

TOWN OF BARNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL ELECTION 2023**BarnstableWatch CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Thank you for stepping forward to serve the Barnstable community by seeking a seat on our Town Council in the fall 2023 election.

About BarnstableWatch

BarnstableWatch is a community organization initially founded to protect our housing stock for use as homes for locals rather than use by non-resident investors as more profitable short-term rentals. BarnstableWatch supports Cape rental traditions, not the 'Anything goes-Anywhere-All the time Airbnb approach.' Since its foundation, BarnstableWatch followers have asked for information about planning and zoning more broadly. BarnstableWatch therefore follows local public bodies and shares information.

About This Questionnaire

BarnstableWatch provides this opportunity to each candidate running for a Town Council seat in the fall 2023 election to provide 250-word responses to four planning and zoning-related questions below. The purpose of this questionnaire is to provide information that residents interested in planning and zoning may assess for themselves.

Please use this word document to respond to each of the four questions on the following pages. Please include your name and precinct number on each page. Please respond in 250 words or less, and via typewritten text (not handwritten). Please send your responses by 5:00 p.m. on Friday October 6, 2023 to BarnstableWatch@gmail.com.

BarnstableWatch will print all responses (up to 250 words), unedited, and without commentary, or endorsement, at www.BarnstableWatch.com. If you choose not to respond, BarnstableWatch will simply note that fact on its website.

BarnstableWatch will send all responses (up to 250 words) to its email list of many hundreds of residents across the Town of Barnstable. BarnstableWatch will not characterize responses or encourage its followers to vote for or against any candidate. If you choose not to respond, BarnstableWatch will simply note that fact in its mailing.

Thank you for responding to help voters make informed decisions.

CANDIDATE NAME PAUL GAGE _____

PRECINCT NUMBER 1 _____

Question No. 1

Thank you for being direct and concise in 250 words per question.

1. *Context:* The Town Council recently changed zoning in Downtown Hyannis to enable dense building development and increased building height by right.¹ It did this in the name of housing.² Despite housing needs, and the Town's consultant statement³ that the Town could regulate short-term rental use of new housing units in this zoning framework, the Town Council chose not to do so.

Question: To increase year-round housing supply for locals, do you support regulating incremental housing units, made possible by zoning changes to increase building density and height, to be used as year-round housing, i.e., restrict use as short-term rentals? Why or why not?

Answer: Allowing owners to develop their property and increase height by right, can allow for mixed use. This will increase the value of the property and if done by right will incentivize property owners to maintain and continue improvements.

The bottom line, we want to increase available housing. In many of our villages, they are starting to take advantage of zoning changes to allow for mixed use, store fronts on the first floor, and housing on the second floor. This is a good thing. Parking is the most concerning issue for this use. However, if these developments are in areas close to work and other amenities, residence may be able to get by without a car.

As far as restricting short term rentals or regulating rent control, this leads to a whole host of other questions; who determines value, who polices and enforces the regulations?

¹ <https://www.townofbarnstable.us/departments/planninganddevelopment/Projects/Downtown-Hyannis-Zoning-Revision.asp>

² "The focus of the rezoning was to create a predictable regulatory framework that would encourage compact residential development, compatible with traditional development patterns, meeting a range of housing needs."

<https://www.townofbarnstable.us/departments/planninganddevelopment/Projects/Downtown-Hyannis-Zoning-Revision.asp>

³ Town Consultant at Hyannis Zoning Workshop, March 2020: "I mean Airbnb can be regulated of course..."

CANDIDATE NAME PAUL GAGE_____

PRECINCT NUMBER 1_____

Question No. 2

Thank you for being direct and concise in 250 words per question.

2. *Context:* When the Town of Barnstable asked people what kind of housing they want more of, the number one answer people gave was more single-family homes.⁴ On the other hand, a housing advocacy organization states that “[s]ingle-family zoning is the ‘heart of the housing crisis’ in its call for zoning changes.⁵ The Town Planning Director calls single-family zoning a “burden” on the community, and said the Accessory Dwelling Unit zoning change was a “babystep” to “pushing back” on the “legacy” of single-family residential zoning.⁶

Question: Do you support keeping single-family zoning in those areas of town now zoned for single-family use? Why or why not?

Answer: Our zoning laws protect the integrity of our neighborhoods. They restrict factories from going into neighborhoods. The A.D.U. Is a very big step toward helping housing. Most of the time these A.D.U.'s are not established by absentee landlords. They are sons and daughters providing a space for aging mom or dad, they are moms and dads providing space for son or daughter. The “landlord” is often living in the property next to or connected to the ADU. For many this is a way for them to afford to stay on the Cape. The recent changes now allow these units to be rented to non-family members. If we allowed for duplexes along Old King’s Highway they would still need to get past that committee.

⁴ <https://itlaserfiche.town.barnstable.ma.us/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=920267&dbid=0&repo=TownOfBarnstable> Local Comprehensive Plan survey at page 5.

⁵ <https://haconcapcod.org/blog/hacbeat-march-april-2023/> at page 3.

⁶Town Council Zoning Subcommittee meeting, June 2020. The Town has taken down the Zoning and Regulatory Subcommittee agendas, minutes, and videos from its website. They are available via a record request. BarnstableWatch volunteers’ meeting transcripts show this passage at minute 56:12 from a recording of the municipal television broadcast.

CANDIDATE NAME PAUL GAGE_____

PRECINCT NUMBER 1_____

Question No. 3

Thank you for being direct and concise in 250 words per question.

3. *Context:* Across the country, cities and towns - including thriving tourist communities - protect existing housing stock for use as homes by locals. They adopt any one of a number of diverse ways towns can prevent or limit non-resident investors from using homes as more profitable short-term rentals.⁷ There are lots of ways for towns to limit or end the heartbreaking stories we hear each spring about locals getting kicked out of their rentals to make way for more lucrative short-term renters. Town Housing staff said this about incenting seasonal homeowners to rent year-round rather than short-term: “We have a large housing stock. It’s just not being used to house our residents.”⁸ The Town Council has taken no action in this respect to prioritize locals in the use of our housing stock.

Question: Do you support adopting some means to return some homes used as short-term rentals to year-round housing use for locals (*other than by one means a local developer has sought, which is for the town to pay property owners via tax incentives not to short-term rent their property*)? Why or why not?

Answer: Are we talking rent control? Again who sets the value, what do we consider affordable? Recently a hotel in Yarmouth raised it’s rates from \$300.00 per week, to \$700.00 per week. Why? That’s what the state is willing to pay. Many who could afford \$300, could not afford \$700. These are unintended consequences of something that seemed like a good thing at the time. I have friends who rent their home out Thursday through Sunday in the summer and stay in a tent at Peter’s Pond or other camp grounds. This helps pay their mortgage. Other friends go to visit family in other parts of the world and rent their home out while away. My wife and I, when first married, lived in winter rentals in the Winter and then we moved in with family for the summer. It was what we could afford at the time. Currently the tax law allows for two week rental grace...where the home owner does not have to pay tax on that income. These short term rentals help our residence stay on the Cape and keep them from having to move to another state.

⁷ <https://barnstablewatch.com>

⁸ Housing Committee [minutes](#) May 21, 2019

CANDIDATE NAME PAUL GAGE_____

PRECINCT NUMBER 1_____

Question No. 4

Thank you for being direct and concise in 250 words per question.

4. *Context:* The Town of Barnstable regularly says it needs more affordable housing units. In the recent form-based zoning changes in downtown Hyannis (about which its consultant said “...any near-term development is going to be on the upper end of market rate...that means they are going to be expensive units”⁹) the Town Council did not include any affordability requirement(s). In the Accessory Dwelling Unit-by right ordinance change, the Town Council did not include any affordability requirement(s).¹⁰ When developers wanted a more profitable use of land at 850 Falmouth Road in Hyannis than the zoning code required, the Town Council said yes: The Residences at 850 in Hyannis is today advertised as a *Luxury Apartment Community*. It sits on land that had been zoned to be 100% affordable housing, with a preference for Barnstable residents and Veterans.

Question: Please comment on whether you would leave pricing to developers and property owners, or incorporate affordability into approvals?

Answer: This question has left me with more questions. How did they grant this building at 850? Are these apartments by Right? Is there or was there a restriction on the deed? (This brings us back to regulation and who is doing the policing?) Is there a portion of this building that is deemed lower income? If so what’s the percentage? Is the town getting credit for these apartment dwelling units? As with the Hotel in Yarmouth, who determines what is affordable?

⁹ Hyannis Zoning Workshop March 2020.

¹⁰ The Planning Department staff said the Town’s Accessory *Affordable* Apartment program was expected to stay on the books, but to have attrition into the new *market rate* ADU program. Source: Zoning and Regulatory Subcommittee December 16, 2020.