

PA PAC Questionnaire for Mayor and City Council Candidates – 2019

When answering this questionnaire, please repeat the questions in your response document with each question numbered and organized as it appears here. Type your responses in italics, bold, or a different font to distinguish your responses from the questions. Please do not use colors. Please try to confine your responses within the word limits set for each question. Do not feel obliged to exhaust the limit for each question. If you use words or ideas from another person, please attribute your source.

Please return the completed form along with your resume describing education, work history, community service, and prior political experience as soon as possible, but by August 5, at the latest.

You may e-mail your responses to Tom Miller at 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 27705-3262

Please note that following the August 5 deadline, the 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: Daniel Meier

Office for which you have filed for election (circle one): Mayor / City Council

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Government and the Public Good

1. Of all the issues confronting city government, which single issue is most important to you and why? What would you do about it if elected? *Please limit your answer to 200 words.*

The biggest issue facing Durham right now is the rising crime rate. If elected, I would work to expand police presence to keep the streets safe, while also making sure there is proper training and procedures to make sure people aren't being unfairly targeted and as much bias as possible is taken out of policing. I would also help to work to bring the communities and law enforcement together to build trust and work together to solve the problems of violence. I would also focus on providing resources to the community and to the District Attorney's Office and CJRC and other groups to make sure that people who are either victims or crimes, or who have fallen into that cycle themselves, have adequate resources to address the root causes of crime. We need global solutions, from economic opportunity, to affordable housing, to alternatives to conviction and incarceration. We need to make sure the City supports other crime reduction efforts and programs. Short-term, we need more policing, long-term, we need to invest in programs/policies that help reduce crime.

2. What can the city do to lift the wages of the lowest-paid workers in Durham and reduce growing income inequality in our community? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

The city needs to make sure that city employees are paid a fair/living wage, and then encourage other businesses and employers to do the same. A key is to make sure to attract more businesses and employers to Durham, and to work on the education and training of Durham residents so that they can get the higher paying jobs. We need to make sure that our more vulnerable residents have the resources and tools needed to be productive and be able to work. This means we need to look at crime reduction, mental health, substance abuse, after school/daycare programs, and other policies and programs that help improve the wellness of the community, which allows them to pursue higher paying jobs.

3. Describe your interest in and commitment to public amenities such as playing fields, open space, street trees, traffic calming, and walking and biking facilities. Are you willing to raise property taxes to provide for and maintain these amenities? Are public amenities allocated to neighborhoods equitably? Please explain and cite examples. *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

I think we need a lot more of all of these things. We need to make sure our neighborhoods have safe places for people to gather for recreation and community events. We also need to keep taking steps, like the bike paths on Main Street, to make Durham, especially the high-density areas like downtown, more friendly for pedestrians, scooters, bicyclists, and the rest. The public amenities would certainly need to be allocated "equitably" but that doesn't mean equally. A low-density neighborhood has less need for bicycle lanes than high-density areas, and it's easier to build playing fields in the low-density areas than it would be for downtown. You need to look at each neighborhood and their desires/needs and plan from there. As to being willing to raise property taxes to build and maintain these amenities, we'd need to know what we are building, and how much they cost. You raise taxes if you have to in order to maintain the City, but you look to the budget, and see what you can do within the resources you have. As we are continuing to grow and develop Durham, property tax revenues should continue to increase without raising rates.

4. What is your position on providing public incentives to private firms to promote economic development in Durham? How can city government use development incentives to promote more widely shared prosperity, including better jobs and higher wages for Durham residents? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

I think that so long as those incentives are handled properly, and have a net-positive impact on Durham, they are a good thing. We want to keep Durham moving forward and developing and growing. The more businesses we can bring in, the more jobs, and the better it is for Durham residents. We need to make sure to bring in employers that will help the community, and encourage them to pay living wages, and make sure we have the infrastructure and transportation in place for our residents to take advantage of these new jobs. I do have a degree in Finance, a MBA, and MSHA, in addition to my JD, and worked in healthcare for several years before law school, so I understand the numbers, and understand how to evaluate these proposals and incentives. We absolutely need to keep Durham growing, and it takes incentives to do that, and we absolutely need to make sure that our residents benefit from that growth.

5. What are the biggest barriers to increasing business ownership by local people of color, and what is the city's role in reducing those barriers? How could the city's supplier diversity or other practices foster more business growth opportunities? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

The biggest barrier is that people of color generally have a harder time getting the access to capital needed to start businesses. The entire financial and banking industry tends to be a lot more strict when loaning money to minorities. The city can't do a lot to change lending practices, but the supplier diversity program can help minority-owned businesses show the ability to succeed and growth potential, which are factors looked at by lending institutions. The city can also consider ownership when looking at the incentives described in #4, diversity can be one factor used to help determine the use of public assistance.

Housing, City Planning, and Neighborhoods

6. Do you think Expanding Housing Choices (EHC) will increase or decrease gentrification and displacement of lower-income residents? How can the city ensure equity in the use of EHC by people of color and other homeowners who have not had equal access to financing? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

I'm not sure what effect it will have on gentrification, but I do think that expanding the use of ADUs can help slow the tide of gentrification. Right now gentrification occurs because it's largely the only way for a property owner to take advantage of the demand for housing, and to get greater returns on their property. If we allow ADUs and the Expanding Housing Choices, the developers and property owners can still get their returns, but do so by adding housing options, not replacing one housing option with another. There is a risk that this will just allow them to increase gentrified density, but if it is structured correctly to create incentives for affordable housing in the development, it is a way to increase affordable density.

7. What should the city seek to accomplish through its power to stimulate and regulate growth? What principles and considerations will guide your decisions in zoning cases and other development issues? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

The city should seek to accomplish development and growth that benefits the most residents. We have a lot of ideas, and a lot of programs that we would love to be able to afford and fund, from reintegration, mental health, substance abuse, recreational facilities, parks, education, after school programs, daycares, and the rest. The more we can stimulate growth, the more we can afford to pursue a lot of the goals we want. The principles and considerations I would use in zoning and development issues are looking at how it would benefit Durham as a whole. Those benefits include protection and enhancing the quality of life and wellness for all residents, including the most vulnerable and poor. You have to look at each project, and hear from those who are most directly affected by the projects (positive and negative), and evaluate each project on the overall benefit to Durham.

8. Do you support the \$95 Million Housing Bond and the city's Five-Year Affordable Housing Plan? Why or why not? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

Honestly, I'm still torn on this, and talking to people, and trying to learn as much as I can. One concern I have is that it's likely to require continued massive funding keep going, since it is a Five-Year plan. I do think we need to increase Affordable Housing, but I think we need to be smart about it, and not just focus on saying it has to be downtown, or in the new developments. I'd like to see more focus on trying to improve ownership and protections for existing individuals and let them keep their homes and preserve their neighborhoods as opposed to giving guaranteed occupancy to developers that they can use to finance their projects while filling the rest of the units, with little protection that once that is done, they won't go right back and price out the affordable units. As most articles note, a lot of the DHA projects would still continue without the bond, and I think we need to look at the ADUs and other solutions that don't cause us to have to spend a lot of money up front, with not guarantees that we won't have to keep funding it, or that we won't just find ourselves kicking the gentrification can down the road. We should focus on giving people the ability to stay where they are and benefit from the development, not simply shuffle subsidized housing from one location to another. That said, I'm wide open on the issue. My gut reaction is that it is too much, too soon, without enough specific programs for ownership and long-term protections.

I worry that this is also focusing almost exclusively on housing, and not enough on underlying issues in the Communities that need to be addressed. We've talked about the reintegration programs, and the need for investments in the communities for mental health, substance abuse, recreation, afterschool programs, job-training, daycare, and others issues. We seem to be able to find money for housing and light rail, we need to find money to address the underlying community issues as well, in addition to fixing up the current subsidized housing that we have. It's all well and good to say we want to focus on "downtown," but we need to focus on the entire community.

9. Would you vote to approve a rezoning that does not include commitments to meet the City's affordable housing goal? If yes, how would you ensure that the city meets its goal? *Please limit your answer to 400 words*

I don't think I can make a blanket yes or no answer. A city, and the City Council needs to look at the big picture, and look out for all of Durham, and look to see how each project/piece can fit into the bigger goal. There may well be individual rezoning requests that don't include those commitments, but they may provide enough benefits and resources and increased wages and opportunities to meet other goals. I would work to help ensure the city meets its affordable housing goals, but I can't pre-judge any project or request.

10. How should Durham's Unified Development Ordinance define a "single-family dwelling?" *Please limit your answer to 200 words*

I think the definition of "single-family dwelling" is fine as is stated. However, we need to look at ADUs and other options to increase the ability to add additional units on lots to increase affordable density.

11. What non-traditional funding schemes (such as public banking, community investment trusts, community development venture capital) have you been exploring for the City of Durham to implement that can bolster our fight against economic inequality in our community? *Please limit your answer to 400 words*

I have not explored any, but I have been researching on the issue, and think that many of those options can be used to bolster the fight against economic inequality. We need to look for ways to increase the power of residents to have a say in their neighborhoods through ownership and other ways to build equity and generational wealth. If people have stable housing, and access to other resources needed to maintain wellness, they can compete and take advantage of the economic growth and opportunities Durham provides, which will reduce the economic inequality.

12. What planning policy goals and priorities do you wish to see from the upcoming review and revision of Durham's Comprehensive Plan? *Please limit your answer to 400 words*

I think we need to continue focusing on overall growth of Durham, bringing in new developments and employers to help lift all of Durham. We need to make sure we focus on good jobs, investment in infrastructure, and increasing affordable housing and affordable ownership.

13. Why do you believe that the recent light rail project failed in Durham? Where do we go from here? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

I think the ultimate reason it failed is that the General Assembly wanted it dead. When they started taking away funding, Durham was left with an ever-increasing, and ultimately unsustainable, share of the costs and risks. In addition, the timeframes were tightened, and the project didn't address some of the major problems faced by Durham, such as congestion on I-40. Ultimately the project connected UNC, Duke, and NCCU, but didn't connect to the airport, RTP, or other major areas, so I think it just became unsustainable with all of the issues arising at the last minute. I do think regional transportation is still something desperately needed in the Triangle, and all of the involved counties (Wake, Durham, Orange) need to continue working towards a solution. We need to look to a comprehensive solution.

14. What if anything, should the city do to distribute the property tax burden with greater equity and fairness? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

Unfortunately, state law doesn't allow us to apply property taxes unevenly or based upon income. It would be nice if we could allow greater exemptions/deductions for low-income property owners. Absent that, we need to make sure we are careful when raising taxes, and the kinds of taxes we raise, to make sure that the burden doesn't fall on our most vulnerable.

Policing

15. Is there a trust problem between the people of Durham and the police department? Are you satisfied with the department's leadership and responses to issues of use of force, racial profiling, deployment of personnel, searches, and communication with the public? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

I think there is a trust problem and it's one that hurts everyone. We need the police to keep us safe, and to help make sure that we can control crime, and when the people of Durham don't trust the police, they don't cooperate in investigations, and are afraid to help do what is necessary to obtain convictions. All too often our violent crimes are not a matter of who-done-it, but can-we-prove-it. If the community doesn't trust the police, and is unwilling to testify, that's a huge problem. We need to work to rebuild that trust so that the communities can be made safer and crime reduced, and part of that is to stop painting community investment as an us vs. them issue, and pretending the police don't want to see crime reduced and our communities improve. They absolutely do.

Am I satisfied with where DPD is? I don't think you can ever be satisfied, but they are making tremendous progress, and I think we too often forget that and pretend that national problems are still applicable to Durham. We have greatly reduced traffic stops, and implemented consent searches, and implemented training to help reduce implicit bias. We have an LGBTQ+ liaison officer to help meet the specialized needs of that community.

We have recently re-deployed the old Housing Unit (now called Community Engagement Unit), and that is making tremendous strides in our more crime-ridden communities to establish relationships with the communities, and to help keep them safe. We need to keep expanding these units, and provide more policing in the short-term to control crime, while investing in the communities (as noted elsewhere here) to help reduce future crime.

The police are not responsible for the racial disparities in incarceration and the justice system, but all too often get the blame. The police respond to calls, and work to keep the communities safe. It is up to the Judicial system, the DA's office, the Defense Attorneys, to handle the outcomes after that.

We do have a trust problem, but it is an unfair problem, and doesn't reflect the tremendous strides Durham has made, and can continue to make. We need to rebuild the trust, and rebuild the ability of the police to be police and keep us safe and be pro-active, while make sure it's done fairly and equitably.

As to use of force, unfortunately police officers often deal with people at their worst, and with mental health or substance abuse issues, and people who are facing serious consequences, so there is often some level of violence in their interactions. It should be as minimal as possible, and we should continue to train police on de-escalation tactics, and use of less-than-lethal tools. When there are use of force issues, they need to be investigated and go from there.

16. To what degree, if any, should the city cooperate with U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Immigration & Customs Enforcement and Homeland Security Investigations? What should the relationship be between local government and federal agencies such as ICE, DEA, and the US Marshals? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

It's hard to know what you mean by investigations/cooperation. We rely heavily on the Federal agencies to assist DPD and DCSO with drug investigations, gun-smuggling operations, violent felony apprehension, anti-counterfeiting, fraud, and other criminal activities, and we should absolutely keep doing that. But, we need to stay focused on cooperating to keep Durham safe from violent

criminals and serious crimes. Local law enforcement are not immigration or federal law enforcement, and should not be expected to do so.

While the recent shooting in El Paso was/is horrific, it's horror is compounded by the fact that many of the victims are not seeking out the assistance they need for fear of immigration enforcement. We need to assure our immigrant communities that the police will not be asking for their status, nor will our schools, or anyone else they may turn to for help. Undocumented immigrants are already an over-exploited class when it comes to employment and other issues. We need to make sure that they are not becoming targets of crime because of any fear of coming forward they may have.

But, we do need a cooperative relationship. The Feds have the ability to reach in and take cases and take enforcement actions without local law enforcement, and that's not always good. We need to make sure that we cooperate to the extent that if someone is charged with a crime, there can be some assurance that if they reach a positive resolution in state court it won't be used by the Feds to take them to Federal Court.

17. Should the city allocate more, less, or about the same money to policing? Please explain your answer. If your answer is less, would you allocate more money to other services to improve public safety? Again, please explain. *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

The city needs to allocate more resources to policing. Despite the higher crime rates, and intensity of crime, Durham pays officers less than surrounding communities. This creates problems when officers come to Durham to get trained on our dime, and then jump to surrounding communities with better work-quality of life and higher pay. We need to make sure we are paying competitive salaries and benefits.

In addition, as noted elsewhere, the CEUs are doing a good job in those communities, and we need to expand the number of officers so that we can expand coverage.

More policing is NOT the long-term solution to crime control, we need investment in the community (mental health, substance abuse, reintegration, daycares, recreation, and other programs geared for community wellness) so that we can reduce the long-term crime. That said, we need to partner with the police in the short-term (and the long-term) and stop painting it as an either/or issues. The police would love to partner with the community to help reduce crime, and would welcome increased community investment. We can, and should, do both.

Civil Rights

18. Name one issue in Durham that directly impacts, or is directly impacted by, race inequity, and explain how the city can incorporate a race equity framework in addressing this issue? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

I think our Criminal Justice system is directly impacted by race inequity. We are making great strides in addressing the implicit bias issues in our system, and we need to continue to work towards that and provide the necessary resources to keep moving that progress forward. We need to make sure the police, but also other city employees, receive equity training, and see if programs can be developed to be offered to the community at large.

We also need to make sure that we address the underlying issues of poverty, crime, housing woes, and the rest. Crime is often driven by poverty, and poor housing, and lack of resources, and if we want to find alternatives to incarceration, we need to fund those alternatives. It's great to say we want people to get treatment, not incarceration, but if we don't provide any resources for them to get that treatment, we are just setting them up for failure.

19. If the city could adopt an ordinance concerning the civil rights of members of the LGBTQ community, what provisions should that ordinance contain? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

The ordinance should contain provisions protecting LGBTQ+ members from discrimination in all areas. Right now it's unclear if Federal and State anti-Discrimination laws protect these members (with way too many arguing they don't), so we'd want provisions providing the same protections against discrimination and unequal treatment to LGBTQ+ members as are currently provided to people based on race, age, gender, ethnicity, disability, national origin, or religion (the Federally protected classes).

20. What can the city do to enhance its capacity to facilitate the reintegration of justice-involved individuals into our community, including removing barriers and providing economic opportunities for justice-involved individuals? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

The City needs to support and expand resources for the reintegration of individuals who are coming out of the Justice System/Jail/Prison. The City needs to make sure their own hiring practices do not restrict the ability of these individuals to seek City employment, and the City needs to encourage other employers to do the same. We also need to make sure we are providing adequate funding and resources to the programs and groups working with these individuals on a variety of issues, not only job-training, but also making sure there is help for issues that let to them becoming involved with the Justice System in the first place – mental health, substance abuse, housing, alternatives to incarceration. We need to look for comprehensive solutions to help improve the overall wellness of the community, and these individuals who are reintegrating.

Personal

21. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense? If your answer to this question is yes, please describe the charge or charges, the circumstances, and the outcome. *Please limit your answer to 200 words.*

No.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please do not forget to send us your resume or a brief biographical statement.

Daniel A. Meier
Resume

daniel@meierlegal.com

BAR ADMISSIONS:

North Carolina (Aug. 2002); Florida (May 2003); U.S. District Court – Middle District, NC (Apr. 2004);
and U.S. District Court – Eastern District, NC (May 2004).

EDUCATION:

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law, Chapel Hill, NC.
Juris Doctor: May 2002.

University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL.
Master of Science in Health Administration: Mar. 1998.
Master of Business Administration: Mar. 1997.

University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN.
Bachelor of Business Administration – Finance: Jan. 1995.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE:

Meier Law Group PLLC, Durham, NC.
Owner – small law firm: Apr. 2006 – present.

Maxwell, Freeman & Bowman, PA, Durham, NC.
Part-time Research Assistant: Jul. 2001 – 2015; *Summer Associate:* May 2001 – Jul. 2001.

Michael W. Strickland & Associates, PA, Raleigh, NC.
Associate: Aug. 2005 – Mar. 2006.

Browne, Flebotte, Wilson & Webb, PLLC, Durham, NC.
Associate: May 2003 – Aug. 2005.

North Carolina Court of Appeals, Raleigh, NC.
Extern: Jan. 2002 – Apr. 2002.

Medical Center of Arlington, Arlington, TX (part of HCA).
Asst. Administrator: Jul. 1998 – Aug. 1999.

Methodist Healthcare System of San Antonio, San Antonio, TX (part of HCA).
Admin. Resident: Jul. 1997 – Jul. 1998.

University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL.
Graduate Asst., Dept. of Health Services Admin.: Aug. 1995 – Mar. 1997.

Diagnostic Health Services, Inc., Dallas, TX.
Asst. to VP of Finance: Dec. 1994 – Aug. 1995; *Intern:* summers, 1992, 1993, and 1994.