

## 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](mailto:BarnstableWatch@gmail.com).

BarnstableWatch will print all responses (up to 250 words), unedited, and without commentary, or endorsement, at [www.BarnstableWatch.com](http://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   Gordon Starr  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.<sup>1</sup> It did this in the name of housing.<sup>2</sup> Despite housing needs, and the Town’s consultant statement<sup>3</sup> 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:*

Yes, new housing units need to be regulated to assure that these units will be reserved for year-round housing. These restrictions need to be codified as buildings do get sold and circumstances change

CANDIDATE NAME   Gordon Starr  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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> The Town Planning Director

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

<sup>2</sup> “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>

<sup>3</sup> Town Consultant at Hyannis Zoning Workshop, March 2020: “I mean Airbnb can be regulated of course...”

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

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

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.<sup>6</sup>

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

*Answer:*

We need to commit ourselves to developing year-round, affordable housing for all of our residents while staying sensitive to our local community. Everyone in Barnstable has a by-right ability to add an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) to their home. This potentially gives everyone added flexibility, control, safety and economic stability.

**CANDIDATE NAME** \_\_\_\_\_ Gordon Starr \_\_\_\_\_

**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.<sup>7</sup> 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.”<sup>8</sup> 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*)

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<sup>6</sup>Town 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.

<sup>7</sup> <https://barnstablewatch.com>

<sup>8</sup> Housing Committee [minutes](#) May 21, 2019

*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:*

I would support any reasonable means to return some homes used as short-term rentals to year-round housing because we need to develop our year-round economy and our year-round housing.

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CANDIDATE NAME     Gordon Starr    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"<sup>9</sup>) 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).<sup>10</sup> 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:*

The Town has a regulation for housing developers that requires 10% of all new units must be deed restricted as affordable. This is named the Inclusionary Zoning Policy. In my precinct, a 272 unit project was recently proposed (and is now mostly finished). The developer, recognizing the Town's desire for more affordable housing, proposed 13% of the units would be affordable. I proposed to the Town Council that we should ask for 17% and I was voted down. At the moment the Barnstable Planning Dept. is working to rewrite the inclusionary regulations to include more affordable housing. I support these efforts.

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<sup>9</sup> Hyannis Zoning Workshop March 2020.

<sup>10</sup> 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.