

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 Phalan - Write In _____

PRECINCT NUMBER _____ 6 _____

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:

Thanks for giving me a chance to respond as a Write-In candidate. When I read the incumbent in my Precinct had no challenger, leaving voters no choice, I took on the challenge.

On the Council, I will make decisions about housing that take into account the needs of the people who live and work here. We need more year-round housing for our residents and our small businesses need more housing for their employees.

Based on everything I've read, we can make decisions that lead to more year-round housing without interfering with what people here have been doing forever, which is renting their homes to visitors to get more income. We can make this work.

When issues come before me as a Councilor, I will make decisions after listening to everyone and after doing my homework. I will put locals and the needs of our local businesses first.

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 Phalan - Write-In _____

PRECINCT NUMBER _____

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:

I think there are many steps we as a town can take to help relieve the housing crisis. Undoing single-family zoning sounds like an extreme step. I will explore and exhaust other options before heading down that road.

In looking at all the options, I will go talk to and really listen to the people I represent and pursue the options they say they want. I'll consider the needs of the whole community, including our local businesses whose prosperity is so important to our town's vitality and character.

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.

⁶ 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.

CANDIDATE NAME _____ Paul Phalan - Write-In _____

PRECINCT NUMBER _____

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:

I support returning some homes used as short-term rentals for our local residents to use as their homes. I talk to people all over and know our small businesses also need housing for their year-round and seasonal help.

My parents owned a home here and introduced me to this beautiful community many decades ago. I understand how families here have rented out their homes over the years to make some extra money. Based on everything I have read, we can make decisions to limit the bad effects of things like Airbnb and help people who need housing without interfering with those traditional summer rental practices.

⁷ <https://barnstablewatch.com>

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

CANDIDATE NAME _____ Paul Phalan - Write-In _____

PRECINCT NUMBER _____

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:

I spent my life working hard to support my family. I loved every minute of it. My wife was a teacher. My father was a police officer. I understand the challenges of home ownership and the importance of our community having housing options for hard-working locals.

With a successful career behind me, I now have the time to give back to the community. Barnstable faces many challenges today. Residents will appreciate my full attention. I don't come to this as an expert in housing policy, but I will study, listen, and make decisions about affordability requirements that meet our community's needs, not just developers' needs.

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.