



APPLICATION FOR DURHAM CITY COUNCIL WARD-3 VACANCY

For residency verification, link to [City of Durham's Ward 3 Map](#)

ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Gender

Are you at least 21 years of age?

White/Caucasian

Female

Yes

Name of any City of Durham Board/Commission/Committee that you are serving on at the present time:

Date Term Expires:

NAME: Sarah Sinning

SPOUSE'S NAME:

HOME ADDRESS 1218 Cranebridge Place, Chapel Hill, NC 27517

HOME PHONE NO: 785-979-0499

STREET

CITY

STATE

ZIP

EMAIL ADDRESS sarah_sinning@yahoo.com

OCCUPATION

Editor

PLACE OF BUSINESS: Lexipol

BUSINESS ADDRESS: 2611 Internet Blvd., Ste. 100, Frisco, Texas 75034

STREET

CITY

STATE

ZIP

BUSINESS PHONE: 469-257-0620

Do you live within the corporate city limits?

Yes

Are you a registered voter in Durham County?

Yes

EDUCATION: I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English with honors from UNC Chapel Hill in 2005 and completed my Master of Arts in English from the University of Kansas in 2008.

Based on your qualifications and experiences, briefly describe why your service on the Durham City Council would be beneficial to the City of Durham

I think the most important characteristic of anyone serving on the Durham City Council is that they have a vested interest in seeing the entire community succeed and thrive. I have been a resident of Durham County for a significant portion of my roughly 15 years in the Triangle, and while I have been pleased with the direction of the city overall as well as the genuine committment of so many of its residents to making the community a world class destination, I'm also well aware that this progress has not been felt by all. If chosen to serve on the City Council, I would advocate tirelessly for shared prosperity, because let's face it, a community is only as healthy as its most vulnerable citizens.

My answers below will elucidate my knowledge of these challenges as well as some potential solutions, but I'm also well aware that my ideas are only one small part of successful service on the City Council. Collaboration is key, and I'm ready to start having those hard conversations to find a pathway forward that works for each and every stakeholder.

Other information you consider pertinent: (i.e., Civic memberships, related experience, etc.)

PROPERTY TAX LISTING MUST BE CURRENT. CITY AND COUNTY TAXES MUST NOT REFLECT ANY DELINQUENCY AT THE TIME OF SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION.

APPLICATION WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC UPON REQUEST

DEADLINE FOR RECEIVING APPLICATION: THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2020 AT 5:00 p.m.

DISCLAIMER: *By submitting your application for the Ward 3 Vacancy, you understand that the application and attached materials are considered public and can be posted on the City's website.*

Date: 8/20/2020

Applicant's Signature 

Return Application to:
City Clerk's Office City of Durham
101 City Hall Plaza - Suite 2700
Durham, NC 27701
Phone: (919) 560-4166
Fax: (919) 560-4835
Email To: city.clerk@durhamnc.gov

Please complete the WARD Vacancy Questionnaire below.



CITY CLERK
CITY OF DURHAM

DURHAM CITY COUNCIL WARD 3 VACANCY CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate Name:

Sarah Sinning

Complete questions in the space provided below or on separate sheet of paper. Return your completed questionnaire to the City Clerk's Office via email to city.clerk@durhamnc.gov

1. Why do you want to serve on City Council and what strengths would you bring to Council? (Limit answer to 400 words or less)

The simplest answer is that I want to make a positive difference in my community, and I believe the City Council is one of the best places to make that happen. For the past year, I've served as the primary editor for the website EfficientGov (recently rebranded to Gov1), a site dedicated to keeping local leaders up to date on the challenges facing their peers nationwide as well as innovative solutions to overcoming them. While this wasn't my first professional experience intersecting with the public sector -- I was a member of the communications team of Carolina Farm Stewardship Association several years back -- this role has certainly been a crash course in what it takes to successfully lead communities, and I would be honored to use this burgeoning understanding to help my own community move forward.

2. What is your time availability to serve on City Council, including serving on Council Subcommittees, and making yourself available for public gatherings? (Limit answer to 400 words or less)

I am fortunate to work for a company that allows me a great deal of flexibility to set my own schedule. That said, I am confident that I can make myself available for all of the various functions of the City Council.

3. Describe your perspective on each of the following issues (Limit answers to 300 words or less):

a. Housing

The lack of affordable housing across the US, and increasingly in the Triangle, is one of the biggest threats facing communities today. The bottom line is this: You can't have a safe, healthy community without everyone having access to a dignified roof over their heads. I also believe that it's the responsibility of local governments to make sure housing stock in the community actually matches the needs of those living there; there is a fine line between beautifying struggling neighborhoods and gentrifying local residents out of their homes due to skyrocketing rents and property values. Through embracing practices like incremental development, however, local governments can ensure residents share in the economic prosperity of revitalized neighborhoods.

b. Public safety and policing strategies:

As I suggest above, public safety is about so much more than policing. One of my favorite quotes on the matter comes from the City Council's own Jillian Johnson in her USA Today Opinion piece published earlier this year: "Public safety comes when communities have dignified and affordable homes, access to quality education, good health care, reliable transportation and stable jobs that provide a living wage." While police clearly serve an important role in communities, I do believe that police in general are overburdened with too many responsibilities outside their areas of expertise, which has unfortunately been to the detriment of too many people of color and those suffering from mental illness.

c. Development and Land Use

This is a complicated subject, but in general, here are some of my key thoughts: First of all, we need to move beyond single family zoning if we're serious about ending our affordable housing shortage. But even inclusionary zoning has its limits, as we've seen play out time and time again across the Triangle. The bottom line, however, is this: We have to start thinking outside the box to create more housing that people can actually afford. I also think it's well past time to start prioritizing development patterns that don't necessitate the use of car travel to access services and amenities. Twenty-minute neighborhoods have been shown to boost community health, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and create resilient small businesses.

d. Inclusion and race equity:

The opening line of the Durham Racial Equity Task Force's first report to the City Council succinctly sums up the inclusion problem the city must start redressing immediately: "In a city born during Reconstruction and reared under Jim Crow, shocking inequities between white people and people of color are still evident in 21st century Durham." I was so pleased to learn of the task force's creation and even more so when this first report was released, since I wholeheartedly agree that investing in historically underserved communities, boosting wellness initiatives across the city, and working to reduce unnecessary interactions between residents of color and the criminal justice system is essential as we strive to correct centuries of racial injustice.

e. Economic Development:

Without ample opportunities for economic advancement, local communities will ultimately flounder, a fact we've unfortunately seen play out in small towns across the country. The good news, however, is that there are a lot of levers local governments can pull to keep good paying jobs within their communities. From corporate tax incentives tied to local job creation and training, to grant programs that help members of underserved neighborhoods launch successful small businesses, local governments are proving time and again that a little creativity goes a long way when it comes to building sustainable communities.

f. Open space and trails and environmental policy:

Numerous studies have shown how important open space is to the health of communities, and we're not just talking about physical fitness. Mental wellbeing is dramatically improved when communities have access to well kept natural areas. But parks are only one part of this equation. Without policies designed with environmental sustainability in mind, particularly when it comes to mitigating the growing impacts of climate change, none of us will ultimately have healthy outdoor spaces to enjoy.

g. Public Infrastructure and City services:

My thoughts on this topic are pretty easy to sum up: Robust cities have robust city services. In fact, when most people think of local government, services like sanitation and transportation are the first to come to mind, which is why it's so vital that these services are not only well run but equitably distributed across the community. As we've seen in cities like Flint, public infrastructure can make or break entire communities, so if we're serious about improving the quality of life for local residents, not to mention rebuilding trust in local leaders, getting these basics right is a must.

4. What are your top three priorities for the City over the next 5 years?

1. Making sure everyone who works a full-time job can afford a dignified roof over their heads.
2. Enacting and building upon the recommendations of the Racial Equity Task Force.
3. Creating more avenues to help substance abusers and those suffering from mental illness find treatment rather than more harmful interactions with the criminal justice system.

5. If appointed, what do you envision being your sources of information and reaching an informed decision?

Though I follow national news coverage through outlets like NPR, the New York Times, and Axios, I also keep a close eye on local resources like the News & Observer and Durham Herald. To stay abreast of the most pertinent policy discussions happening nationwide, I also follow the work of the Pew Charitable Trusts as well as the Brookings Institution. And of course, staying informed on what other local leaders are doing across the country as they attempt to tackle our shared challenges is key.

6. Detail your current civic engagement and other related experience.

As I hope you can tell from my answers above, I deeply care about the problems plaguing communities nationwide. In fact, one of the main reasons I accepted my current role with Gov1 was that it gave me the opportunity to help leaders across the local government space do their jobs more effectively. Despite all of the dysfunction we see playing out at the federal level these days, I still believe in the power of government, especially at the local level, because let's be honest, this is where the real change happens.

7. Other pertinent information:

DATE CLERK'S OFFICE RECEIVED APPLICATION