

## People's Alliance PAC 2008 Questionnaire for Durham Board of County Commissioners Candidates

Candidate's Name Doug Wright

1. Do you think that the County Government has exhibited an adequate response to the drought and water crisis? **No** If not, what else could be done and how would it be paid for? **The county has taken some positive steps toward conservation by trying to set the example such as putting low flow devices in all facilities. Conversation has begun about moving us towards becoming a drought resistant community by utilizing drought resistant landscaping, new rules and policies locally and statewide as well as regional planning. In trying to appear pro-active and assign blame, we alienated our city council members with inappropriate jargon when absolute cooperation is needed. We should engage first on a plan to educate our community about water conservation in a manner that helps to begin a real paradigm shift in water usage patterns. The cost could and should be shared with the city and small enough at this point to be absorbed into the current budget even if we have to tap into fund balance. Building restrictions such as landscaping and effective planning need to be implemented immediately and would be absorbed into the cost of development.**
2. Are you aware that the Department of Homeland Security has chosen Durham/Granville counties as one of five possible sites for a facility to study dangerous and poorly known viruses and diseases? **Yes** Do you support the location of this facility in our community? **No** When economic development and public health and well-being are in a potential conflict, where does the burden of proof lie? **It is the responsibility of government, federal, state, and or local to ensure public health is protected, therefore lies the burden of proof.**
3. The Durham City and County governments' Measuring our Progress report of 2005 focused on 8 measurements. For each, please state Durham County's biggest current challenge—and the single first thing you would try to do as a Commissioner to solve that challenge. One short sentence for each challenge, please! This is an overview question. State the challenge briefly, and briefly state your first method of approaching that challenge.
  - Children are ready for and succeeding in school  
**Early intervention is the absolute key to ensuring children are ready for and succeeding in school. Fund and support the training of more Children Community Teams, these are citizens that have high visibility with children, they are trained to recognize children in crisis and help them to navigate the system and get the help they need. Team members are volunteers, the training is intensive but affordable and I believe the results will be invaluable.**
  - Durham citizens enjoy a healthy environment  
**Water resources and quality of that water is the biggest current challenge. Enact policies and rules that will push us towards becoming drought resistant and thoughtful planners, ensure developers adhere to regulations.**
  - Durham's citizens enjoy a community that is vibrant, rich in aesthetic beauty and embraces and promotes its cultural heritage  
**Neighborhood blight such as run down homes, vacant lots, etc. Work**

effectively and openly with neighborhood associations, owners, and the city to redevelop and improve areas in distress.

- Every citizen in Durham has access to adequate, safe and affordable housing  
The lack of supportive housing for people with disabilities. Work with our local non-profits, state and federal government grant opportunities, with local developers and neighborhoods to increase the amount of supportive housing, strive to eliminate the NIMBY ( not in my back yard ) stigma attached to the neediest of our community.
  - Durham enjoys a prosperous economy  
Balancing continued growth while maintaining quality of life. Maintain an open mind and weigh all information thoroughly about developments, incentives, and conservation when making decisions about future growth and development.
  - Durham citizens are healthy  
Substance abuse is the number one health problem in the City of Medicine. Make sure increasing substance abuse treatment is kept on the front burner, understanding that for every dollar we spend in prevention and treatment we save over seven dollars in other related costs.
  - All Durham citizens are safe  
Increased gang activity and the related crime. Support our court system and accountability for criminals, insist upon services for substance abusers, and intervene early.
  - Durham citizens enjoy sustainable thriving neighborhoods with efficient and well-maintained infrastructure  
Efficient and well maintained infrastructure is the challenge. Fund the needs in a responsible manner as well as ensure the infrastructure is there before supporting further development.
4. Does the above imply that these statements do not apply to residents who are not citizens (i.e. non-citizen immigrants)? **No** What challenges does the County face with regard to these immigrants/residents, and what policies are needed? **The cost of serving anyone in our community is always a challenge, that doesn't mean you turn a blind eye to any group. Our federal government needs to find a solution to the immigration issue on a national scale. Public officials are sworn to uphold the law and certainly cannot enact policies that violate state or federal law, so whether someone is legal or not does present significant dilemmas. No one should be denied crisis services, basic human rights must come into play.**
5. How do you think that the City and County can work together better?**Administratively** Would you support some form of City - County government consolidation? **Yes** If not, why not? If so, what are the obstacles to it and how should they be mitigated or overcome? **Egos and turf battles are two of the top reasons people or governments don't work well together. Division of power and authority are real challenges that could and should be worked through. Management and administration consolidation could produce significant savings. It truly comes down to the will of our community and its leaders, it wouldn't be an easy or comfortable process but one that could be beneficial to our community.**
6. What part can the county play in providing a safety net for the most profoundly mentally ill persons, given the difficulties with state privatization? **First it needs to**

be noted that " mental health reform " or state privatization effects people with mental illness, developmental disabilities and substance abuse disorders. Each of these disability areas deserve our attention and concern. We are expanding Durham Center Access, our front door so to speak as well as our detox and crisis services, that should open on August 1. We need to encourage our state leaders to not open up General Statute 122-C in the short session. There are three studies currently going on, one of the Local Management Entities, one on the Division of Medical Assistance, and one on the Division of Mental Health. These need to be completed before any major policy changes are made again. In Durham, we are ahead of the curve, having implemented over twenty best or evidence based practices over the last year, more than any other LME in the state. There is a big difference between what happened with a specific service, " community support " and reform as a whole. The Secretary of Health and Human Services has admitted his office made decisions that caused the fiasco dealing with community support and provider endorsement. Utilization management for medicaid services was outsourced by the state in 2006. That was a mistake that I personally opposed (see Herald/Sun guest columnist on March 27, 2006) and the Durham Center through the county sued and tried to stop. The former Secretary and Governor forced through this failed effort without forethought or planning. Some changes with the law need to happen and the Durham Center has positioned itself as a state leader by embracing the needs of our consumers as our driving force. We must maintain local control and keep a close eye on this process over the final months of Governor Easley's term and how our next governor will deal with the challenges we face.

7. In order to raise much-needed revenue for capital needs and operating funds, do you favor enacting a land transfer tax? **No** An increase in the sales tax? **No** Both? **No** Would you support placing these on the ballot for county voters this fall or in 2009? **I see both of these taxes as optional. Raising taxes should only come after a thorough analysis of our budget. In a worse case scenario I would favor the land transfer tax first, then the sales tax. I couldn't answer whether I would support putting them on a ballot outside of a budget process.**
8. Do you support increased mass transit? **Yes** If so, in what form and how would you propose funding it? If not, why not? **Regional rail, with a sales tax increase.**
9. The County has provided economic incentives to lure new companies and new jobs to the area. Do you support the current County strategy? **Yes** Do you have suggestions to enhance this strategy, or would you restrict/reduce it? **It seems to be working fairly well. Certainly every project must have a thorough cost/benefit analysis done before moving forward.** Do you support the County providing incentives to Greenfire and Scientific Properties for their current proposals? **Yes** If so, should the County provide similar incentives in the future? **Yes** Should the County impose certain requirements, e.g., require the creation and maintenance of a certain number of jobs? **Yes** If so, why, and if not, why not? **Every agreement should have requirements that make it beneficial to our community and not a burden. I would love to see jobs as a part of those agreements but not all could meet that criteria.**
10. What is the primary issue facing Durham County in its land use policies? How

would you address this issue? Because my main focus has been human services or as a friend of mine says, "human capital", this area is a real challenge for me. For me to truly understand what policies are at issue, I must go through the process multiple times and see where the policies conflict with actual practice and why. My main concerns with land use are conservation, sustainability, and infrastructure. There are areas in our community that could benefit greatly from economic development and that has to be a part of the equation. I am currently educating myself by reading the UDO, asking a lot of questions, and reading a lot of e-mails so I can be an informed commissioner and hit the ground running in 2009.

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