

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

As soon as possible, or at least by March 18, please return questionnaire to: Milo Pyne, 806 Vickers Ave. Durham, NC 27701-3143; or email to liatris@mindspring.com (email preferred)

Candidate's Name Ellen Reckhow

1. Do you think that the County Government has exhibited an adequate response to the drought and water crisis? If not, what else could be done and how would it be paid for?

Yes. As a large water user, we instituted many water saving initiatives several months ago. We have drafted a County Water Conservation Policy with a goal of reducing water usage by 30 - 50%. In addition, we distributed water saving devices to more than 1000 county employees free of charge.

In December, I wrote Governor Easley a letter asking the state to take a more active role in leading the water conservation effort. Some of my suggestions were included in his recent plan of action. I also included several ideas in my State of the County Address in January that we plan to pursue such as encouraging low impact design storm water control measures which allow for groundwater recharge.

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? Do you support the location of this facility in our community? When economic development and public health and well-being are in a potential conflict, where does the burden of proof lie?

Given current information, I am not in favor of the proposal. However, I am waiting for a report from our Environmental Affairs Board which agreed to study the issue. We should always err on the side of caution in favor of public health and safety. I have concerns about the safe disposal of solid waste from the facility and security issues, among other issues.

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
One-third of our young people do not graduate from high school. We need to take a comprehensive approach to reconnect our youth as outlined in my State of the County Address (www.durhamcountync.gov). The first thing on the list that I would focus on is expanding programs birth to 5 since there is increasing evidence that those years are critical for child development. The Durham Connects initiative that we just kicked off will involve the hiring of 20 public health nurses to touch every newborn in Durham, assess the family's needs, and connect them with appropriate services if necessary.
- Durham citizens enjoy a healthy environment

The lack of transportation options is a major problem leading to over reliance on the automobile. I will be advocating for adoption of the transit plan that comes out of the Special Transit Advisory Committee (STAC) process.

- Durham's citizens enjoy a community that is vibrant, rich in aesthetic beauty and embraces and promotes its cultural heritage

We do not have sufficient resources to adequately fund the arts. I will continue to work for a dedicated source of funding to implement our cultural arts master plan.

- Every citizen in Durham has access to adequate, safe and affordable housing

We need to implement the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness and expand other housing initiatives. I would like to see us have the legislative authority to use inclusionary zoning, a proposal that we pursued a number of years ago. It has tremendous potential to increase the stock of affordable housing without requiring public resources.

- Durham enjoys a prosperous economy

Approximately, 1/3 of our citizens qualify for a social service program. I am working with the Economic Empowerment Sub-Committee of the Prosperous Economy RBA group to start a strong economic empowerment/financial stability initiative to increase incomes through greater filing for the EITC, build wealth, and promote asset creation. We plan to roll out a pilot with County, and hopefully City and School system employees, this year and then broaden to the broader population next year.

- Durham citizens are healthy

Approximately 40,000 citizens are uninsured in Durham. I will be working actively in the coming year to implement Project Access, a program that I helped to craft, to provide better access to medical services for our uninsured.

- All Durham citizens are safe

Too many of our young people are involved in gangs and crime. It is essential that we implement the 45 recommendations from the recent Gang Assessment.

- Durham citizens enjoy sustainable thriving neighborhoods with efficient and well-maintained infrastructure

Capital facilities are not always available to meet the needs of our growing community and are not always well maintained. The City and County need to adopt capital improvement programs that not only provide for new facilities in a timely manner but provide for ongoing maintenance.

4. Does the above imply that these statements do not apply to residents who are not citizens (i.e. non-citizen immigrants)? What challenges does the County face with regard to these immigrants/residents, and what policies are needed?

I interpret the word citizens broadly to include all residents living in our community. The main challenges we face are in providing bilingual services in our departments and health care for the uninsured. Our school system faces increasing need for special services to serve non-English speaking children.

5. How do you think that the City and County can work together better? Would you support some form of City - County government consolidation? If not, why not? If so, what are the obstacles to it and how should they be mitigated or overcome?

We have put in place a number of efforts to allow for the county and city to work together better. The managers meet monthly and the Mayor and Chair and Managers meet with the Superintendent and Chair of the School Board monthly. We also have regular City –County meetings. The only frustration is that there is not always adequate follow-up on what was discussed leading to hold up on joint initiatives.

I believe it may be time to review whether more of our services could be provided jointly -- such as economic development -- and whether we should move toward City/County consolidation. The main obstacles would be: how to consolidate law enforcement; how far to extend the boundaries of the city or urban services district; and the makeup of the governing body.

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?

Durham County has initiated adult system of care modeled after our award winning system of care for children. It will provide wrap-around services in a holistic manner for adults who are dually diagnosed and the homeless with multiple problems. In fact, the Durham Center has a reasonably good track record operating under the reform that the state mandated. However, two years ago, we had the rug pulled out from us when the state took away our ability to review Medicaid cases and decide on appropriate treatment and instead gave it to a third party vendor Value Options. That has had a number of negative impacts.

7. In order to raise much-needed revenue for capital needs and operating funds, do you favor enacting a land transfer tax? An increase in the sales tax? Both? Would you support placing these on the ballot for county voters this fall or in 2009?

After things settle out with the Medicaid swap with the state and the fiscal implications associated with it, I favor a broad community discussion about the two revenue options and determination of the best course for the community. Depending on the recommendation, I could envision a referendum in the Fall of 2009 associated with the next school bond.

8. Do you support increased mass transit? If so, in what form and how would you propose funding it? If not, why not?

I do support increased mass transit. It is essential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and foster a smart growth pattern. Expanded bus service should occur and development of a regional rail network as the Special Transit Advisory Committee (STAC) recommended are appropriate. I could support the funding sources that the STAC recommended along with impact fees on new development in the transit corridors and an increase on the excise tax on the sale of new cars.

9. The County has provided economic incentives to lure new companies and new jobs to the area. Do you support the current County strategy? Do you have suggestions to enhance this strategy, or would you restrict/reduce it? Do you support the County providing incentives to Greenfire and Scientific Properties for their current proposals? If so, should the County provide similar incentives in the future? Should the County impose certain requirements, e.g., require the creation and maintenance of a certain number of jobs? If so, why, and if not, why not?

I support the policy we have adopted since we have many checks and balances in place. The incentives are not paid until the investment is made and/or the jobs are created. In addition, we have a clawback provision so that if the company leaves the community or discontinues the jobs during the first ten years they owe us either all or a portion of the

money back depending on the time frame. We also have a provision to hire a consultant at the developer's expense to review the proforma to determine if the incentive is needed. That approach will be used for Greenfire and Scientific Properties before any incentives are considered.

10. What is the primary issue facing Durham County in its land use policies? How would you address this issue?

We must actively promote sustainable development. I had a list of initiatives in my State of the County Address including expanding transit services, implementing the Greenhouse Gas Action Plan, making Durham a drought resistant community, encouraging walkable mixed use developments, preserving open space and farmland, among others. I am hoping we will make more progress on them now that a sustainability manager has been hired.

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