

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

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. They should be generous. Do not feel obliged to exhaust the limit for each question.

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 July 30, 2017, 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 July 30 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: _Sylvester Williams_____

Office for which you have filed for election (circle one): Mayor / City Council Ward 1 2 3

Address: ___404 Sparella Street, Durham, NC, 27703

E-mail Address: ___sylbar@hotmail.com

Phone: ___919-596-2682

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.*

Growth in the city of Durham has been uneven. The need for infrastructure to handle the downtown growth includes road improvement and adequate parking. With growth comes affordable housing problems. In the budget for 2017, 25% of the budget or \$45 million is set aside for reserves. The state of North Carolina only requires 8% of the budget be set aside for reserves. While there is a \$.01 tax increase raising about \$2.7 million for affordable housing, the reserves could be cut in half while maintaining the state's requirements for reserves and build additional housing for low income. Additional help will come from the state of North Carolina. In July 2012 the State of North Carolina agreed to an 8-year plan to develop

community-integrated housing and services for 3,000 individuals with mental illness living in Adult Care Homes (ACHs). The plan was the State's attempt to address a July 28, 2011 Letter of Findings issued by the US Department of Justice (USDOJ) which found North Carolina in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). That letter was issued in response to a complaint filed on July 26, 2010 by Disability Rights NC alleging North Carolina's practice of warehousing people with mental illness in ACHs violated the ADA's integration mandate.

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.*

Development of downtown Durham, where the bulk of the resources have gone, has been on bars and restaurants. Jobs in these sectors of the economy tend to be lower paying jobs. Durham needs me to guide and bridge the divide by building greater partnerships with the school systems to bring back vocational classes which allow someone without a college education to make well above the median income for the city of Durham by learning a trade. I have talked to general contractors and builders who are saying that it is difficult to find skilled laborers in this booming market.

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.*

We do not need to raise the taxes. The current system of raising taxes has not benefited the low to medium income citizens of Durham. Why would there be a public/private combination of \$1.2 billion for downtown development if it does not increase the revenue base. The Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce website shows that for 10 jobs there is an incentive up to \$1 million and for 25 jobs an incentive up to \$2 million. I asked the city manager at the National Night Out event how much in incentives had been given to the development of downtown Durham. He could not give me an answer. Before taxes are increased we need to re-evaluate. Why should the city continue to increase taxes with the amount of reserves increasing, without knowing the impact of incentives in generating revenues and with the lower to middle income homes feeling the greatest impact from tax increases. I live in East Durham and CR Woods Park is being supported by my church. If the church had not interceded the building where church services, weddings, birthday celebrations and community awareness events, would have been demolished.

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.*

See number 3. Until we get answers it is impossible to determine the effectiveness of incentives. My experience as a financial analyst gives me insight to how developers take advantage of the system. Duke Realty and Kane Realty built the CapTrust Building and opened it in 2009. The building was sold to another developer in 2013. If we want to increase revenues in Durham we need to focus on the residents of Durham. Affordable housing will bring in people that buy locally and pay taxes. Developers are capitalist and have no commitment to the citizens of Durham.

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.*

Incentive should be given to businesses to go to economically depressed neighborhoods. These incentives would be tiered based on the number of employees representing the demographics of the underemployed.

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 is selling out to the highest bidder, through taxation, eminent domain, road building and zoning requirements. All of the aforementioned have been used. Pan Pan Diner, Scarborough Funeral Home, Hillside High School, East End Connector, widening of Alston Avenue, Hayti, the selling of Rolling Hills for \$1 to McCormack Baron Salazar and Fayette Place. There are currently two Title VI Complaints before the Federal Government dealing with this level of discrimination. I am in correspondence with FHWA on one of the complaints.

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.*

City zoning should meet the needs of the people. Where I live, Angier Avenue has been zoned light industrial, even though homes and houses have been there for over five decades. Because of the zoning there is a lack of housing development on this section of Angier Avenue. The place of my home church was declared a wetland area after we had been there about 5 decades. This required us contacting the state, county and city. Although we reached a satisfactory conclusion, there were differing opinions on the validity of our requests.

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.*

No. Cut the reserves. Work with the state of North Carolina with Target Housing. Partner with developers to build family homes with tax incentives.

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.*

The city's affordable housing goal is too low. \$2.7 million increase for residents of Durham is not serious when you consider the amount of money given to developers.

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.*

Why do you insist on raising taxes. The church that I pastor has helped to build orphanages and churches around the world. There is enough money being generated in tax revenues without any tax increases. The city of Durham needs someone astute in finances as my self to break through the myth that the only way things can happen is that you raise taxes.

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.*

The population in Durham and surrounding areas is not dense enough to support light rail. Charlotte and New Orleans both tried it and are struggling.

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.*

Instead of light rail we can improve bus transportation. Frequency and destination need to be improved.

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.*

Yes. Southside is an excellent example. Any homeowner in a house over 10 years old would have a moratorium placed on any tax increases.

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.*

Dallas Duke, had FBI training and worked with the SBI. He stated that 65% of police officers are either incompetent or corrupt. One way to correct the perception is to hire locally, through incentive if needed. A person from the community is more likely to build trust with the community. One reason why I have heard that more police officers do not live in Durham is because of housing affordability. Once we address affordable housing, we also address having a better police department.

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.*

Everyone should abide by the same rules and regulations. Some see sanctuary cities as a way to get cheap labor and undermine the legal citizens in Durham looking for a job.

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.*

More. See answer above.

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.*

UNC Chapel Hill Planning Department showed that road building in Durham has been discriminatory in application. The use of eminent domain through low income and minority neighborhoods is still a problem as attested to by Anthony Foxx, the former mayor of Charlotte and former Secretary of Transportation for the Obama administration, The school system had a Title VI Complaint filed in 2013. As the state of North Carolina apologized in 2007 for institutional racism, the city of Durham must be willing to do the same.

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.*

Civil rights do not apply to the bedroom but to unfair treatment in the public. . Transgender is considered a mental problem and therefore does not fall under civil rights unless a person is denied access to mental health care . J Edgar Hoover, the head of the FBI, have always had rights, and he would fit in the category.

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

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.*

I voted for neither presidential candidate.