

Triad City Beat Questionnaire

Sheriff Danny Rogers

1. Why are you running for sheriff?

When I decided to run for office four years ago, I laid out a set of goals and strategies I wanted the Sheriff's Office to accomplish. And while we have realized a significant amount of those goals such as establishing transparency through agency accreditation (CALEA), increasing community engagement with a community resource unit, promoting second chances through the 1st offender and re-entry programs, launching a mental health assessment partnership, and creating equitable employment practices with sworn and non-sworn job training, there is still much work to be done. I did not accomplish these tasks on my own; I have an effective team, and our team within the Guilford County Sheriff's Office will continue these tasks to provide the kind of quality services the people of Guilford County deserve.

When I ran for Sheriff in 2018, people told me they did not think the Sheriff's Office was accessible, so another goal of mine was to change that. Therefore, another major accomplishment during this first term was implementing the Sheriff's Roundtable inviting people across the county to come in to talk and listen. This group meets once a month with both in-person and online meetings. We share information with the attendees, allowing them an opportunity to discuss any concerns they have. People want transparency and to be engaged. The Sheriff's Roundtable is an excellent way for me to make this happen. Our next meeting is on Sept. 22, where we will discuss fentanyl. If you are interested, you can call my office for details about how you can become involved.

2. Your opponent, Phil Byrd, has been critical of your leadership. What response do you have to his criticisms?

My opponent is entitled to his opinion. I do not share the same perspective, just as chickens and eagles do not share the same perspective. My focus is on the oversight of the Guilford County Sheriff's Office and the citizens of this great county.

When running for office, one can choose to share plans, goals, and strategies or criticize others. When one chooses to do the latter, it is generally because they do not have the former.

3. Why do you want to run for another term as sheriff?

It has been an honor to be elected and serve the citizens of Guilford County as Sheriff for the last 4 years. I entered the office determined to lead an agency with equal protection under the law for all Guilford County citizens and meet the needs of a remarkably diverse community. I have obtained a substantial amount of knowledge in the area of leadership and built community trust by engaging with citizens of diverse backgrounds. The top priority of the Guilford County Sheriff's Office is always the safety and well-being of all Guilford County citizens. Our objective is to enhance the quality of citizens' lives by reducing crime and the fear of crime. We have been and will continue to be proactive in our approaches to fighting crime and challenging injustice using innovative, resourceful, and aggressive methods to assure the quality of life of our citizens. Reducing crime, providing safe schools, streets,

and neighborhoods, eliminating drug and gang activity, combating sex trafficking, reducing recidivism, preventing domestic violence, and addressing mental health concerns inside and outside the detention centers, are all pertinent issues at the forefront of enhancing the safety of Guilford County. This is the work that my team began in my first term and will continue in the second.

4. What do you think are the biggest issues facing the department right now?

One of our key issues in the sheriff's office is recruitment and staffing. We have a situation where our detention officers are working mandatory overtime. This is not good for us, and it is not good for them and their families and their work-life balance. But we aren't unicorns when it comes to this issue. Like most other sheriff's offices, we are experiencing shortages. That is one of the reasons the Guilford County Commissioners approved us offering \$5,000 sign-on bonuses.

In addition, I am actively seeking staff and working with young people to help them consider a career in law enforcement when they graduate. I want them to see this work as a place where they can be successful and serve their community.

5. As you know, people are increasingly concerned about policing and how it impacts communities of color. What response would you have for people who are advocating for defunding or reforming the police?

When people say, "defund the police," I am often confused by what they mean. When I talk with them further, what I hear them saying is that they would like reform. I can say explicitly state that I do not support defunding the police. It is our job to protect and serve the community, and that is what the Guilford County Sheriff's Office will continue to do. However, I am open to reviewing policies and procedures that may warrant restructuring to meet the needs of everyone in the community. This is another reason that bringing CALEA back to the Guilford County Sheriff's office was a top priority for me, to hold everyone involved accountable for the decisions that are made throughout the Sheriff's Office and to ensure that all decisions remain transparent to the citizens that we serve daily. Continued training for our officers is required to ensure that they are well equipped to handle de-escalation of all situations that may arise, including mental health crises, to ensure the safety of our officers and citizens.

This is also another reason the Sheriff's Roundtable has been effective. When people have questions or concerns, they can come to me or my staff and share. We will investigate what they share and when we find issues, we will make changes then. I have gone beyond the rhetoric of "defund or reform the police" and tried to determine what they really mean. This is how I operate. We must have police, and we will have to police. But it must be focused on the community and its needs as a whole.

6. What do you think the GCSO should be spending the most money on?

Ultimately, our money should be focused on keeping the community safe. That is our mission, and that is what we will do. Therefore, I prioritize our budgets to ensure they are focused on the primary mission, and I make sure that this is the Sheriff's Office's primary focus.

As a result, the bulk of our money, like most other businesses, will be spent on staffing. That is why the staff must be trained. The staff must have clear instructions and effective leadership, and the tools they need to do the job. When these things are in place, it makes us good stewards of the money the public has entrusted us with.

- 7. Some people are also concerned about what seems to be an increase in police surveillance. The N&R recently reported how the GPD would increase the number of license plate readers in the city. What role do you think the GCSO plays in terms of surveillance, and what are your thoughts on these practices/technology?**

Part of our job in the sheriff's office is assisting the Greensboro and High Point police departments. And they, like us and the rest of the country, are having issues with staffing. If using this kind of technology helps keep the community safe while recognizing our staffing needs, then it is worth investigating.

- 8. There have been a few notable deaths in local jails in the past few years, including in Guilford County. What would you do to improve jail conditions and prevent these deaths?**

Of course, our goal is to prevent any deaths associated with the Guilford County Detention Center. Unfortunately, when people are brought into the detention center, any issues that they were battling outside of the detention center such as mental health, drug addiction, etc. are now inside. I find irony in the fact that when the Guilford County detention center opened its doors in 2012, the oldest mental health hospital in North Carolina closed on the same day. And since then, incarceration seems to have become a storage facility for people in crisis. As a result, our team is committed to enhancing and expanding reentry initiatives that will reduce crime, increase services for mental illness, and bring positive transformations to families. We have partnered with an external agency that allows inmates access to mental health services. Additionally, ensuring adequate staffing and training are priorities to ensure the safety of our medical personnel, detention center residents and officers.

- 9. Why do you think people should vote for you compared to your opponent?**

I do not want the community to place my role as the Sheriff over being a human first. Relationships are and always have been extremely valuable to me, especially my relationships with the Guilford County citizens. In relationship, promises are made. When I was elected as Sheriff of this great county almost 4 years ago, I made a promise for "A Positive Change for all Guilford County Citizens." For any citizens who have this question, I ask them to assess my record as Sheriff. I have maintained that promise and accomplished many of the goals I had to ensure that promise. As mentioned previously, my team has established transparency through agency accreditation (CALEA), increased community engagement with a community resource unit, improved accessibility to the office with the Sheriff's Roundtable, promoted second chances through the first offender and re-entry programs, launched a mental health assessment partnership, and created equitable employment practices with sworn and non-sworn job training.

In addition to those promises, I cannot emphasize enough how much safety is my greatest priority. As a result, violent and property crime rates are down significantly since I began my term in 2018. These are the results the citizens of Guilford County expect from a Sheriff in his first term. I have delivered on those expectations.

10. Anything else you would like to mention?

Our office is representative of our diverse community. I'm proud to lead the most diverse Sheriff's Office in the history of Guilford County with 19 nations represented. Guilford County Sheriff's Office is the third largest in North Carolina serving close to 560,000 citizens with more than 600 employees that include sworn, non-sworn, and civilian staff. I look forward to continue serving Guilford County for another term.

11. How do you think the changing laws around abortion have affected GCSO policies and the agency as an agency operating in one of the last abortion-protected states in the South?

At this time, changes to the federal abortion laws have not impacted the Guilford County Sheriff's Office as women's rights in North Carolina remain protected. The Guilford County Sheriff's Office will uphold the law and continue to protect women's rights as the law stipulates.