

# PA PAC Questionnaire for Sheriff Candidates - 2018

Please return this completed form along with your resume or a brief biographical statement describing your education, work history, community service, and prior political experience as soon as possible, but by **March 12**, at the latest.

You may e-mail your responses to Tom Miller at [tom-miller1@nc.rr.com](mailto:tom-miller1@nc.rr.com) or you may send a printed copy of your responses to Durham PA-PAC c/o Tom Miller, 1110 Virginia Avenue, Durham, NC 27705

Please note that following the March 12 deadline, the Durham People's Alliance PAC may publish your responses to this questionnaire and your resume.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and your willingness to serve the people of Durham.

Candidate's name: Clarence F. Birkhead

Address: 212 El Paso Ave.

E-mail Address: clarencebirkhead@gmail.com

Phone: 919-423-6179

*When responding to this questionnaire, type your answers in italics, bold, or a different font to distinguish your answers from the questions. Please do not use colors. You may explain your answer to every question, but please be concise. If possible, limit your answer to each question to no more than 350 words. If you use words or ideas from another person, please attribute your source.*

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## Why You Are Running

1. What is the single most important issue confronting the Sheriff's office. If you are elected Sheriff, what will you do to address it?

**The lack of trust between the community and the sheriff's office is the single most important issue we face. The community needs to trust law enforcement again. People who interact with law enforcement should feel safe and have confidence in those they call on in times of need. The sheriff's office has been involved with a number of significant issues during the past four years that has eroded the community's trust. If elected, I will take immediate steps to rebuild that trust within all our communities. This will begin with a commitment of increased transparency, accessibility and**

accountability from the sheriff's office to the community, which will include specific ways I will communicate with and listen to the community.

### **Crime Prevention and Public Safety**

2. What role do you think the Sheriff's Department should play in school safety?

**The Sheriff's office should lead a collaborative effort to ensure our schools are as safe as possible. I would work with our school administrators and staff to develop a critical incident response protocol (CIRP) designed specifically for each school. The CIRP would dictate the procedures for responding to various incidents. These would include incidents involving active shooters, severe weather and medical emergencies. School Resource Officers (SROs) must be trained to ensure quick response whenever our school safety is threatened. At the same time, SROs must be trained to reduce use of force and build trust with students and the school community.**

3. What role do you think the Sheriff's Department should play in gang prevention?

**The sheriff's office should always seek opportunities to collaborate with local, state and federal agencies when combating gang violence. No one agency can address the issue of gang violence alone. For example, the N.C. Department of Public Safety manages "GangNET," a secure internet connection that allows agencies to enter and view information on gang members. GangNet was originally started by the Durham Sheriff's Office in collaboration with the Durham Police Department in 2003. That level of coordination must be put in place and utilized.**

4. Do you support or oppose legislation which would increase control of the sale and distribution of firearms? Please explain.

**A 9-year old recently told me he could get a gun quicker than he could get a meal. This is a profound testament to the challenges we face and encapsulates why I do this work. I believe - and we must all believe - that Durham can be a place where our children do not live in neighborhoods where guns are easier to come by than a meal. I would support smart gun control legislation that restricts the ability of the mentally ill to get access to guns, increases background checks and has a defined waiting period. Furthermore, I would support any legislation that is designed to restrict access to weapons and to aggressively remove guns from the hands of youth and from our neighborhoods. I would also support legislation that promotes responsible gun ownership.**

5. What, if anything would you do to improve security at the Durham County Courthouse?

**I would evaluate current security measures in place at the courthouse, particularly at access points, to ensure they are appropriate without creating unnecessary barriers for public access. I would meet with all court officials to listen to their concerns, if any, about safety within and around the courthouse.**

6. Do you support or oppose the expanded use of citations by law enforcement officers? Please explain.

**I do support the expanded use of citations by law enforcement officers. Wherever possible and appropriate citations should be used in lieu of arrest. In most cases, a citation can achieve the same results as an arrest, which is for the person to appear in court and to answer for the violations they have been cited for. By expanding the use of citations, we start to reduce the number of persons being**

held in the detention facility for minor violations. The goal is to gain voluntary compliance and we should try to achieve that through the expanded use of citations.

7. Do you support or oppose the expansion of the misdemeanor diversion program? Please explain.

**I support the expansion of the misdemeanor diversion program. The more we can do to minimize persons being incarcerated and having their lives turned upside down the better. Additionally, expanding the misdemeanor diversion program is a step in the right direction toward reducing the use of, or eliminating the use of, "money bail" for low-level non-violent offenders.**

8. What is your position on cash bail?

**As I stated above, the use of alternatives to incarceration, including eliminating cash bail has my full support. Although the sheriff has no direct involvement with the bail system, having a sheriff who understands and supports alternative initiatives could increase the probability of reducing or eliminating the use of cash bail. I fully support efforts to ensure that people are not detained in our jails because they are poor.**

9. Are you concerned about the criminalization of poverty and, if so, what policies will you put in place to avoid fees and costs for poor people arrested, deferred into a program, or detained in the Durham County jail?

**We do not want to criminalize poverty. Wherever appropriate, I will be committed to thinking outside the box and to trying new ideas. I support efforts to ensure people are not detained in our jails because they are poor or have unmet mental health needs. I will work in concert with other agencies and organizations to assess the needs of those detained in our jail and connect individuals to the support they need to help break the cycle of recidivism. After careful evaluation, I will make sure our fee structure is appropriate to meet the needs of our residents without creating an economic burden on individuals or family members.**

10. If you are elected Sheriff, what will be your policy concerning checkpoints?

**We will not do checkpoints for immigration purposes. We will use checkpoints as they are designed, which is to gain voluntary compliance with motor vehicle law and promote safety on our streets and highways. For example, we would continue to conduct "Booze It & Lose It" checkpoints and "Click It or Ticket" campaigns.**

### **The Sheriff's Department**

11. Should state and local government law enforcement agencies have the discretion to decide to what extent they cooperate with U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainers and programs such as Secure Communities and the 287(g) program?

**Yes, local law enforcement should decide whether or not to cooperate with ICE and their detainer program. I will make a clear and uncompromising commitment to not cooperate with ICE. As sheriff, I will not honor ICE detainers and we will not participate in ICE roundups.**

12. What additional resources does the Sheriff's Department need that it does not currently have?

**This is a difficult question to answer since I have not seen a current inventory or list of needs. Once elected, we will conduct a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (S.W.O.T.) analysis, which will give us a clear picture of deficiencies so we can begin to address the needs of the department.**

13. As Sheriff, what measures would you support and/or take to make Sheriff's Office and jail more accessible to non-English-speaking defendants and their families?

**We want a sheriff's office that is reflective of the community we serve. To that end, I will seek to hire deputies who represent the diversity of the communities they serve. Additionally, we will use bilingual signage and interpreters and technology where possible to assist non-English speaking defendants and their families.**

14. Is there a trust problem between the people of Durham and the Sheriff's Department? Are the department's responses to issues of use of force, racial profiling, deployment of personnel, searches, and communication with the public satisfactory?

**Yes, there are issues with trust between the community and sheriff's office. As I mentioned above, I believe the lack of trust is the single most important issue the sheriff's office is currently facing. In my opinion, the sheriff's office has taken a non-communicative approach with the community which feeds into the distrust and forces the community to draw their own conclusions.**

### **The Jail**

15. Do you support or oppose the recommendations contained in the Durham Human Relation Commission's 2017 report on the jail, (including a community-based survey of inmates and staff, a civilian oversight board, ending the use of lockbacks, expanding the STARR program, and the removal of financial barriers to pretrial release). Please explain.

**I support the commission's recommendations generally and I specifically support the following recommendations:**

- **Leverage the Durham County Commissioners' authority to approve contracts and provide funding to demand more accountability and better services by private contractors and the Durham County Sheriff within the Durham County Detention Facility (DCDF).**
- **Increase resources for mental health services within the jail beyond the current level, while also implementing a mental health diversion program to connect qualifying defendants with appropriate services in lieu of detention.**
- **Allow a community-based research team to conduct a survey of detainees and staff of the DCDF.**

16. What changes, if any, should be made to the physical plant of the jail and its operation and administration?

**We will conduct a full analysis of the detention facility to determine its continued usefulness as our jail. The jail opened in 1996 with a capacity of 576 single cells. Since that time the area around the jail has changed considerably. Therefore, it may be appropriate to evaluate the area around the current jail location. The men and women who work in the detention facility do a fine job caring for those who have been arrested as well as taking care of the facility itself. Under my leadership, we will develop a staff that is competent, professional, and committed to providing the highest services possible.**

17. How will you protect the rights of LGBTQ individuals incarcerated in the jail?

**We will make every effort to ensure the safety of LGBTQ individuals. When necessary, segregated housing will be utilized to protect the rights and privacy of this population. More importantly, we will train our staff to ensure a welcoming and affirming environment.**

18. What is your position on inmate visitation in the jail?

**I will be committed to maintaining in-person visitation. I believe having human contact, especially with caring and loving family members, is essential to maintaining a positive attitude and a healthy state of mind.**

29. Are you satisfied with the current private contracts that govern access to phone calls, visitation, meals and commissary, etc. for inmates?

**My current knowledge and understanding of these contracts is that they create an economic burden on the families of those incarcerated. We will review jail contracts and consider where new contracts could improve jail conditions and reduce the cost burden borne by those in the jail. We also will demand improved services and quality from our current contract providers and look for new and local opportunities.**

#### **Concerning You**

20. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense other than a minor traffic offense (such as speeding)? If the answer is yes, please describe the circumstances and the outcome.

**No.**

21. For whom did you vote in the 2012 and 2016 presidential general elections?

**Obama and Clinton, respectively.**

*Thank you and please remember to provide us with your resume or a biographical statement.*

Clarence F. Birkhead has dedicated the past thirty years of his life to serving the citizens of North Carolina as a law enforcement professional, teacher, mentor and advocate. Clarence has experience in both local government and the private sector and continues to give his time and energy by serving on various boards and committees. Clarence received his master's degree in organizational management from Pfeiffer University and completed his bachelor's degree in criminal justice at Shaw University.

He began his professional career as a deputy sheriff of Randolph County in 1984 before relocating to Durham where he joined the Duke Police Department in 1988. He spent 17 years serving the Duke community, first as a detective with Duke Police and later as Assistant Chief for Operations. At age 38, he was appointed Chief of Police where he oversaw all public safety functions for the university as well as the medical center and hospital.

His biggest achievements as Chief of Police were combining the university's security and police forces and expanding the department's jurisdiction to the neighboring communities. His efforts to merge the two divisions eliminated duplication, streamlined operations, doubled manpower, and improved response times. Meanwhile, Clarence's success at extending the jurisdiction of the force fostered collaboration between the public private law enforcement entities in Durham and expanded the service level of the Department to include both those of the Duke and greater Durham community.

Early in his career he learned the value of communication and respect and the importance of teaching his officers how to mediate before taking any other action when responding to 911 calls. A strong proponent of community policing, Clarence has always strived to build relationships between the community and police, and develop a staff that subscribes to the same philosophy.

He believes law enforcement agencies should work together to address issues of crime and quality of life issues. As such, he developed partnerships across the state and in every jurisdiction in which he worked.

As a community leader, he was saddened to see marginalized groups lose confidence in local law enforcement. His desire to make a positive impact on Durham law enforcement and community relations has been the driving force behind his decision to run for Durham County Sheriff. His hope is that as sheriff, he would have an opportunity to improve services, build strong community relationship and protect all its citizens.

He serves on various county and city boards and commissions, works with community organizations and volunteers and speaks at community, civic and charity events.

Clarence believes that having a committed and professional law enforcement agency means selecting, training and retaining qualified applicants. That's why he has served as an instructor in the police academy, as an assessor on many hiring and promotional boards, as an adjunct professor at both North Carolina Central University and Durham

Technical Community College where he has taught a plethora of criminal justice courses. He also has lectured at countless professional seminars across the nation. He is committed to doing everything possible to restore trust, integrity and honor in the profession of protecting and serving the citizens of our county.

When Birkhead is not working, he can be found spending time with his wife and family. He also takes time to smoke cigars, ride his motorcycle, play golf, and catch up watching sports whenever he can.