

## Porter Casey for Town Council Platforms at the Podium Answers

### **1. Do you think our main street/downtown is healthy and successful? If not, what would you do to change that? If yes, why?**

Yes, I remember when Downtown was ghost town.

We have so much to offer now downtown, great local stores and restaurants and meeting places. Great events, like concerts, movie nights, Last Friday

I love living downtown, I love the historic buildings and local hometown businesses that give Clayton that Small Town Charm.

We must preserve that historic charm and we must continue our revitalization of downtown, not just Main Street but all streets.

When we start talking about traffic and downtown parking, we know we are vibrant and healthy.

Moving forward, I would like us to address the following:

1. Parking Concerns: Improved Signage, public / private partnership with existing parking lots, execute the Parking Taskforce initiatives
2. Continuation of First Street to Lombard St. That will create more parking and allows for more economic opportunities.
3. Main Street infrastructure improvements and ultimately taking control of Main St from the DOT so we can plan a phased and improved street scape for Main St.
4. The Railroad owns a large swath of land downtown next to the tracks. We need a downtown vision for the railroad corridor and surrounding, then take that to the railroad and negotiate with them on improvements.
5. Better pedestrian safety for bikes and walkers: Continuity of sidewalks from Deep River to Vinson's. We also need walk signals near Boulevard, at Church Street and Barbour Street.

It is very important however that when we talk about Downtown, we must not forget about the downtown residents and how the town's plan for downtown impact their quality of life and how it affects the prosperity of downtown businesses.

I am excited to see downtown continue to develop for years to come.

I want to help be a voice for the community and shape the downtown for years to come! Please give me an opportunity to serve the community. If you would like to learn more about me, please visit [www.portercasey.com](http://www.portercasey.com) !

### **2. How do you feel about the transportation options currently available in our city? Do we have enough options? If not, what will you do to increase those?**

A healthy transportation network is vital as Clayton grows.

We must rethink transportation. We need to think transportation to include walking, biking, shuttle, golf cart and commuter rail. A balanced approach benefits our community.

Traffic is a sign of a healthy community. Imagine if we could help reduce the number of cars on our streets but still have a healthy community. The more we can give people options the better we can make it for our community. The town is currently working with a consultant on a Pedestrian Plan that focuses on walking and biking.

We must also:

1. Develop a Mobility Plan that refines transit services, roadway expansion, greenways.  
One thing about these plans..... need to take actionable steps towards improvements with timelines!! Unexecuted plans are wasteful of taxpayer's dollars.
2. Work with GoTriangle on the Triangle Commuter Rail Line, A possible commuter train from Hillsborough that could expand to Clayton. To learn more, click here: <https://www.readyforrailnc.com>
3. Partner with the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization to identify and seek funding for regional transportation priorities.
4. Take the top priorities from the Pedestrian Plan and seek Grant money from NCDOT Pedestrian Planning Grant Program. See link below.  
<https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Documents/Bicycle%20and%20Pedestrian%20Planning%20Grant%20Initiative%20Overview.pdf>
5. We must also work with other Regional, state, and federal agencies to improve the transportation network.

As we grow it is vital that we make sure our transportation options grow as well.

When developing a balanced transportation approach, we must always keep safety at the forefront. I want to help be a voice and advocate for the community!

### **3. Some people in our community say that we have traffic problems. What do you think? How would you mitigate those concerns or change the situation?**

Traffic is a sign of a healthy town if those people are investing in our town, supporting our businesses, and not just driving through to someplace else. We must make sure we provide services and amenities, so Clayton is a destination.

Action Items:

- The Town is currently working on a Comprehensive Growth Plan, and we need to take that plan and map out our traffic and accident hot spots. For state-maintained roads we must present that information to the Dept of Transportation (DOT).
- We must support interconnected streets that can efficiently disperse traffic.
- Through our Unified Development Code, we must continue to mitigate potential traffic impacts of new and future development.
- We should provide alternative transportation options and create a Mobility Plan that incorporates those alternatives.

Lastly when we make these decisions, we need to look at the situation through these lenses:

- Driver Perspective
- Business Owner Perspective
- Pedestrian Perspective

**4. There have been discussions that the current development review process is broken and needs to be modified or replaced. As a councilmember, how would you weigh into this issue to determine what policies and procedures need to be reviewed?**

We need to take a collaborative approach with developers. They are investment partners.

The Town is currently updating the Comprehensive Growth Plan and will use that plan to map out the future and vision of the town based on input from the community and how they would like to see the town look years from now.

After this vision is created, the next phase is to update our Unified Develop Ordinances (UDC). These ordinances are the guidelines that help support smart, responsible growth and development. The UDC is also a guide to the town's expectations to homeowners, businesses and developers and can help encourage high quality design on both residential and commercial projects.

There are a lot of things in our code that are outdated or could be streamlined. As we improve these ordinances, we must have high expectations while making the town easy to work with and collaborative with our developer community. We must insure consistency, transparency and impartiality. The town needs this collaborative approach with the development community so growth can be strategic and aligned with the needs of the community as a whole. Furthermore, it is important that any issues with policies are discussed between the Town Manager, Planning Director and development community. That is then presented to the council, and if the council comes to a consensus, they should explore changing those policies.

We cannot trade short-term gains for long-term pains.

**5. How do you plan to involve residents in the decision-making process in our town?**

Transparency and collaboration!!!

You must be out and be active in the community! You must be involved. Council members are the voice of the community.

I would continue doing Pints with Porter, my meetups with the community at local business.

I want to start monthly office hours or town halls in different areas of town to make sure I reach out to all the community. Why? We must seek out input from all areas of town from Riverwood area, Glen Laurel area, downtown area and the ETJ.

I plan to continue the summaries I've been doing of the Town Council meetings through Porter's Perspectives – you can see them on my blog at portercasey.com.

We must be active and collaborate with the community and be active in the community. When the town creates committees for public input, we must have a diverse group of community members and make sure to involve and invite new people to these committees.

Finally, we must grow and develop new leaders so we can have new, fresh perspectives on the Town Council. If you do not have transparency and involve residents in the decision process or act on their feedback, then the town cannot thrive. And when hard decisions are made, town council members must be honest and share the basis for the decisions.

**6. If you received a \$1 million grant to use for the city any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?**

There are two answers to this.

Reality: Roads and infrastructure. Town spends \$1 million in road main per year. We could get a year ahead.

Dream: We must listen to the community, and I could see us having an ideas contest and vote on the best use of this grant.

Hopefully going towards a long-term park or activity center for the community, both senior and young.

**7. What neighborhood do you live in? Why? Where are your favorite places to spend time in our town?**

For Question #7 at Platform's at the Podium with the Clayton Chamber of Commerce.

7. What neighborhood do you live in? Why? Where are your favorite places to spend time in our town?

We are raising our family in Downtown Clayton, NC. We bought a historic home that was built in 1895, it is the same house my uncle grew up in.

My family and I love to experience the downtown with all its small southern charm. We love to walk to restaurants and are frequent visitors to the Hocutt-Ellington Memorial Library. My family and I make it a point to stay in town and rarely leave our community, especially when it comes to food options. Here is my typical routine: breakfast at Jones Cafe, it's the best. Lunch at Yellow House -

The Community Place, Clayton Steakhouse or Jones Cafe. Mid-day meetings at Boulevard West Cafe (plus a great place to frequent anytime of the day for a pick me up!). Our 7-year-old loves to frequent The Crazy Comet Creamery and Nancy Jo's Homemade/Clayton for ice cream. After work meetings at First Street Tavern (plus a great late-night vibe) and Corked & UnTapped. Deep River Brewing Company is always a great choice any day, any time! (Wed – Sun). For dinner options, my top 3: Vinson's Pub + Eatery and Skylines Cafe - Clayton, NC and Manning's Restaurant. You cannot go wrong with any of these!

If you are looking for a sophisticated, classy vibe you must check out Revival 1869 - A Drinkery at night.

If you are looking for a unique gift for any occasion, please check on The Market at Three Little Birds, plus watch their live show every Thursday night!! If you are looking for something cool check out Barbour Shop Creative Services. Also must check out The Crowing Hen and The Queen's Court

Plus, you cannot forget that Clayton has an amazing music scene, any Friday or Saturday night you can catch awesome local talent, one of my favorites is Wade Hill and The Revival!!

With all these choices, and more coming, you have no reason to leave Clayton!

**8. What is your thought/plan to steps will you take to keep Clayton's "Small-Town Charm" while we continue to grow at such a rapid pace?**

I remember when Clayton was truly a small town. Everyone knew everyone. That made things interesting back in the day.

To keep that Small-Town Charm it is all about how people feel and the perspective of the community.

We must:

- Maintain that southern hospitality
- Encourage volunteerism and community involvement
- Support local businesses.
- Maintain a vibrant historic downtown
- Have activities and events that bring the community together. One that I thought was amazing was the Faith on the Square event that involved multiple churches.
- Make sure we have a vibrant Arts community and support our local artist.
- Preserve our historic buildings and historic neighborhoods

Small town-town charm is what you feel when you have a sense of belonging in the community. It's also being proud that you are a part of Clayton! I sure know I am!

**9. Are you for or against tax increases to improve the transportation infrastructure in order to make it easier and faster for people to travel for work and play?**

I am mixed on this topic. In general, I do not like the idea of raising taxes. I think we need to consider exhausting all other options first and only raise taxes as a last resort.

The town also has other means of obtaining funds for infrastructure projects.

Such as:

- Matching grant programs. Like through the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)
- Infrastructure Bond Referendum – Make it a people's decision

It is important that we make good fiscal decisions and are good stewards of taxpayer money. As a council we must treat tax money as if it is our own.

The council must make strategic long-range decisions so the town does not have to make reactionary, urgent decisions that can cost taxpayers more.

Personally, I feel the town is facing that with the urgency to build a new wastewater treatment plant. That is why as a council member I want to make sure we do not have any skeletons in our closet and are not surprised with any unplanned infrastructure issues.

Please vote for Porter Casey on Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> and let me give a new fresh perspective to Town Council.

**10. How will you, as a councilmember, ensure that you're following best practices for council/staff interactions, for introduction of new items onto council agendas, and for leadership recruitment and evaluation?**

My conscious is my guide. Plus, I have a strong-willed wife that keeps me straight!

Seriously though, I have years of experience in the private sector with staffing, recruiting, management and building high performing teams.

I am a firm believer that when you have the right Town Manager for the job and work through them, not staff, and that's how you initiate councils' priorities.

It is important that the Town Manager is the leader, and the council sets the vision it gets from the community. The council must have high expectations from the Town Manager and allows them to do their job.

Circumventing leadership can create confusion, and distrust.

It is also important to have 360 evaluations of leadership so there is strong employee engagement and high staff morale.

We need strong, equitable HR policies that evaluate performance and leadership performance. As done in the corporate world, leaders must set metrics and goals for performance that must be communicated and documented regularly.

Finally, it is important the town must recruit and hire the best talent. A bad hire can cost the taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars and set the town back years. One good hire is better than two average hires.

We cannot trade short-term gains for long-term pains.

I want to help be a voice and advocate for the community!

Please vote for Porter Casey on Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> and let me give a new fresh perspective to Town Council.

### **11. If elected, what would be your main priority for the Town of Clayton?**

Planning and Infrastructure! Infrastructure Infrastructure!

We must address our infrastructure needs.

1. Wastewater Treatment Plant – Biggest Challenge for next council. We are very low on sewer capacity in our town.
  - The town is in a critical need to build a new wastewater treatment plant, this will be largest capital project ever for the town. To the tune of approximately \$180 million.
  - Who bears the burden of this capital project? What will our sewer rates look like in a few years? I have been told it will be the citizens in our community.
  - Do we have a well mapped out analysis of our sewer and water capacities, what we have available versus current, proposed and future development.
2. Road Conditions / Congestion
  - Improved working relationship with the Department of Transportation (DOT).
  - Map Out and prioritize road hot spots – Both DOT and town roads
  - Prioritize road revitalization needs for town roads. The Clayton maintains 90 miles of roads and has little over a \$1 maintenance budget per year.
  - Unified Development Code Update / Rewrite: Encourage smart, responsible development that considers traffic and congestion impacts.
3. Improved collaboration with the Johnston County Board of Education to help map out additional school needs that are based on our proposed and future development.
4. As Clayton grows, we must make sure our Parks and Recreation grows with it. We must continually add new parks and activities for both our youth and senior community.
5. Shared storm water basins for downtown so each development making efficient use of downtown land. is not occupying valuable land. Have shared water basins for better maintenance and upkeep

### **12. The recreation bond and the projects it was to implement hasn't received much attention and is rarely discussed publicly. Do you know where it stands, what has been implemented and what is left to do?**

The bond was publicly approved in the 2019 election by 74%, and the amount of the bond was \$18 million dollars.

The bond encompassed the following parks in town: Municipal, East Clayton and Community Park.

It did appear that the recreation bond went through a phase where no progress was being made. But with big projects there can be a phase of internal design, consulting, and project planning. Those happenings sometimes don't make headlines. Also, since the bond was passed the town had to face the complexity of COVID and the changeover of two Town Managers. When you have a change in Town Manager leadership plans and visions can change and may be redesigned.

The good news, although delayed, the town now has made good progress in this bond. In May the town approved the final scope for East Clayton, Municipal Park, and Community Park. In August they Awarded the design build contract build for Municipal Park to Balfour Beatty. They are the same firm that built the Harmony Playground in Clayton. We

are looking for demolition in November and construction completion by May, in time for the Splash Pad to be ready for summer. East Clayton is to follow a similar phase.

As for what's left, we will have to wait and see how much money will be available after the current projects are completed. The Town of Clayton has a website that provides updates to the bond, I would like to see that website updated so citizens can track the progress. <https://www.townofclaytonnc.org/Parks-and-Recreation/bond.aspx> It is also important that as Clayton grows, we have a Parks and Recreation system that grows at the same pace. We must have adequate green space, playgrounds, sports fields and both youth and senior activities in our community.

**13. How will you support town plans for improvements in cultural offerings (from departments like the Clayton Center and Library, as well as from the DDA, Public Arts Advisory Board, etc.)?**

I would absolutely support these groups. The council helps sets the budget for these groups and feel we need to continue to expand these funding opportunities. It benefits the entire community; it helps businesses showcase themselves and helps add to the Small-Town Charm and quality of life.

These groups have done an excellent job exploring new and unique ways to highlight our cultural arts. We must continue to encourage and foster these groups and highlight the talents of our community.

The Clayton Center was a good example of that when they did the live concerts during COVID shutdown. My family and I would gather and listen to those concerts every Wednesday!

Likewise, Hocutt-Ellington Library always does unique and creative events. The Big Read is one example of how grant money was used to bring a yearlong theme of events for families with activities and events.

My family loves the public art sculptures and going to the monthly Clayton Visual Art Receptions that highlight local artist at the Clayton Center.

As we move past COVID it is important that we support these groups and enhance existing events and establish new cultural events in our town. I would like to see the town explore public and private funding of these cultural offerings by expand public art displays on public and private buildings, and in streetscapes. Let our artist and our organization offerings serve as canvass for our culture.

**14. How will you remain accessible to the public after the election?**

My family and I live an active lifestyle. Raising a 7-year-old we have to keep up with her and keep her occupied. We love being involved with everything.

You must be out and be active in the community! As a representative of the community, it is important to be active and involved in the events of the town, not only town sponsored events but also civic events, and faith-based events.

As an elected official you must be an advocate for the community, and you must be out in the public and participate in the happenings with the town. You must also practice what you preach, you represent and advocate for local businesses so you must also be their number one customer, shopping local, eating local and attending local! Not just downtown but throughout the entire community.

Council members are the voice of the community, if we are not accessible then we are not meant for this job.

Here are my some of my actions:

- I have started doing Pint's with Porter, meet-ups at local business.
- I will commit to monthly town halls across the town, making sure I reach out to all the community. We must seek out input from all areas of town. Riverwood area, Glen Laurel area, downtown area.
- I commit to continuing to do my summary of the Town Council meetings through Porter's Perspectives at portercasey.com.

Finally, I will be a cheerleader for the town, and I must always sing its praises.

**15. What are your priorities for your term as a council member? How do you plan to introduce your priorities to staff to make sure they move forward?**

Porter's Platform – 4 P's: People, Planning, Preservation, Prosperity.

People – Listen and be a voice of the community. Be transparent and open to the happenings of the town.

Planning – Encourage smart, responsible development through planning. Working with the vision of the town and rewriting the Unified Development Code to encourage high quality growth and retail.

Preservation – Preserving the Small Town Charm; Preserving our Southern Hospitality; Preserving our downtown historically significant buildings and neighborhoods.

Prosperity – Prosperity for the citizens, a higher quality of life. Fiscal responsibility: Prosperity for the business owners who have invested in Clayton.

These plans cannot be accomplished by one person alone. As a council we should all work together and bring those issues together as a council to the staff. The council must have synergy and take a collaborative approach. So much more can be accomplished if we work together. These are issues we can prioritize in our work sessions, and we can map out a plan and a strategy to move forward. We must take a phased and incremental approach. But most importantly we need to be deadline oriented with our priorities.

**16. Do you think Town Council has a role in in the development review process? Why?**

There are a couple of ways to look at this question. In a way the council does have a role in this process.

As council you adopt policy that drives a vision of development.

That is done through our Unified Development Ordinances, those ordinances are written to adhere to state and federal laws and reflect the vision we received from the community.

Based on these ordinances it directs the town staff at what to look for in development review. It is the council's responsibility to know the process and understand the impacts, but the council should not sit in on these individual developer reviews. That is the role and the expertise of the town employees.

Along with the ordinances that shape the vision, what is also important is that the process is: concise, clear, impartial, and consistent for the development community.

If there are ever problems with this review process it is the role of the Planning Department, Planning Director and Town Manager to inform the council. The town must have high expectations from developers but must also not create any undue, unnecessary burdens.

**17. Departmental requests for staffing is discussed with every budget cycle. Are you concerned with the staffing levels in any departments? Why?**

From an outsider who is not currently on the town council I would add my fresh perspective to the process, having managed staffing offices and building teams in my corporate career.

We must be good stewards of taxpayer money and we must also insure a good work life balance within the town staff.

Also, it is important that the staffing levels balance with the amount of growth the town is experiencing. In being fiscally responsible with tax money, we must just not throw bodies at a problem. We must make sure town staff are working efficiently and they have the proper tools to do the job.

We need to quantify the needs: the what, the why, and then measure the importance and number of hires.

Furthermore, I would like to see strong data to back up the reason for those hires. In certain situations, it may make sense to use contingent workers and staff, especially when there is a short-term demand.

We must insure an open line of communication between the Town Manager, and Department Heads. Finally, we must also continuously recruit and hire the best talent for our town.

**18. As a Council member, how will you work with NCDOT and Johnston County schools to address traffic and school capacity issues?**

Road congestion and school overcrowding is a major pain point for the community. I have been told time and time again that it is the Board of Education and NCDOT's problem and we have no control. That may ultimately be the case however we can always do a better job working with both entities.

- We must have a collaborative relationship with both groups.
- We must have a better long-term view of the needs of our community
- We must work with our development community on smart, responsible growth
- Through our new Comprehensive Growth Plan, we must take the Future Land Use Map and have Johnston County and the BOE incorporate that in with counties land use map.
- We need to map out all approved and future development and that impact. We need to present that information to the DOE and DOT, so they know where the future demands are.
- We must determine a variety of solutions and see what other towns are doing that face a similar issue.

We cannot trade short-term gains for long term pains.

**19. The Town of Clayton is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Growth Plan. If elected, how will you make sure the goals of the plan will be implemented?**

For those who are not aware, the Comprehensive Growth Plan is a major health check of our growth, development, infrastructure, safety, culture, and quality of life of our town. These plans help paint a picture of our needs, wants, and vision for the future of the town. This is a community endeavor, and this document is intended to be the voice of the community. The state expects growing towns to do these approximately every 4 years. These studies are too costly for the town to invest in and then just sit on a shelf. For these plans we must have a bias towards action. Stewart Inc., the consultants who help with this plan, are currently working on the prioritization and implementation phase of this plan. We must take the feedback that we get from the community, their pain points and their needs and work towards action. Imperfect, incremental progress is critical.

These plans typically address the complex and hard problems of our town, but complexity does not mean impossible. We need a strong implementation plan, clear deliverables, and monthly check-ins to evaluate progress. We must map out and timeline goals and hold ourselves accountable. We must also be transparent with our community on our progress and deliverables. In an effort to be transparent, I would ask that the town to monitor the prioritization and improvement process on a special section of the town website.

**20. The Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Clayton collaborate on several projects and programs that benefit the business community and residents of Clayton. How should the Town Council foster and support this relationship?**

A healthy chamber is vital to the success of the town.

I am happy to be a Chamber member and understand its importance to the town.

Through partnerships and collaboration, the Town and the Chamber can help shape the vision set out by the community. The Chamber can attract the retail and restaurants that the community desires. The town, working in alignment with the Chamber, can help encourage economic development and attract industry, business, and jobs to our region.

I think it is important that town stakeholders are active and participate in the Chamber boards. I like that Clayton's Economic Development Director serves as a member at large on the Chamber's board and is active and fostering that relationship.

A prime example of a healthy collaborative relationship is the most recent Duke Energy \$25,000 entrepreneur grant awarded to the Chamber and the town. For the grant to be awarded it required a joint partnership with Town of Clayton and the Chamber of Commerce. Through this grant money, the Chamber can divide it up and distribute it to businesses in need. Without the Town / Chamber collaboration this grant would have never happened.

Other benefits of a health Chamber: it can also help educate, inform, and market our community as we seek to compete with surrounding towns and communities for the best businesses and talent.