



2019 Raleigh City Council and Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

The Raleigh Police Accountability Community Taskforce (PACT), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of North Carolina, Carolina Justice Policy Center, and El Pueblo would like to provide voters with information about where Raleigh's 2019 Mayoral and City Council candidates stand on important issues of police accountability and oversight. Our goal is to educate voters about local candidates' positions on local policing issues.

All candidates for City Council and Mayor are receiving this questionnaire. Responses will be made publicly available in an effort to hold candidates accountable to their communities' fundamental need for justice, safety, and respect.

Please submit all responses on or before **August 27, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.**

Save a copy of this document and type your responses under each question, using additional space as needed.

Email your completed questionnaire to: **sbirdsong@acluofnc.org**.

Candidate Name: Jonathan Melton

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1. **PACT has called for the City Council to pass a resolution asserting the Council's public support for a Community Oversight Board of local police with investigatory, subpoena, and disciplinary power. We propose focusing our community's energy on securing Raleigh's authority to create a board with subpoena power and later convening dialogues with community stakeholders to discuss details of the board's structure. The Council's support of an external Community Oversight Board with meaningful authority would communicate that we want to work together toward a system where people's concerns would be justly investigated.**

Do you support the creation of a Community Oversight Board that has the power to investigate, subpoena, and discipline police officers when there is injustice?

Response (Please give a clear "Yes" or "No" and any explanation):

Yes, I support a police oversight board. Police put themselves in harms way on behalf of the city, and I have immense respect for all law enforcement officials, but there have been recent incidents which suggest that law enforcement should be more accountable to the citizens they pledge to protect. The process by which police incidents are recorded and officers disciplined could be more transparent. The city should be willing to admit that the law enforcement process is not perfect, that it can be biased against certain citizens, and that there is more we can do in terms of sensitivity and conflict de-escalation training. I believe there is a benefit to regular training and updates on best practices when it comes to city law enforcement.

2. **For so many people, particularly Black and Latino residents, a routine encounter with a police officer can become a traumatic experience that results in unnecessary, invasive searches. This happens because the individual doesn't know that they have the right to refuse a consent search of their person, vehicle, or home. RPD has created a consent-to-search form that states an individual's right to refuse a search, and RPD policy requires that an individual sign their consent before a vehicle or property search, but only requires written consent before individuals themselves are searched "where possible." It is unclear whether this policy is effectively enforced.**

Are you in favor of requiring Raleigh Police Department to require and enforce the use of consent-to-search forms prior to any search and pat down that is not based on probable cause?

Response (Please give a clear "Yes" or "No" and any explanation):

Yes. It goes without saying that this is the best procedure for keeping our city safe.

3. **While Raleigh has implemented a body-worn camera program, it lacks a key element to ensure it is fully implemented: disciplinary consequences for violating**

the policies. This was illustrated in the failure of the officer who killed Soheil Antonio Mojarrad to turn on his body-worn camera. In order to ensure proper use of body cameras, policies should specify additional training opportunities and disciplinary consequences for officers who repeatedly misuse body cameras and improperly handle recordings. Similar policies have been implemented in other cities, including Durham and Charlotte.

Do you support the development and implementation of an effective discipline policy to enforce the existing RPD body-worn camera program?

Response (Please give a clear “Yes” or “No” and any explanation):

Yes. Until we are able to provide law enforcement with automatically enabled body cameras, there must be repercussions for officers incorrectly handling or blatantly not making use of body camera technology. We should examine the policies that other cities comparable to Raleigh have put in place and bring law enforcement, city officials, and representatives from concerned communities to the discussion table to find a reasonable common ground.

- 4. Another tool for ensuring the consistent use of body-worn cameras is to use a camera system that automatically turns on when officers draw their weapon from its holster. The body-worn cameras that Raleigh has purchased from a company called WatchGuard apparently do not support this feature, and are turned on by the officer clicking a button on the camera.**

Do you support allocating funds to implement a holster activated body-worn camera system?

Response (Please give a clear “Yes” or “No” and any explanation):

Yes, It would make the role of law enforcement more accessible, and allow us to hold officers more accountable, if officers were not required to go through the manual step of turning on a body camera in a moment which might otherwise have many distracting factors. If technology exists that automatically turns a body camera on in situations where law enforcement engage with citizens, we should absolutely employ it.

- 5. Wake County’s jail has regularly been overcrowded, and at times as many as 90 percent of the people in the jail are being held before their day in court, and before being convicted of any crime. Studies show it can take months or years to recover from the job loss and other damage caused by even a day or two of incarceration. There are many ways to reduce the harm to the community of jailing people before trial. One option is to expand the use of citations in lieu of arrest for certain misdemeanor charges. This policy can not only prevent harmful pretrial incarceration, but it can also reduce jail overcrowding and save time and police department resources.**

Do you favor expanding the Raleigh Police Department’s use of citations in lieu of arrest for certain misdemeanor charges?

Response (Please give a clear “Yes” or “No” and any explanation):

Yes. The overcrowding of prisons is a burden on our criminal justice system, our law enforcement, and the taxpayers of Raleigh. I do think that RPD should prioritize and strongly consider use of citations rather than arrest and placement in prison, when the level of misdemeanor crime warrants it.

- 6. Are you in favor of requiring, and ensuring funding for, de-escalation training for all RPD officers? Do you support establishing consequences for officers who do not attempt to de-escalate prior to any use of force?***

Response (Please give a clear “Yes” or “No” and any explanation):

Yes, RPD officers should be required to take extensive de-escalation training upon joining the force, and should also be required to revisit the training and be updated on new practices and procedures as updates become available. The city has a responsibility for the safety of its citizens, a necessity of which is a fair, unbiased, well-staffed and well-funded police force. Officers should face consequences for excessive force if it can be proved that they did not attempt to de-escalate the situation. Please see my answer about body cameras.

- 7. Do you support promoting police transparency by requiring that RPD make the pictures, names, and ranks of RPD officers available on the city website?***

Response (Please give a clear “Yes” or “No” and any explanation):

Yes. Police transparency of any kind can only serve to make citizens of Raleigh feel more protected and more heard. I also think that officers should make an effort, and be rewarded for efforts, to get to know people who live and work in the areas they patrol. I do also understand that the RPD is currently understaffed. This does not excuse racial profiling or police brutality but does mean we need to keep our expectations of what they can accomplish in line with their resources. The city government, with support from the NCGA, should work to provide RPD with the staff and financial support so that they may engage the public in new and best practices which will make the public feel more protected.