

# PA-PAC Questionnaire for Mayor and City Council Candidates – 2017

Candidate's name: Tracy D Drinker

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

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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 300 words.**

*Of all the issues confronting city government, the single issue that's most important to me is the lack of affordable housing. Our infrastructure is flourishing and the growth in the central part of Durham has been enhanced. However, we've failed in our formulation of a plan for extended growth in the surrounding communities. We've made an attempt to work on the affordable housing issue, however, we need to take a more aggressive stance to make it happen. We need to come together with our non-profit organizations and DHA to assure the people of Durham are unified and see that the City Council and Mayor's office cares for their well being also.*

**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? Where in our community do you see opportunities for city government to address the racial wealth gap? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

*In order to lift the wages of the lowest paid workers in Durham, we must first ask: are we, as a government, collaborating with the right entities? We must make sure to connect with nonprofits, educational institutes, and federal grants or foundations that are willing to help. The communities in Durham are in need of developmental programs for training in jobs that pay enough to support a family. We are also going to need our workforce and education system to assist in helping parents to be able to go to school and work, as well as a system in which our children can thrive. Education of financial services, emphasis on home-ownership and also business ownership are the areas of concentration in which the racial wealth gap can begin to flourish.*

**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 of different wealth and income levels equitably? Please explain and cite examples. Please limit your answer to 500 words.**

*My interest and commitment to public amenities is one that it enhances the quality of life of our communities. If and wherever these enhancements are warranted I would definitely suggest having community workshops so that the people of that community could be a big part of the planning process. Instead of immediately looking into a tax hike, Special District Financing or even Land Value taxes should be looked into. Special District Financing involves issuance of tax-exempt bonds to finance public improvement and Land Value tax varies on the extent of the use of the land involved. Raising property taxes would be a last resort.*

**4. How should the city measure the benefits and costs of incentives to promote development especially as those benefits and costs affect low-income residents of Durham? How would you use these measurements when deciding to vote for or against a proposed incentive? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

*Giving developers the right to build extra units of residential housing on fixed parcels of land if the developer sets aside a certain percentage of the units for affordable housing is an incentive that I believe we are already using. I have also given thought to consultation on a land value tax program. This would help developers become more of a part of the community even though most developers are outside entities.*

**5. What actions should the city take to expand job creation and job quality? In your answer, please comment on the city's potential involvement in entrepreneurship, worker-owned cooperatives, and union organizing. Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

*The city has moved in the right direction with the Mayor's PRI Job Task Force and the Youth Work Program when it comes to investigating the needs of improvement in creating avenues to improve the job market. However, we must also become more aggressive in our stance on developing more programs to instruct on nonprofits, entrepreneurship, grant writing, something as simple as credit assessments and the stock market through the Durham Public Schools, NCCU, Durham Tech and Duke University. By bringing in the light rail connector, improving the bus, bike and trail routes, to include maybe a north and south bus hub, to help with transportation to make sure our citizens have easier access to their jobs. With the rail system comes more productive and better paying jobs to the area.*

### **Housing, City Planning, and Neighborhoods**

**6. What does "gentrification" mean to you? What, if anything, should be done about it? How, if at all, is the issue of gentrification implicated in the Planning Department's current review of zoning in East Durham, the proposed creation of an Alston Avenue Design District, and the redevelopment of the former Fayette Place property? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

*Gentrification to me means the revitalization of a poor neighborhood into a more affluent one for those in the upper or middle class. It appears to be a quick fix for those who can afford it in regards to housing and those who cannot are either pushed out or bought out with no affordable housing or living space. The new developments should allow more citizens who live in the communities to continue to live and flourish there. However the majority of the homes/condos built have become overpriced and continue to become a face of people who come from communities, cities and states outside of the known historical Black Wall Street many grew up knowing. Our diversity has grown and Durham is truly a melting pot. However, the people who built the city are the ones being pushed out. Each zoning proposal to include East Durham, Alston Avenue and Fayette Place should be looked at and reviewed on an individual basis as long as there are plans for affordable housing connected to any and all plans.*

**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? Illustrate your answer with a recent controversial zoning case. Did the city decide the case correctly? Please limit your answer to 500 words.**

*The city should accomplish a safe community environment, affordable housing choices, and a diverse and economically sound cultural experience. The principles and considerations that will guide my decision in zoning cases and other development issues are to include;*

*Making development decisions, sustainable, predictable, fair and cost effective*

*Preservation of our city landmarks*

*The creation of employment opportunities, to include, entrepreneurship, nonprofit market shares*

*Encouragement of community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions*

*The most recent zoning case that I can recall is the need/want of a Publix in the Northern Durham area (Guess Rd./Latta Rd.). A decision was made on the case to deny construction and rezoning. A project by Florida-based Halvorsen Development Corp., was slated to have a 66,000-square-foot retail center anchored by Publix, plus about 60 single-family housing lots. The property is currently zoned for suburban residential development, so any commercial or mixed-use development on the lot would need additional city approval. In my opinion the city made the correct decision.*

**8. Does the city adequately fund its affordable housing plan? If no, what funding are you willing to fight for in the next budget for affordable homes for lower income Durham renters, homebuyers and homeowners? Where will the money come from? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

*At this time Durham is working diligently with DHA, Nonprofit organizations such as, Habitat for Humanity, the Whitted School Project, CASA and the Durham Affordable Housing Coalition to assist in affordable housing projects. The Durham Housing Authority has been working even harder in assisting those with vouchers to make a smoother and time efficient transition.*

*The City's Five-Year Housing Plan is built around three overarching goals which reflect the City's commitment of working with the Durham community to protect the most vulnerable and preserve diversity at the neighborhood level. Those goals are:*

*Goal 1: Address the City's greatest housing needs by preserving and expanding affordable rental housing units and vouchers serving Durham residents, with a focus on households below 50% AMI*

*Goal 2: Maintain affordability and protect low-income Durham residents (especially households below 50% AMI) in neighborhoods experiencing significant price appreciation, with an initial focus on Southside and northeast central Durham*

*Goal 3: Engage the larger Durham community to make affordable housing a citywide priority*

**9. Under what circumstances would you vote to approve a rezoning that does not include commitments to meet the city's affordable housing goal? If you answered yes, how would you ensure that the city meet its goal? Please illustrate your answer with a recent case. Please limit your answer to 500 words.**

*At this point there is no circumstance of which I would approve a rezoning that does not include commitments to the city's affordable housing goals. Affordable housing is the most pressing element within the city's strategic plan.*

### **City Finances, Capital Improvements, Transportation, and City Services**

**10. If the city needs more revenue for a basic public service, do you, in general, favor a new or increased user fee or a property tax increase? Residential trash pickup is an example of a basic service. Please limit your answer to 250 words.**

*If the city needs more revenue for a basic public service I would be more in favor of an increase of user fees.*

**11. Do you support or oppose Durham's plans for rail-based transit? If federal funding for the project is denied, what must Durham do about transportation, urban planning, housing, taxes, and infrastructure? Please limit your answer to 500 words.**

*I am definitely for the rail-based transit. The city has agreed to build affordable housing along the rail route. However if federal funding is denied for the project, we can check with the Department of Transportation for grants, the federal Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TFIA) to quickly begin construction, expanding advertising on train cars and buses. possibly selling naming rights and sponsorships or even entering into partnership with a private company will help finance part of the project.*

**12. Has the city's investment in bus transportation reached the population which needs it most? What else can be done to improve bus transportation access and affordability? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

*I would agree that it's reached the population, but not all at all times needed. I think if the Go Durham Transit system had a hub in North Durham, another in Southern Durham the connections would be on time as well as more available to the areas and citizens who truly need it that aren't reached on a consistent basis.*

**13. Would you support a property tax relief program, for example, a circuit breaker, to reduce the tax burden on homeowners with limited resources and help them stay in their homes? If your answer is yes, please describe the program or programs you would support. If your answer is no, please explain. Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

*Even though localities are frequently reimbursed for tax revenue foregone, the efficiency (and fairness) of the programs is compromised by reliance upon the homeowners to initiate applications for program eligibility. Even when percentages are employed in formulas rather than fixed amounts, it becomes difficult to incorporate any semblance of equity in such a far-reaching and broadly applicable program. Where renters' eligibility qualifies, any estimates of what proportion of a tenant's payments constitute the tax component is largely a matter of guess. The difficulty in maintaining any integrity in the circuit-breaker program as explained by H. William Batt, Ph.D.*

### **Policing and Public Safety**

**14. Is there a trust problem between the people of Durham and the police department? Are you satisfied with the department's 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 believe there is more of a mistrust issue between the police department and city hall more so than the police of Durham and it's citizens. With all that's going on within our nation and seeing the Stop and Frisk policy with NYPD being struck down, Durham Police Department uses the SBI-122 Traffic Stop Report. This report helps the department to track officers making vehicle stops throughout the city. The use of body cameras has also helped as a deterrent to excessive force by officers and wrongful complaints by civilians. Durham is in a good place with it's community vs. officer mentality. Each District is becoming more involved in Community Affairs.*

**15. To what degree, if any, should the city cooperate with U.S. Department of Immigration & Customs Enforcement? Should the city become a sanctuary city? If your answer is yes, for whom should the city provide sanctuary and by what means should sanctuary be provided? If your answer is no, please explain your reasons. In either case, please be specific. Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

*Cooperation with the U.S. Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement has been ongoing for over 15 years now. ICE normally will request that an immigrant be turned over to them if they are arrested and convicted of a crime, are gang related in their activities or pose a threat to National Security. Durham is a melting pot filled with a variety of cultures and religions and should be a sanctuary city.*

**16. 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.**

*Should the city allocate more, less or about the same money to policing is a good question. I feel that only recently we have reached out to the police department. This is due to concerns in our losing police candidates as well as, police officers to other Law enforcement entities who were paying more and offering take home cars. That has been addressed with the recent raise, however, there is still a problem with the complexion of the department itself. I propose that we start either an auxiliary police force or police cadet program. This would consist of persons who either live in Durham or are from Durham. They will enter the program at the age of 18 and work as a foot patrol squad working in the Central Durham location. This will not only free up some of the support from District 5 but will prepare those who at the age of 21 may want to continue as police officers for the City of Durham. The incentive of the program would either be a paid or paid and plus education towards a degree. By the time they turn 21 they will be BLET Certified and already know the job as well as, have a great rapport with the citizens of Durham.*

### **Civil Rights**

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

*The three things that comes to the forefront, that directly impacts or is directly impacted by, race inequity is the disparity in education, wages and housing. If we as a city cannot come together on an educational curriculum*

*that keeps the children of this city engaged in their classwork, parents involved in their activities and teachers paid for actually teaching in a productive environment. The cornerstone of the framework will fail. How can our democratic ideals stand for all men are created equal if it doesn't happen within our school system.*

*The proper education is not only reserved for schools but also in the workplace. This is an area in which we must continually give training and incentives for a job well done. Our wages at this time are not conducive to the cost of living within the brand new and progressive Durham. How can we have affordable living for all when apartments in the central downtown district may start at \$1,200.00 and the housing outside the district for a two bedroom with comfortable living quarters at \$850.00.*

*I can complain even more about the housing disparity that evolves from the two previous issues of impact, but I believe we are moving in the right direction. The city is moving fast however it's leaving those behind and pushed out of their communities that they have lived in for many years due to depreciation of their quality of life and image portrayed in many of their minds that the city doesn't care.*

*We must all work together to rebuild that connect in the city because this is a multicultural melting pot and we can do it together.*

**18. 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.**

*Under the compromise for HB2, cities cannot pass local ordinances. If they could then comprehensive nondiscrimination in employment services, housing for sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.*

### **Personal and Political**

**19. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence other than a minor traffic 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 250 words.**

*No I have never been charged or convicted of a criminal offence.*

**20. For whom did you vote in the 2012 and 2016 presidential and gubernatorial elections? For whom did you vote in the 2014 U. S. Senate election? Please limit your answer to 100 words.**

*In the 2012 and 2016 Presidential and Gubernatorial Election I voted for President Barak Obama and I believe Floyd B. McKissick Jr. for Senator*