

SANDRA O'CONNOR - RESPONSES

Q1 - *Can you tell me how and why your approach would be different than what the existing council members have been taking in their governing?*

My governance approach is actively listening to the residents' concerns, meaningful engagement with residents and factoring this information along with staff reports, then critically analyzing the issue. I state the reasons of my voting position, bringing transparency and accountability to the residents. I consistently challenge development where I see heritage, environmental or infrastructure problems. I have the strongest documented environmental/stormwater emphasis and am frequently in minority for it. I have a strong fiscal scrutiny record.

Q2 - *I have a question which of you have accepted money whether for performing services or as a gratuity from any developers or their related companies.*

I have never accepted money or anything else from developers or their related companies.

Q3 - *Several studies that the Town initiated identified major gaps in planned investment vs actual funds available particularly gaps in infrastructure funding. What steps will you take to find the required funds*

This deficit was impacted by provincial and federal governments downloading of responsibilities to cities and towns without funding support. We will continue to lobby these governments directly and through organizations like Association of Municipalities on Ontario, Rural Ontario Municipalities Association, Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

To address this issue, a balance of solutions is needed. Have a current Asset Management Plan that prioritizes infrastructure work needed and presents a long-term option with critical short term goals eg stormwater infrastructure. Capitalize on government grants available eg stormwater management. Tourists impact our infrastructure, so a portion of the Municipal Accommodation Tax could be used for critical infrastructure.

Q4 - *What does "transparency" mean to you?*

Transparency means that we operate openly by sharing clear information, decisions, and processes so residents can hold Councillors accountable. This translates to open council meetings, publishing clear minutes, systematically recording votes, placing development information online, conflict-of-interest disclosures, etc. I justify my vote so it is clear to residents. I am accessible to residents to talk about their concerns.

Q5 - *How would you describe your style of leadership?*

I do not have one leadership style. It depends on the situation. Foremost, I use the participative style which involves meaningful consultation with residents and staff before voting on motions. I also use the collaborative style which focuses on building consensus among councillors and bridging gaps between the residents and town staff. I emphasize authenticity, community building, and the ability to work with diverse perspectives. I am not afraid to ask the hard questions, challenge the norm, and critically assess projects.

Q6 - What are the hallmarks of your personal code of conduct?

I have demonstrated a high degree of integrity. I act upon what I say in a consistent manner. I treat everyone with respect and am resident focussed. I am accountable and take responsibility for my actions.

Q7 - How do you remain informed of issues that affect the greater good and wellbeing of our town?

I read all documentation presented, with appendices, that accompanies NOTL meetings, open houses, etc. I keep informed with the latest news and communication from the Town and on the NOTL website. I am on several Town committees and Boards. I scan some local Facebook sites to keep current on the concerns raised by residents. I read local news sources as well. I seek feedback from residents at local events that I attend and 1 on 1 conversations, in all areas of NOTL. I remain current with municipal association websites (AMO, ROMA, FCM). I read regional, provincial and national news sources.

Q8 - What measures would you use to consult the voting public in order to reach consensus on major decisions, for example, on the future use of the old hospital site so that it serves the larger community?

The process for consultation on the old hospital has already been decided and active. Besides public input, it will include professional analysis input, and a transparent competitive procurement process with a fairness monitor. At the penultimate stage, we could go back to the public for more feedback on final options before the final decision.

Meaningful engagement with residents is critical. I would like to see more Townhall type meetings and/or small group sessions in different locations throughout NOTL and at different types of venues to get public input. There is always online surveys/questionnaires to get input. Focus groups; Delegations to Council; email to Council. The Town has the responsibility to inform stakeholders and answer questions in a timely manner so that it could be an informed consensus.

Q9 - How often and for what reasons do you engage in person with individual unelected residents of the Town of Niagara on the Lake?

Representing residents is 1 of the 3 main duties of a Councillor, so engagement is critical in fulfilling our role. This is a constant activity: Emails, phone calls, texts, at the local grocery store, at community events. I also reach out by publishing a quarterly newsletter on timely issues. I would like to see more Council Town Halls in different areas of NOTL to engage people.

Q10 - As a rule, how soon after receiving a message from a NOTL resident do you respond to it?

If I have the information, I usually respond within 24-48 hours. If I need to get information to respond (eg staff input), it would dependent on when I get the 3rd party information. However, I would keep the resident apprised of the process and delay.

Q11 - How would you approach deciding how to vote on issues of significance to residents of Niagara on the Lake?

First rule is gather information by: going to open houses, listening to stakeholders, read staff reports and any information online (eg development proposals and all appendices), research similar issues, ask questions. Critically analyze this information against relevant policies, procedures and legislation.

Make a fair and informed decision – justify my position. Does it benefit the Town, suit the community?. I am not afraid to make the tough decisions.

Q11 - What three specific issues that affect the Town do you deem priorities to take action on?

- a) responsible growth: follow the vision outlined in the OP; infrastructure and stormwater resilience; protection of community character; and environmental resilience; protect Greenbelt
- b) Fiscal Responsibility : Focusing on long-term financial planning, the responsible use of taxpayer dollars and ensuring growth contributes appropriately to the infrastructure and services it requires.
- c) governance: no to amalgamation; need a strong voice at Region

Q12 - What action would you be inclined to take on short-term rentals in NOTL?

My main concern is the impact on neighbourhoods eg noise, hollowing of neighbourhoods. I would like to revisit the STR Committee recommendations because many were not implemented eg hosted vs non-hosted. In considering hosted STR, if implemented, there would need to be grandfathering options. Ultimately it is a balance between residents and tourists, fairness and enforcement.

Q13 - What strategies would you use to ensure that longtime Town of NOTL residents are fairly considered and able to continue living in the area if they wish to do so?

Long-time NOTL residents usually translates into seniors. Seniors need to be recognized in the Town Strategic Plan – they are currently not recognized. Ageing in place options need to be nurtured – partner with the Region, Province and private organizations. Young people and families also need options. All segments need a more stable tax base, with acceptable increments and not large fluctuations.

Short term rentals (STR) are also a factor. We need a balance between supporting tourism accommodation via STRs and protecting our residential options and neighbourhoods vitality. The concentration of STR could hollow out a healthy neighbourhood.

Q14 - How often do you shop in a Town of Niagara on the Lake supermarket or small business?

Weekly.

Q15 - Have you ever been arrested for any reason, accused of fraud or offered a bribe?

No – never.