus. Educating the community would help, through student orientation on campus, social media and underscored by traditional media when situations arise.

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?

Greater recognition for businesses that do pay a living wage. Marketing push to encourage consumers to support businesses that pay a living wage. Guidance from town or volunteer ambassadors to sit down with business owners face-to-face and explain the benefits to the employer for paying a living wage.

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?

Start-up costs are quite high, including housing for employees. We don't seem to have a support system of other black or brown business owners. Is Chapel Hill a welcoming community? Then let's spread the word. We need a critical mass. If more business owners of color come to Chapel Hill, that will attract other business owners of color. We need to have a culture in town where people of color feel safe and valued and welcome. The fact that we have trouble attracting business owners of color says we're not there yet.

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

Chapel Hill is still a fairly conservative business environment. Established business community and chamber of commerce are predominantly white. We don't seem to recruit nontraditional or minority-run businesses. We lack the "coolness" factor that attracts entrepreneurs. We support Launch, but once businesses graduate, they go to Durham. We have some affordable co-working spaces, but I don't see them promoted at all by the town.

### **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?

College is a time of growing into yourself, so I'd like to see us promote civic engagement. Reach out to student groups that promote public service and philanthropy and establish mentoring relationships. Listen to student ideas of how we can make participating in government processes "cool."

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?

Free translation services; having liaisons who are members of the non-native-English-speaking community and are tapped into what the town has to offer. Don't prioritize one community over another. We want to welcome, not play favorites.

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?

Seriously promote our "All Are Welcome" message with a "You Count" campaign to educate people on the benefits and importance of participating in the census: what they need to do; how to avoid risk. Flags downtown; posters in businesses; banner ads in public housing newsletters; flyers on windshields in mobile home parks; working through St. Thomas More pastoral and program staff to get the word out.

### **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.)?

Working closely with our state legislators. We meet with them annually before the legislature starts its regular session to talk about our concerns and positions. We need to keep up the conversation, understanding that being too strident only provokes the majority of the General Assembly to dig in their heels against what "liberal" Chapel Hill wants. We can have some success under the radar, such as behaving like a sanctuary city without calling ourselves one, thus affording some protection to people without federal documentation.