

Voices to Votes NC Questionnaire: Kelly Roberts

1. If elected to serve on the City Council, which factor will carry more weight in your future decision making...your professional experience and personal opinions or the wishes of a majority of Wilmington residents?

First and foremost, elected officials are employees of the people. I will make decisions based on my values and what the public is telling me they need.

2. You have voiced your support for increasing the budget to facilitate better pay for our police officers and to expand the total number of officers. Why is this important to you and where can we find the necessary funding in the city budget?

We have the money in the budget to increase our police pay. \$3 million will put us even for all police officers with the city of Leland and surrounding cities. We have the money in the budget. The problem is no one has been bringing it up until I did. Now it's the focus of everyone's campaign. We did increase police presence. We did increase pay for special assignment assignments. We need retention bonuses and we need to retain a positive culture within the police community.

3. Your professional experience is in the cyber security arena. Please explain the potential danger of potential cyber attacks on our city systems and how you would recommend steps to prevent serious damage?

This is an excellent question. 2025 has been the worst year for cyber attack municipalities in North Carolina. I need people to understand that these are automated scripts and automated bots that are attacking every municipality. It does not take a targeted attack, but it's looking for a weak point and our network. My plan is to establish a specific commission for this issue. We have other commissions for other issues that are very important to this community. I do believe that this issue is also important to these community cities. All around North Carolina are adopting a commission specifically for network security. This falls within the infrastructure umbrella. I personally can oversee this commission. I personally can appoint the appropriate engineers to work with the Cape Fear Utility Authority to make sure we are safe from cyber attack. Nothing will happen to us on my watch. I assure you that.

4. Please offer your suggestions on how we can limit the negative impact of homeless people on downtown businesses. Do you agree with the final version of the recent ordinance that

was passed prohibiting camping on sidewalks and in public spaces? Would you support tax increases to pay for more housing and beds for homeless people?

First, let me say that this is a very caring community. That's a good thing and it's not fair to group all of the unhoused under one umbrella. Every one of them has a different issue. Some of that is mental health. Some of that is substance abuse, some of that is simply being down on your luck. I was the first person to speak about using a social worker at the power breakfast, and since then the city has hired social workers that will go out assess the situation and put that homeless person to the appropriate resource. We do not need to increase taxes for this. We can be fair, but also still be firm. I do believe that we need a loader in class for downtown. We need a panhandling clause; other cities have this; this is not something new however, Wilmington has done nothing about it. The downtown businesses deserve better. Our tourism deserves better and the safety of our children that go downtown to have ice cream at Killwins deserve better.

5. The pace of multi-family residential development has obviously grown beyond the capacity of many of our roads and intersections. Expanding or adding roads is limited by our unique geography and poor long-term planning in the past. We face budget limitations both at the local and NCDOT level. How would you propose to improve our already stressed road networks, or if you might support a pause in new multi-family residential projects until needed infrastructure improvements are made?

We do not need to build on every piece of vegetation within the city limits. The current infrastructure cannot handle the influx of people. The problem that we have is that we are literally on a peninsula. There is an ocean on one side and there's a river on the other. We need to understand that we need to accept that we currently do not have the infrastructure for more multifamily development within the city limits.

6. Why do we need to grow and become a city of 150,000 people or more? What is the benefit of a significantly larger population to those citizens already living here? What is the "right size" for Wilmington? When will we reach our optimal size?

There are many dense cities across the United States. If you're going to have density, you need to have a walk capability that means parks that means grocery stores that means the proper infrastructure from a water perspective from a road perspective. We currently do not have that. I spoke with the leaders of the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority and they told me it will be 15 years until we get that infrastructure ready.

7. Every candidate lists affordable housing as a priority. When considering affordable housing as defined by HUD, subsidies are required to reach the required lower rental rates. Would you support increased taxes to finance more subsidies for creating affordable housing? If not, how would additional affordable housing be financed?

I do not believe the government should be in the housing market. I do understand we're helping people own homes and owning a home is your way to financial prosperity in the United States. It's the American dream. I will not vote for any tax increase for this program however, and I will not vote for any increase of the budget for this program. We currently spend \$2.8 million a year and I will not spend any more than that.

8. Do you believe existing Wilmington residents should be willing to sacrifice some level of their quality of life to create more housing for people who want to move to Wilmington?

This is a core value answer for me. Issues are going to come up and issues will be resolved. Your core values are what separates you as a candidate and as a productive member of society, one of my core values is to make Wilmington safe for you, your children and your grandchildren. I will not be voting for anything that supersedes public safety.