

Questionnaire for Candidates for Elon Town Council, General Election, November 4, 2025

(Voters may vote for 2)

Questions

Steve Exum

Randy Orwig

Michael Ratigan

Tax Rates, Finance

1. Is Elon's tax rate too high, too low, or about right?

1. Too low. Our low tax rate limits progress; small increase would strengthen infrastructure, support smart town growth.
2. I'd propose a municipal rate - \$0.365 per \$100, after consulting more experienced council members.
3. About right. If much is earmarked for capital projects, it's reasonable; otherwise it's likely too high.

1. Tax rate is not about too low/ too high; it's a rate set each year by town of Elon needs.
2. Tax rate is not about too low/ too high; it's a rate set each year by town of Elon needs.

1. About right.

2. \$.040.

3. About right.

3. According to a report to the town council earlier this year, the town has accumulated a savings account, or fund balance, of approximately \$15 million, representing 180 percent of the town's annual budget (of which as much as 120 percent is undesignated) – far above the state's recommended minimum of 8 percent. Is the town's current fund balance amount too high, too low, or about right.
3a. Should the town's property tax rate be reduced, with the funds replaced by use of some of the fund balance?

3a. No. Savings should fund capital needs, not short-term tax cuts that weaken future budgets.
3b. Modernize core infrastructure – streets, sidewalks, water/ sewer, stormwater, and public safety.

3a. —
3b. Funds that are spoken about here cover holdings that are for specific projects/overages from speculation on sales tax income. Some years higher and others lower.

3a. No.

3b. Town's savings should be used responsibly for long-term capital investments, such as infrastructure, public safety, strategic land acquisition, to prepare for future growth, community needs.
4. If elected my obligation is to the town of Elon and its best interests; I will vote on what is in the town's best interest.

Board of aldermen, town employees and employee benefits, and town board benefits

4. Elon town council votes on most issues are almost always unanimous, 5-0. What consideration(s) would you make on when to cast a vote against the council majority? [50 word limit]

4. I value collaboration, but I won't vote just to go along. If the facts, community input, or my conscience point another way, I'll speak up. My job is to represent Elon honestly and thoughtfully, even if that means standing apart from the majority.

4. Question takes a negative view of council that works together well and is creating and planning good things for the town and its future. We all vote our conscience, most times turns out that it is all of us. Many of the issues are worked out long before a vote.
5. I am perfectly fine with what they pay. ...not meant to be full-time income.

5. Yes.

5. Members of the town council now make \$5,000 per year (with the mayor earning \$6,500). Are current salaries for the mayor and members of the town council adequate and fair?

5. Yes. Given the council's dedication and workload, current salaries seem fair and appropriately modest.
5a. Keep the same.

5a. –

5a. Keep the same.

5a. Would you vote to increase the amounts during your term or keep them the same?
5b. If raise, by how much, or to what level?
6. Some local governments have begun providing, at taxpayer expense, health insurance to members of their elected boards. In your view, is that an appropriate or acceptable benefit which should be provided to members of Elon's town council? [25 word limit]

5b. —
6. No. Most council members already have full-time jobs with health insurance, so adding taxpayer-funded coverage would be unnecessary and an inappropriate expense for Elon.
7.

5b. –
6. No. The Town of Elon is way too small to even deal with this kind of benefits for elected servants.

5b. —
6. No. It is not the town's responsibility to provide insurance to council members.

Town departments

7. With regard to each of the departments below, do you believe they are adequately funded, need more funding, or need less funding?

- 7a. Police
- 7b. Fire
- 7c. Public Works
- 7d. Parks & Recreation

7a. Adequately funded.
7b. Adequately funded.
7c. Adequately funded.
7d. More.

7. The town ...does what it can with resources we have to create best departments....

7.

8. If more, would you be willing to raise property taxes, if necessary, to provide additional spending for the department(s).

- a. Police
- b. Fire
- c. Public Works
- d. Parks & Recreation

8.

a. —
b. —
c. Yes.
d. Yes.

8. The town ...does what it can with resources we have to create best departments....

7a. More.
7b. More.
7c. Adequate.
7d. More.
8.

a. Yes.
b. Yes.
c. Yes.
d. Yes.

Other town policies

9. What area(s) of town spending do you feel should be increased or decreased? [50 word limit total]

9. Increased. Capital projects to encourage smart growth and infrastructure improvements and sustainable energy technology.
Decreased –

9. The town ...does what it can with resources we have to create best departments....

9. Increased: Infrastructure, road maintenance & first responders to keep pace with growth.
Decreased: Reduce non-essential spending on symbolic resolutions & outside studies that don't directly serve residents. Every dollar should strengthen services, safety & sustainability for the people who live and work here.

10. What, if anything, can be done to address to the periodic complaints from residents about homes in residential areas where Elon University students are alleged to have loud parties at night or be otherwise disruptive? (25 word limit)

10. Address noise via enforcement, landlord accountability, and a Town-Elon Good Neighbor program: party registration, quiet hours, student education, 24/7 reporting portal, date-targeted responses to hotspots.
11. About right.

10. ...We often discuss these issues through code enforcement, police involvement, communication with students/university.... We will continue being mindful and direct in dealings with these situations.
11. –

10. The town should work closely with university officials, enforce existing ordinances, and promote shared responsibility program between students and residents to maintain respect, neighborhood peace.
11. About right.

11. The town council has established a social drinking district in the downtown area that allows people to buy beer and wine for public consumption between 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. seven days a week. Is this too long, about right, or too short a time period?
11a. If changed, in what way? [25 word limit]

11a. —

11a. ...Social District is tremendous success with no problems. It has led to tremendous Block party, concerts, and has contributed to downtown that does things year-round.

11a. —

12. A consultant in the town's employ has recommended that if the town built a new three-story town hall, the town could rent out some of the space on upper floors for apartments or retail space. Would you support such uses?
12a. Does the town need that large a town hall in the first place?

12. I don't have enough information to answer in the affirmative or the negative.

12. ...town is purchasing the old Lab Corp building on Williamson to become new Town Hall.

12. No.

12a. I don't have enough information to answer in the affirmative or the negative.
13. Yes.

12a. The future of downtown development changed with that purchase.
13. We will follow law and if administration makes recommendation for further radiuses we will consider....

12a. No.

13. Yes.

13. When providing mailed notices to area residents about proposed rezoning requests, the town currently sends to residents whose property "abuts" the affected rezoning, the minimum range required by state law. Some other jurisdictions, both locally and across the state, have provided notifications to a wider radius of property owners. For instance, Graham notifies residents within 150 feet, Mebane uses 300 feet, and Burlington provides notices to those within 400 feet. Should Elon's notification radius be expanded?
13a. If yes, to what radius?

13a. Yes – expand to 300 feet, matching Mebane. It broadens outreach beyond abutters while balancing cost.

13a. –

13a. 150 feet.

Relationship with the University, board ethics

14. What is your view on the appropriate relationship between the town and the university? [50 word limit]

14. Elon University is a tremendous asset – fueling culture, innovation, and smart growth. The town-university relationship should be collaborative but independent: shared planning, data-driven problem-solving, and regular public meetings. Board ethics matter: disclose relationships, avoid favoritism, recuse when appropriate, and put residents' interests first while welcoming the university's energy and partnership.
15. Yes.

14. The town and the University will continue to create dialogue and there has been significant movement on sharing resources that help us all. We are always going to continue building that relationship as both entities grow and change.

15. This is a non-issue.

14. The town & university should maintain a professional, cooperative relationship built on mutual respect. Collaboration is important on infrastructure, safety, and community initiatives; but the town must always remain independent in its decision making, ensuring residents' voices guide policy rather than institutional influence.

15. No.

15. Should a member of the board who works for the university vote on issues before the board involving the university or on which the university has taken a position?

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15a. Why or why not? [25 word limit]

15a. Yes - with safeguards. University-employed members should disclose affiliations, follow ethics rules, recuse only for direct financial conflicts; otherwise, their insight strengthens accountable town-university collaboration.

15a. —

15a. Board members employed by the university should recuse themselves from related votes to avoid conflicts of interest and maintain the town's independence and public trust.

16. How would you recommend that members of the board of aldermen avoid any real or perceived conflict between their duties and the position of the university on certain public policy issues that might come before the board of aldermen? [50 word limit]

16. Adopt clear guardrails: disclose university ties in writing and before agenda items; recuse for direct financial interests, supervisory relationships, contracts, or hiring/funding decisions. Use transparent procedures – flag ties in memos, log ex parte contracts – and seek town attorney ethics reviews. Decide by adopted public-interest criteria, with annual ethics training.

16. A non-issue at this time.

16. Board members must disclose all potential conflicts, recuse when appropriate, and maintain transparency. Town policies should prioritize residents' interests first. Clear ethical standards, public communication, and accountability help ensure decisions reflect the community's needs, not institutional or personal interests.

17. Is the University, which is a non-profit organization and thus exempt from most taxes, providing adequate revenues to the town in exchange for available municipal services?

17. No.

17. —

17. No.

17a. If not, what more could be required? [50 word limit]

17a. Elon University currently contributes about \$491,000 a year. That's not enough for the services it uses. I'd support a simple PILOT: phase to \$1-1.5 million over three years, tied to its share of police and fire calls, with annual inflation adjustments and clear public reporting, plus capital needs funding, too.

17a. ...Town of Elon must always deal with fact that over 40% of town is tax-exempt property and that now has more income from sales tax than property tax The university...will always need to be negotiating and creating strong relationships to find ways to help which aids all of us.

17a. The university could increase its financial partnership through voluntary service payments or shared infrastructure projects, especially in areas like public safety, traffic management, and green space preservation. A stronger contribution would balance the demand on municipal resources that support both the student population & long-term residents.

18. Is having a town advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Belonging or a Sustainability Committee an appropriate function for Elon's town government?

18.

18.

18.

- a. Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Belonging
b. Sustainability Committee

18a. Yes.
18b. Yes.

18a. –
18b. –

18a. Yes.
18b. Yes.

18a. Why or why not? [25 word limit]

18c. Both are appropriate – if effective. DEB builds fairness and trust; Sustainability cuts costs and risk. Clear charters, measurable goals, timelines, and reporting deliver accountable action.

18c. ...town Committees are strength to grow town. I helped form Sustainability Committee and serve with highly qualified volunteers, citizens.... DEB is a profoundly important committee....

18c. Both committees are appropriate if they remain action-oriented, focused on education, inclusion, and practical programs that enhance Elon's quality of life without political agendas.

19. Does the council spend too much time on symbolic resolutions celebrating various days or months and, in particular, on potentially controversial social issues, such as Pride Month or Celebrate Diversity Month?

19. No.

19. No.

19. —

19a. What useful purpose(s) do these fulfill for town government? [25 word limit]

19a. No. Celebrations aren't distractions – they build belonging, joy, and civic pride. Symbolic resolutions affirm values, welcome neighbors, and strengthen community, so long as essential business proceeds.

19a. ...it is so good to have a town that is engaged.

19a. Town Council should focus primarily on local governance. Symbolic resolutions have limited practical effect and often distract from essential town business and resident priorities.

General comments

20. What is your greatest area of disagreement with action(s) taken by the town council in the past 2-5 years? (25 word limit)

20. I've had no major disagreements; this council is conscientious and results-oriented. If elected, I'll add innovative ideas, attract smart growth, and make residents' lives happier.

20. ...our council is getting things done, getting along as we do it. ...controversy is not a helpful part of the work we need to do.

20. The town needs to remain focused on issues that most directly affect resident's daily lives such as infrastructure, traffic and public safety.

21. In your view, what are the three main issues facing the town of Elon during the next five years? [50 word limit]

21. Over the next five years: 1) Modernize core infrastructure – streets, sidewalks, water/sewer, stormwater, public safety – through a transparent, phased capital plan. 2) Guide thoughtful, walkable mixed-use development that adds housing, neighborhood retail, and green space aligned with capacity. 3) Deepen the town-university partnership – better logistics and a fair, data-based PILOT.

21. 1) How growth will happen and we can be a part in creating successful growth; 2) Downtown development and beautification; 3) Continue to create a wonderful place to live looking forward to a new skate park and all the ways we connect the town for enjoyment and good living.

21. 1 – Managing growth while preserving small-town character; 2 – Investing in infrastructure, roads, and first responder resources; 3 – Balancing the university's expansion with resident's quality of life through transparent planning and fiscal responsibility. Together, these define Elon's future and community identity.