

Christine Kelly

**Media Report**

**Draft**

**July 3, 2022**

# Part I Introduction

This report reviews electronically available news stories on Christine Kelly, candidate for North Carolina State House District 37. It also includes a transcript of an interview with Kelly, as an Appendix.

The Table of Contents in **Part II** of the report is a useful guide to the entire report and can be used as a stand-alone summary. In one section, it surveys the bulk of the news file, through the headlines we have assigned to each item.

**Part III**, the **Greatest Hits** section, identifies key points taken from available media articles.

**Parts IV**, **The News File**, contain edited copies of the most relevant electronically available stories.

We hope you find this useful.

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## Part III Kelly: Greatest Hits from Media Review

### Background

From an April 2022 questionnaire by the local on-line “Indyweek”.

- Age: 59
- Party affiliation: Democrat
- Occupation & employer: Sr. Marketing Digital Manager, SAS Institute
- Years lived in North Carolina: 30 years
- What in your background qualifies you to represent the people of North Carolina effectively? What would you cite as your three biggest career accomplishments?
  - I believe I can represent the people of North Carolina effectively because of my four years of service on the Holly Springs Town Council alongside my decades of community service in Southern Wake County—including my membership in the Holly Springs Rotary, Holly Springs MLK Jr. Committee, NC State Oaks Leadership Scholars Program Steering Committee, League of Women Voters of Wake County, NAACP Raleigh-Apex Branch, Holly Springs Volunteer Coordinator for Western Regional Food Security Action Group, NC Free Moms Hugs, and NC Moms Demand Action. I have a history of tackling community issues, such as my efforts to work with Wake County to address odor issues from the South Wake Landfill in Holly Springs. My passion for my community and my knowledge of Southern Wake, make me qualified to represent North Carolinians in District 37. (Indyweek, 4/28/22)

Kelly was born in Ontario and received a BA from the University of Waterloo in 1987. She moved to North Carolina in the early 1990s. Before that, “I grew up in a small French-Canadian town of 5000, and then my high school years were the mining town of 500. And then I went to school in a town of about 100,000 outside of Toronto, lived in Toronto, lived in Calgary, lived in LA, came back to Toronto.”

Her family is not mentioned on her website. A podcast interview from 2021 indicates she has a husband Charles known as “Chip” and has children as well one of whom was in law school in 2021.

### Holly Springs Town Council

Kelly was elected to the Town Council in 2017, and a December 2017 feature in the Raleigh News Observer indicates she was a “divisive” candidate representing an “anti-growth” faction.

- During last month's election, voters booted out two Town Council members who were considered pro-growth and replaced them with newcomers who want to slow the pace of growth so roads, sidewalks and schools can catch up. The top vote-getter in the November election was Christine Kelly, who emerged as a divisive candidate after she accused some town leaders of ethics violations and complained about a plan to close part of the street where she lives.
- Tensions were apparent Tuesday, Dec. 5, when the new six-member council met for the first time. A majority of the council selected Tom O'Brien as mayor pro tem instead of Cheri Ann Lee, who has been on the board since 2011, highlighting the emergence of two competing factions.
- Mayor Dick Sears, who has led the town for 16 years, and Lee are aligned as pro-growth leaders who have supported countless new subdivisions and commercial projects. Under Sears' watch, the town has gotten a cultural center, a library, new parks, a nature center and a baseball stadium.
- Jimmy Cobb and Hank Dickson, who lost their re-election bids last month, were generally seen as allies with Sears and Lee. But now a majority of the council members say they want to take a more cautious approach to growth: Kelly, O'Brien, Dan Berry and Peter Villadsen.
- "I think in order for a town to survive, we have to grow," O'Brien said. "I don't see anyone on the council as stopping growth at all, but the number one concern is traffic. How do we help support infrastructure for the growth of the town? How do we fix that?".....

The article describes how contentious the races were and how Kelly made accusations of unethical conduct that were found to have no merit.

- Along with disagreements about how the town should deal with growth, council members are still licking their wounds from the heated election. Campaign signs for candidates on both sides of the growth debate were defaced, knocked down and stolen. Discussions on Facebook groups have included unfounded accusations and name-calling – "sore losers," "unfair," "petty."
- Ill will peaked in mid-October when then-candidate Kelly publicly accused Sears, Lee, Cobb, Dickson and town attorney John Schifano of violating various sections of the town's Code of Ethics and Conduct. In 53 allegations, Kelly accused the group of voting with bias on a proposal that would close a portion of her street, making inappropriate comments on social media and accepting improper campaign contributions.
- Holly Springs hired Katie Hartzog, a Raleigh attorney, to investigate the claims, and she found no merit to Kelly's allegations. The attorney said Kelly had lodged the complaint in an effort to delay the council's vote on a downtown project.
- "Ms. Kelly stated that she had a 'hunch' about potential violations but offered no specific facts," Hartzog wrote in a Nov. 22 report. "In conclusion, I have found no credible evidence of an ethics violation in this matter."

- The Town Council agreed to ask Kelly to voluntarily pay the \$9,000 spent on legal fees. Kelly denied to comment on the request, and she said the allegations were not made as a political ploy to gain votes. “I don’t think the election was about that complaint,” she said. “The election was about the issues like discussed on the Citizens for the Responsible Growth (Facebook) page. The outcome of the election was not changed because of that.”.....
- Some people started writing posts on Facebook calling for Kelly’s resignation before she took office. Kelly said she has no plans to resign. (RNO, 12/5/17)

In 2021 Kelly described these as her greatest accomplishments as a Council member.

- Three of the highlights of my time on the Holly Springs Town Council are:
  - 1). I was instrumental in making Holly Springs a Tree City USA community. Along with achieving that designation, I also helped to put in place Tree Preservation Ordinances and a Tree Advisory Board.
  - 2). I fought for funding to ensure everyone serving on our police force wears body cameras. To increase transparency further, I helped to launch a web portal to demonstrate to our community that our public safety teams are dedicated to serving all residents.
  - 3). I helped to approve key economic development deals with FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies and Amgen Inc., which will result in over 1,000 quality jobs in our community. An even further-reaching impact will be that these deals will change our commercial tax base. Meaning, it will help the area by giving us more opportunities for funding future infrastructure needs and extending town services. (IndyWeek, 4/28/22)

### **Loses Mayor’s Race**

In 2021, Kelly ran for Mayor of Holly Springs (and gave up her place on the Council). She opposed the fact that outgoing Mayor Sears had not imposed a mask mandate.

- “In talking to business owners and residents, especially to those with kids under 12, there is great anxiety on how COVID can impact them. It’s been proven by many leading medical organizations that getting the COVID vaccination is effective at minimizing the risks of infection and the severity of symptom for breakthrough infections. Wearing masks has become crucial to manage the risks associated with these emerging, very contagious variants. Having a mask mandate would help our residents and businesses do their part to reduce the spread of COVID. It would help businesses adhere to a town mask mandate, instead of having to try to implement one themselves.
- “If we were not living through a pandemic no one would have to wear a mask. However, knowing people in our town who have had COVID, knowing others who have died of COVID, we need to take this virus very seriously. If we rally together to get vaccinated and wear masks, we will have less spread of COVID in our town.” (RNO, 10/15/21)

These represented her goals as mayor:

- I would focus on these in my first year: 1) Increase resident outreach with enhanced communications, neighborhood meetings (in person and video) and improve the lines of communications to the town government to help our ALL residents and businesses feel more connected. I look forward to adopting and promoting more diversity, equity and inclusion efforts within our community. 2) Work to enhance mayor and council engagement to improve communications and build collaboration. In the same fashion, work with other municipalities and government groups to promote open dialog and further champion projects for our town. 3) Continue to work to improve the quality of life for our residents, for example continue to work closely with those that can address odor issues from the local landfill. (RNO, 10/15/21)

She lost overwhelmingly to Republican Sean Mayefskie. (RNO, 11/4/21)

## **Running for State House**

Kelly narrowly won a three-way primary for the NC 37 seat held by one term Republican Erin Pare. The race is considered essential for the Republican ability to regain a “supermajority” as Pare had narrowly ousted Sydney Batch two years earlier.

### **RNO Endorsement**

Kelly received the RNO endorsement because she is evidently regarded as the most liberal of the candidates.

- Our choice candidate, however, is Christine Kelly, a former member of the Holly Springs Town Council who works in marketing at SAS Institute. Kelly has spent years talking with people across the political spectrum, and sees the need to get our strongest written policy out of committee. She has been endorsed by NC AFL-CIO, and was also recognized as a “Progressive Candidate” by the North Carolina Democratic Party’s Progressive Caucus. We recommend Christine Kelly for District 37. (NRO, 4/27/22)

In their questionnaire, Kelly couldn’t even name one thing she differed with the Democratic Party on.

- My values align with the Democratic Party, and I’m not aware of any areas where we disagree. (RNO, 4/24/22)

### **Issues - Abortion**

- Reproductive rights should be considered health care. An individual’s decisions regarding their pregnancy should be up to themselves, their doctors, and not the government. I oppose legislation that would limit a person’s right to make choices and decisions regarding their own bodies. (RNO, 4/24/22)

### **Issues - Minimum Wage**

- I support raising North Carolina's minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour. Bills like NC House Bill 289 (2017) & NC Senate Bill 673 (2021)—which have phased-approaches for increasing the minimum wage of \$7.25 to \$15—need to be brought to the floor for a vote, instead of being stalled in committees. Another initiative I support that would benefit all North Carolinians, including low-income families, would be to expand our state broadband internet coverage. We need to make broadband fully accessible and affordable for all households, businesses, and schools. (Indyweek, 4/28/22)

### **Issues - Opposes Parents Bill of Rights**

- Activists continue to maintain it is harmful legislation. Some suggested that the resources and attention be dedicated elsewhere. "Why don't they spend more time actually working to get our teachers more pay. To give them money for resources?" Christine Kelly, who is in opposition, asked. (WNCN, 6/14/22)

### **Issues - LGBT**

Kelly denounced the recent refusal of Holly Springs to adopt broader anti-discrimination ordinances against gays.

- Christine Kelly, a former Holly Springs Town Council member, said there was no reason for the council to not accept the ordinance. She was one of the other members to support the council adopting the resolution in October. "We tried hard when I was on council to do something," Kelly said. "Love is love is not enough anymore. We have to do more." (Durham Herald-Sun, 6/16/22)

### **Issues - Climate Change**

- I believe the state government has an obligation to prevent impacts of climate change. Here are some policies I support to address climate change in North Carolina:
  - I support legislation to bring a reduction in the emission of carbon dioxide and work towards carbon neutrality. I applaud Governor Cooper's Executive Orders No. 246 detailing next steps on the path to a clean energy and equitable economy for North Carolina. I also am excited about his Executive Order No. 80, which allows for North Carolina to address climate change, and transition to a clean energy economy.
  - I support legislation that supports clean water—protecting and cleaning ground and surface water, as well as passing policies to hold polluters accountable for the clean-up. I also believe there should be fines in proportion to the damage caused by their actions.



- I support legislation to expand green building programs. Having more structures LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified is a step in the right direction. We need to incentivize this for both new construction and existing buildings in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (Indyweek, 4/28/22)

### **Issues - Education**

- The steps are already laid out by the Leandro case on how to fund our schools. We need to fight to make sure those promises are fulfilled. As a priority we need to increase teacher pay, and diversify our workforce so that teachers are a better representation of our students.....the Supreme Court of North Carolina's decision in Leandro v. The State of North Carolina (1997) affirmed that the state has a constitutional responsibility to provide every student with an equal opportunity for a sound basic education and that the state was failing to meet that responsibility. As documented in this action plan, the challenges of meeting this responsibility have increased since the original decision, and North Carolina needs to significantly increase its commitment and efforts to provide for the education of every student. In order to do so, we will need to strategically improve and transform multiple components of our education system—from ensuring an adequate supply of qualified teachers and principals, to improving curriculum, instruction and assessment, to more effectively addressing the needs of at-risk students, and addressing the persistent gaps in achievement among groups of students. (Indyweek, 4/28/22)

### **Issues - Marijuana**

- I support passing the North Carolina Compassionate Care Act which has bipartisan support in the NC Senate. It sets a list of conditions by which patients with certain conditions, or in hospice, would be allowed to use marijuana as treatment. I would support that legislation when it comes before the NC House. I am open to learning more about how legalizing recreational marijuana would benefit our State economically, as it has in other states. (Indyweek, 4/28/22)

### **Issues - Medicaid Expansion**

- I support expanding Medicaid in North Carolina. We need to focus on healthcare priorities so that we close the current coverage gap for those who are not eligible for Medicaid, help small businesses with programs for them to have cost-effective health insurance plans for their employees, and work with prescription drug companies to lower the costs of drug prices. I fully support the work that the 'Joint Legislative Committee on Access to Healthcare and Medicaid Expansion' is doing as they search for ways to expand healthcare access to North Carolinians most in need. I support expanding the Innovations Waivers. There are 12,000 IDD (intellectually and developmentally disabled) patients on innovation waivers, with an equal amount on the waitlist. The current expansion for Innovation Waivers does not address the long and growing waitlist. We must increase the number of slots available because disability rights are human rights. (Indyweek, 4/28/22)

## Part IV Kelly: The News File, 2017-22

2017

### DEC 2017 Elected to Town Council; Considered “Divisive”

A familiar fight is playing out in this growing suburban town, where some people celebrate new neighbors, restaurants and stores while others bemoan traffic jams and crowded schools.

But unlike many growth disputes throughout the Triangle that quickly fizzle, this one is bitterly dividing residents and reshaping the town’s governing board. The way it all plays out could set the tone for years to come in terms of new development and construction.

“There’s another Civil War, but this time it’s within Holly Springs,” said longtime resident Kevin Adams, who volunteers with the town and manages a Facebook group that encourages discussion about local issues.

During last month’s election, voters booted out two Town Council members who were considered pro-growth and replaced them with newcomers who want to slow the pace of growth so roads, sidewalks and schools can catch up.

The top vote-getter in the November election was Christine Kelly, who emerged as a divisive candidate after she accused some town leaders of ethics violations and complained about a plan to close part of the street where she lives.

Tensions were apparent Tuesday, Dec. 5, when the new six-member council met for the first time. A majority of the council selected Tom O’Brien as mayor pro tem instead of Cheri Ann Lee, who has been on the board since 2011, highlighting the emergence of two competing factions.

Mayor Dick Sears, who has led the town for 16 years, and Lee are aligned as pro-growth leaders who have supported countless new subdivisions and commercial projects. Under Sears’ watch, the town has gotten a cultural center, a library, new parks, a nature center and a baseball stadium.

Jimmy Cobb and Hank Dickson, who lost their re-election bids last month, were generally seen as allies with Sears and Lee.

But now a majority of the council members say they want to take a more cautious approach to growth: Kelly, O’Brien, Dan Berry and Peter Villadsen.

“I think in order for a town to survive, we have to grow,” O’Brien said. “I don’t see anyone on the council as stopping growth at all, but the number one concern is traffic. How do we help support infrastructure for the growth of the town? How do we fix that?”

About 19 miles southwest of downtown Raleigh, Holly Springs didn’t have a modern sewage system until the early 1990s, let alone shopping plazas and sprawling subdivisions. As the Triangle grew, so did Holly

Springs, into a bustling family-friendly suburb of more than 33,000 people. Many residents commute to jobs in Raleigh and Research Triangle Park, an easier trip now that the state has extended N.C. 540 through town.

Christine Kelly walking up Christine Kelly walks to the front of the Holly Springs council chambers to take her oath as a new council member on Dec. 5, 2017.

Sears said it will be bad for Holly Springs if the Town Council starts to deny development proposals. Developers might choose to take their business to Apex or Fuquay-Varina instead, he said, and Holly Springs would possibly have to raise taxes to compensate for slower growth.

He said the new council members' concerns about infrastructure are understandable, but unrealistic.

"I think what I've got to instill in the newbies is that the system for growth doesn't quite work that way," Sears said. "It doesn't work like, let's get all the sidewalks and roads and bridges and then deal with the developments coming in."

Along with disagreements about how the town should deal with growth, council members are still licking their wounds from the heated election. Campaign signs for candidates on both sides of the growth debate were defaced, knocked down and stolen. Discussions on Facebook groups have included unfounded accusations and name-calling – "sore losers," "unfair," "petty."

Ill will peaked in mid-October when then-candidate Kelly publicly accused Sears, Lee, Cobb, Dickson and town attorney John Schifano of violating various sections of the town's Code of Ethics and Conduct. In 53 allegations, Kelly accused the group of voting with bias on a proposal that would close a portion of her street, making inappropriate comments on social media and accepting improper campaign contributions.

Holly Springs hired Katie Hartzog, a Raleigh attorney, to investigate the claims, and she found no merit to Kelly's allegations. The attorney said Kelly had lodged the complaint in an effort to delay the council's vote on a downtown project.

"Ms. Kelly stated that she had a 'hunch' about potential violations but offered no specific facts," Hartzog wrote in a Nov. 22 report. "In conclusion, I have found no credible evidence of an ethics violation in this matter."

The Town Council agreed to ask Kelly to voluntarily pay the \$9,000 spent on legal fees. Kelly denied to comment on the request, and she said the allegations were not made as a political ploy to gain votes.

"I don't think the election was about that complaint," she said. "The election was about the issues like discussed on the Citizens for the Responsible Growth (Facebook) page. The outcome of the election was not changed because of that."

Much of the back-and-forth debate about growth in Holly Springs continues to play out on Facebook groups: Citizens for the Responsible Growth of Holly Springs, which supports increased infrastructure, and the Citizens for Responsible Truth of Holly Springs, which supports the previous council.

Some people pointed out that the Anti-Bullying Committee, an effort spearheaded by Sears to combat bullying in schools, was not registered as a nonprofit with the Internal Revenue Service. The IRS status is pending, and the group is registered as a nonprofit with the state of North Carolina.

Sears became a meme last month when the Facebook group Holly Springs Memes posted a picture of him with the caption, "For God's sake will someone shut Sears Facebook access down."

Sears said the drama has become so intense that he won't seek re-election in 2020.

Screen Shot 2017-12-11 at 10.30.40 AMA Facebook post calls for newly elected Holly Springs Town Council member Christine Kelly to resign.

Some people started writing posts on Facebook calling for Kelly's resignation before she took office. Kelly said she has no plans to resign.

Tensions about growth bled into the real world in March, when Lee said she was harangued at her son's soccer game. The incident was about her vote to approve a new housing development on Honeycutt Road that will add 392 single family homes and 210 multi-family buildings on the southwest side of town.

"I'm worried about Holly Springs now," Lee said of the new council. "I feel like this is all a power trip and not what's best for the town. ... The old regime needed some change, but people need to remember this group is what made Holly Springs the place where everyone wants to live."

Kelly said voters have made it clear they weren't happy with the town's direction.

"From the election results, I believe that the residents of Holly Springs were looking for change," she said. "I know that change is not always easy, but I look forward to working with everyone on the new opportunities in town."

Council members say they hope to put any hard feelings aside and work together.

"My opinion is that if there's an elephant in the room, then we should talk about it and work it out to do what's right for the town," Berry said.

Dickson, who was not re-elected, shared some advice for the new council members during his last meeting earlier this month.

"You must have thick skin," he said. "If you don't now, grow some, because you are now wearing a target. Get ready. It starts in a few minutes."

On Facebook, some people are gearing up for a bumpy ride.

"I, for one, am very much looking forward to watching our newly reelected Mayor work with the new Council members," Peter Hewitt wrote Nov. 11 on the Citizens for the Responsible Growth of Holly Springs page. "Do they allow popcorn in the Council Chambers?" (RNO, 12/11/17)

## 2021

### OCT 2021 RNO Profile on Running For Mayor

Holly Springs will have a new mayor for the first time in nearly 20 years.

Richard “Dick” Sears is not seeking another term as mayor of Holly Springs.

Two people are seeking to replace him: City Council member Christine Kelly and political newcomer Sean Mayefskie.

Early voting in the Nov. 2 election begins Oct. 14 and runs through Oct. 30.

To find polling places and full details on early voting, visit [wakevotesearly.com](http://wakevotesearly.com) or contact the Board of Elections at 919-404-4040 or [voter@wakegov.com](mailto:voter@wakegov.com)

Name: Christine Kelly

Age: 58

Residence: 201 Grigsby Ave.

Occupation: Sr. Marketing Manager, SAS Institute Inc.

Education: Bachelor of Mathematics, University of Waterloo and Master of Wealth and Trust Management, Campbell University

Political or civic experience: Finishing four-year term on Holly Springs Town Council

Campaign website: [www.christineforhsmayor.com](http://www.christineforhsmayor.com)

In August, Holly Springs Mayor Dick Sears decided against ordering a mask mandate like some other Wake County towns. Do you agree with this decision?

No, in talking to business owners and residents, especially to those with kids under 12, there is great anxiety on how COVID can impact them. It’s been proven by many leading medical organizations that getting the COVID vaccination is effective at minimizing the risks of infection and the severity of symptom for breakthrough infections. Wearing masks has become crucial to manage the risks associated with these emerging, very contagious variants. Having a mask mandate would help our residents and businesses do their part to reduce the spread of COVID. It would help businesses adhere to a town mask mandate, instead of having to try to implement one themselves.

If we were not living through a pandemic no one would have to wear a mask. However, knowing people in our town who have had COVID, knowing others who have died of COVID, we need to take this virus very

seriously. If we rally together to get vaccinated and wear masks, we will have less spread of COVID in our town.

What is Holly Springs doing right, and wrong, on managing growth?

Holly Springs has done a lot of things right in the last few years. I'm proud to have been a part of the following:

« created and adopted a several key strategic plans, with others being worked on such as a Housing Affordability study.

« implemented historical preservation and tree preservation ordinances.

« hired new staff resulting in town efficiency gains, better service and more transparency.

« attracted small and large businesses to increase our commercial tax base.

« increased resident outreach and communications .

Yet we have more work to do. With rapid growth, comes challenges that the town has inherited or perhaps contributed to which needs to be addressed:

« Lack of housing options and housing affordability options.

« Infrastructure challenges due to some inadequate roads and sidewalks resulting in traffic congestion and pedestrian safety.

« Insufficient sustainability initiatives.

« Investing properly in our town employees in training, and improved systems.

If elected, what would your two or three priorities be during your first year in office?

We have had three mayors who have served our town since 1983, Mayor Holleman, Mayor Womble and Mayor Sears. We have seen our town grow from about 1,000 residents to over 42,000.

Following their legacies, I would focus on these in my first year: 1) Increase resident outreach with enhanced communications, neighborhood meetings (in person and video) and improve the lines of communications to the town government to help our ALL residents and businesses feel more connected. I look forward to adopting and promoting more diversity, equity and inclusion efforts within our community. 2) Work to enhance mayor and council engagement to improve communications and build collaboration. In the same fashion, work with other municipalities and government groups to promote open dialog and further champion projects for our town. 3) Continue to work to improve the quality of life for our residents, for example continue to work closely with those that can address odor issues from the local landfill.

What unique skills or life perspective would you bring to city governance?

I have lived in Holly Springs in the same house for 29 years and throughout these years, I have been every involved in our community such as being the PTA president for several of our schools, to working tirelessly to help local nonprofits like Holly Springs Rotary, Holly Springs MLK Jr. Committee. I know our community very well.

My work history consists of working in a family-run. small business, in a town much like Holly Springs was 30 years ago. I understand and want to help our small businesses thrive in our community. As a 30-year employee of SAS Institute Inc, I have built experience in sales, marketing and management. These skills make it easy for me to go from a small business conversation, to working with executives of large global company. And more importantly, I have served the Holly Springs on Town Council for this last term of four years. With this knowledge I am ready to transition from a Town Council role to one of mayor. (RNO, 10/15/21)

### **OCT 2021    Indy Week Questionnaire**

Name: Christine Kelly

Age: 59

Party Affiliation: Democratic

Campaign Website: christineforhsmayor.com

Occupation & employer: Sr. Marketing Manager, SAS Institute Inc.

Years lived in Holly Springs: 29

1) In 300 words or less, please give us—and our readers—your elevator pitch:

Why are you running:

As a 29-year resident of Holly Springs and a current town council member since 2017, I know the opportunities the town has before us. I'm excited to embrace the changes with the addition of new businesses and neighborhoods. I feel strongly that these opportunities will be enriched when we balance and support the needs of current residents. I have the knowledge, experience, and passion to lead our town into this next chapter.

Why should voters entrust you with this position?

My history as a resident and community advocate, and my current local government experience gives me a unique view into how to move the Mayoral position forward as our town grows in support of our residents. My 30 years work experience at a large local software company in many management and customer facing roles, brings the experience and knowledge needed when building effective

public/private partnerships. And, as a wife and mother, I will bring the perspective that decisions are made, not just for the immediate benefit, but for current and future generations of residents.

What are your priorities, and what would you want to see the town council do differently or better over the course of your term?

My philosophy for the Mayor's position is to advocate for a quality of life in the community for all residents and businesses, with a focus on community, collaboration, and compassion.

My priority will be to leverage the experience I gathered on town council to approach the position with a fresh perspective as this will be the first new Mayor in 20 years. My efforts will focus on ensuring that the collaboration between council, staff, the community, and business partners is open, transparent, and collaborative.

2) Given the direction of Holly Springs government, would you say things are on the right course?

Yes, we are on the right track, but there is more work to do.

The things I believe we've done right include:

Preserving our small town feel through the adoption of Tree Preservation and Historical Preservation ordinances. This work resulted in Holly Springs becoming a Tree City USA.

Making decisions based on new and updated plans supporting the priority areas in our strategic plan. Prior to joining council in 2017, there were several plans which had not been updated in years. Now we have adopted a new Strategic Plan, a new Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Plan, a new Parks and Recreation and Greenway Master Plan, and others are in process for an updated Unified Development Ordinance and Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

Infrastructure investments are a priority, and we are leveraging all public and private partnerships available to help address our needs. Our residents voted in support of a \$40 Million Transportation Bond in 2018 and we have work that has begun on several of the proposed projects.

A newly adopted Affordable Housing Study which will help provide options for how we can ease the lack of housing affordability in our town.

If not, for what specific changes will you advocate if elected?

I'd advocate for more sustainability and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives. These are areas that we have seen some movement in the last 4 years, but we need to do a lot more work in these areas.

Some issues we are experiencing in our town such as traffic congestion or housing availability, can get some relief through innovative partnerships. These partnerships can be private, such as the new companies investing in our town who share similar goals, or public with aid from county, state, and federal funds. Our town has had success in such partnerships in the past and I will work to advocate for more.



3) What are three of the most pressing issues the town currently faces? How would you propose to address them? Please be specific.

#### 1. Managing Smart Growth

Holly Springs is experiencing both residential and commercial growth at a rate we have never seen. To do this well, we will need to increase our staff, improve necessary infrastructure while protecting and preserving our unique qualities.

Our current efforts to update our key plans for Land Use, our development ordinances and having future developers adhere to these new plans will be key to our success.

#### 2. Addressing Landfill Odor Issues in Holly Springs

It's no secret that we are experiencing odor issues being reported by neighborhoods and businesses negatively due to local area landfills, one being the South Wake Landfill. I shared reports and data analysis I created using odor complaints dating back to 2016 with Wake County and GLF Environmental to show how our town has been negatively impacted. This work helped establish a series of monthly meetings with interested parties to discuss ways to reduce the odor complaints. We are seeing some progress in odor reduction and expect for this effort to continue with positive results.

#### 3. Increased Transparency, Collaboration and Communications from the Mayor's office

The Mayor and Council are there to serve our community. I believe we need to have an open-door policy and be accessible to residents. We also need to be out in the community to listen and learn from residents and businesses on an ongoing basis. Since this will be the first new Mayor in 20 years, I see this as a great opportunity to leverage multi-media platforms to increase two-way communications. More input from the community increases collaboration and provides an opportunity for more transparency.

3) What's the best or most important thing the town council has done in the past year?

Our Council approved several key Economic Development deals with FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies and a few months later, AMGEN which will result in over 1000 new great paying jobs in our community. These companies are making large investments which will help our town transition from a bedroom community to one with employment opportunities. These deals will change our tax base from 80/20% residential/business to 70/30%. Increasing our commercial tax base will help the town opening opportunities for funding future infrastructure needs and extending town services.

Alternatively, name a decision you believe the council got wrong or an issue you believe the town should have handled differently.

I believe we have an opportunity to work with the public in advance of town council meetings for them to know ways to engage and provide input for development projects near their homes. I can think of several meetings where I believe council made the right decision, however residents voiced frustrations after the meeting because they did not know of the opportunity to provide their input. As a town we are posting meeting announcements to meet all legal obligations, essentially doing what "we need to do." However,

following that process may result in missing communicating with those who fall outside the required notification area, but are still impacted. For example, Google Maps and Waze has resulted in more cars using neighborhood roads as a traffic cut-through. I'd like for the town to work on more ways to engage around a proposed development using more of "what we could do". At the end of the day, most developers want to be good neighbors. This will help that achieve that goal.

5) What prior experience will make you an effective member of the town council and advocate of the issues listed above?

Serving on town council these last years have given me the opportunity to learn how the town operates, build key relationships with staff, and learn how town council works to serve our community.

With these skills, I can engage with residents and businesses to learn of issues with the town and hear of ideas for improvements. I have the business skills to know how to build and work effectively with teams to collaborate on finding solutions.

Please note any endorsements you have received that you consider significant.

I am proud of following endorsements because addressing the issues important to these groups will result in a better, healthier community.

Equality NC  
Wake County Democratic Party

6) Given the rate of growth in Holly Springs, how will you ensure that growth is well managed and enhances the town rather than detracts from it?

Our Vision Holly Springs Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2019, provides the roadmap on how our town can grow in a smart way, incorporating new building best practices and standards. This plan has created with input and participation from residents, businesses, and future investors in our town.

Where does density and height fit in in planning decisions, if it does?

Our Future Land Use Map and Character Areas in the Vision Holly Springs Comprehensive Plan discusses the recommendations for various character areas like Regional Centers, Downtown Village District and Mixed-Use Centers. Each of these have specific guidelines from building scale and massing, to open space and natural resource areas requirements. We are also updating our Unified Development Ordinances to align with our new character land use areas. This new UDO will open opportunities for more innovation in the types and mix of buildings that can be built in designated areas.

How do you intend to balance growth with sustainability?

As outlined in our updated UDO, our town will continue to enforce tree preservation, open space areas with new developments as well as encourage solar and electric vehicle charging stations. We are moving forward with adding ordinances and requirements within the boundaries allowed by our NC General Statutes.

7) As with most places in the Triangle, Holly Springs is grappling with issues related to affordable housing. How would you like to see the town approach affordability issues over the next few years?

Our town is embarking on a new Affordable Housing Study. This study will help determine how our town can work towards more affordable housing and housing affordability options. This is a needed study since our average house price is over \$500,000 and we are seeing a lack of housing availability. Lack of affordable housing is impacting the ability of residents to live and retire in the same town.

While this study is ongoing, we continue to work with developers using innovative ways to encourage more housing affordability output. One success story this year is working with a developer who voluntarily designated 50 units as workforce housing in a new apartment complex. Another success is working with Wake County on a public/private economic development deal which included 128 affordable housing units to be managed by DHIC. We need to continue to encourage more of these opportunities with each development opportunity.

Should it promote apartment living, duplexes, and/or triplexes?

I can see all these options as viable to help create more affordable living units in our town. The study will help identify these types of opportunities.

Encourage density in single family housing?

Yes, our current zoning allows for a variety of homes in neighborhoods with different density to encourage a mix of housing. This study can help us determine more ways to encourage housing affordability options.

What do you believe the town is doing right?

So much has happened in since I've been elected on council since 2017 which I believe is heading the town in the right direction. The momentum started with the hiring of a new Town Manager and other key positions after several of our staff retired. Seeing the leadership of new staff members working with existing staff has helped our town be prepared for the growth we are experiencing. This new team has created a more agile, service-oriented organization, pushed for adoption of new critical software systems, and implemented departmental restructuring to help align the expertise in key teams.

Holly Springs is ranked the #1 safest city in North Carolina, and our Fire Department was awarded No 1 ISO Rating, making it a top 1% of fire departments nationally. I fully support all budgetary requests coming from our police and fire departments to make sure they have what they need to keep our community safe. Even with these recognitions, both our police and fire have continued their community outreach to ensure everyone feels safe in our town. There were lessons learned from the many community discussions occurring with the Black Lives Matter movement, and we listened. One outcome is that we are investing in body-worn cameras for all our police. To increase transparency, a new Police Transparency web portal was launched to show our community that our public safety teams are dedicated to serving all residents.

What could it do better?

With accelerating growth, comes stresses to our current infrastructure and town services.

Our town needs to make sure we continue to provide the services to our residents in an equitable way. We need to keep mindful of the areas of town that are lacking infrastructure and facilities and plan to address those deficiencies.

We have an opportunity to help our community be more connected, by providing programs that include the various diverse communities. Our Parks and Recreation department is one way to support more and different programs to reach underserved residents.

As a town, I believe we have a great opportunity to improve the types and ways we have for residents and businesses to communicate with town, and vice versa. One example if we are looking at a 311 system to allow an easy way for residents to engage for non-emergency requests. We have increased our communications around town projects, upcoming open houses, new board positions. This area can always grow, and I believe needs more resources to help enhance our web outreach and other communication methods.

8) What infrastructure needs does Holly Springs currently have?

Our new Comprehensive Transportation Plan has identified areas on need in our town to increase safety, accessibility and reduce congestion. The new plan will help prioritize the areas of needing most attention and we will look for ways to address these areas of need.

We recently approved funding for initiative to establish new water sources for future needs. Collaborating with other municipalities, this project is working on new future water sources to service us for decades to come. We are meeting our water needs now, but we are also being proactive for future growth.

Other programs for storm water, waste pickup, code enforcements are all being evaluated for cost savings and better service opportunities. We are experiencing the aging of infrastructure which after several decades may needs to be repair, upgraded or modernization. Our challenge is looking at innovated ways to fund priorities this work.

How should the city address these needs and pay for them?

Some areas of infrastructure needs, such as our storm water, have been underfunded in the past. In analysis, we are also seeing that we have been charging less for some fees than most other municipalities.

We are looking at ways to incrementally address the funding needs by implementing best practice approaches to fee schedules. We started with storm water fees last year and now looking at other areas for service improvements and cost savings and/or fee alignments to cover more costs.

Having more commercial investment in our town will also open avenues for paying for key infrastructure projects in the future.

Finally, we need to leverage the ability to have bonds, or work with government partners to help finance the bigger infrastructure needs for our town. The recent Transportation Bond is an example of that.

9) Holly Springs has funds left over from a 2018 transportation bond. How should that money be spent?

The Transportation Bond projects are well documented on the town site where it details the Bond-Funded Projects and Bond and Partner-Funded Projects.

We are currently working on several active projects using the first \$20 Million issuance of the bond. The town is closely monitoring the list of projects and will take the growth and needs into considerations when looking at the issuance of the rest on the bonds in the future.

In your view, how can the town improve public transit and alleviate traffic?

Some of the bond projects were to create more grid street opportunities to alleviate known congestion. The Holly Springs Road Widening Project was prioritized because of the need to increase capacity on that road with the upcoming 540 interchange coming to Holly Springs. We need to continue to work with NCDOT to request support for other known areas of congestion. As Mayor, I will continue to work hard to advocate for Holly Springs roads to get priority.

Our first public transit Go Triangle bus service started this October. While it's exciting to have transit, the schedule and routes are limited. We need to evaluate how our town can improve the routes to increase ridership.

How can it improve infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians?

Future development will require the implementation of multimodal infrastructure based on where development is occurring as identified by our land use plan. Our updated Unified Development Ordinance provides guidelines for sidewalk and road width to support safer pedestrian and cycling activity. Our new Comprehensive Transportation Plan which is due to be adopted in the next months, with help to identify and prioritize the support for this type of infrastructure.

10) Holly Springs was one of a handful of Wake County municipalities not to reimplement a mask mandate recently with the resurgence of the COVID-19 Delta variant.

Was this the right decision?

I publicly stated I supported a town mask-mandate however the others on council who voted in the majority, chose to focus on education of wearing masks instead. I believe the approach taken by Wake County to support mask-mandates was the right approach.

How do you feel Wake County and Wake School Board officials have handled the COVID-19 pandemic?

I believe Wake County and Wake School Board officials have had to make very difficult decisions during the Covid pandemic working with real time data and monitoring the impact to our local communities. I applaud them for engaging with the public to get input and try to share the latest information all to help

residents stay safe. I visit the Covid-19 Information dashboard frequently and when I had questions, reach out to Wake County and Wake School Board officials and they always are quick to reply.

If you don't think the pandemic was handled well, what should have been done differently?

Given the many unknowns about Covid, the changing safety guidelines, the impact to residents and businesses I appreciate how hard it was to keep our communities safe. There were times when it was difficult to know the latest information regarding the availability of vaccine in our area. Overall, I think the right decisions were made given the data available and our state and county did a good job.

11) In what ways should Holly Springs promote economic development? How should the town assist small business owners?

Partnerships with our local businesses is very important to our town and our economy. We have a very strong Economic Development team that helped procure the very 2 large deals this year. I was proud to play a part in the recent announcements of \$2 billion dollar project of FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies bringing 775 jobs, and a few months later, AMGEN \$550 Million manufacturing facility bringing another 335 jobs. These companies' chose Holly Springs because of the town's willingness to be a good business partner, access to a talented workforce, and partnerships in county/state government and local colleges.

In parallel, we also need to support and grow our small business communities. Through partnerships with local groups like the Holly Springs Chamber of Commerce, and many business networking groups, we continue to promote and foster the success and growth of our local businesses.

12) Holly Springs residents love their parks and greenways. How should the town work to preserve, improve, or expand them?

We recently adopted a new Parks, Recreation, and Greenways master plan on March 2021 after extensive work by staff, outreach to the community and expertise from experts in the field.

This comprehensive plan is available on our website and it highlights the many ways we are listening and planning for the needs of our residents. This plan is driving the decisions on how best to utilize the remaining 8 \$Million of the Parks and Recreation Bond money passed in 2011.

A few highlights:

The recent Acquisition of the 55.9 acre Cass Holt Park on the west side of Holly Springs is a start to bringing parks closer to residents across all areas in town. The concepts for this park are currently being considered with resident input.

Greenway trails were identified as the topmost priority for our town to invest in. There are several ongoing projects to help expand our greenways across our town and with other communities.

13) If there is anything else you would like to address please do so here.

Three mayors have served our town since 1983 and they provided great leadership and growth, leading the town from about 1,000 residents to over 42,000. However, our town has grown so quickly that new vision and directions are needed.

As our new staff has created opportunities to reorganize key services and focus on organizational excellence, I see the same opportunity with the Mayor's position. I will start by looking at ways to increase community outreach to better support our residents and businesses. I see these changes ranging from adopting new proclamations in support of the many facets of our growing population, to looking at efficiencies in our Mayor office. One area I've identified is to discontinue a \$300 monthly travel allowance, saving our residents over \$14,000 in the next term, since I do not believe that monthly stipend is necessary going forward. These are just some examples of opportunities I have identified, and I will work to identify more to better serve our residents.

I'm ready to be Holly Springs next Mayor and can hit the ground running on day one. I hope you will support me and vote for Christine Kelly for Mayor on November 2nd.

(<https://indyweek.com/news/elections/christine-kelly-holly-springs-mayor-candidate-questionnaire/>)  
(10/14/21)

### **NOV 2021 Loses Mayor's Race**

Holly Springs will have a new mayor for the first time in nearly 20 years.

Richard "Dick" Sears did not seek another term as mayor of Holly Springs.

With 11 precincts reporting, Sean Mayefskie defeated council member Christine Kelly in the mayor's race.

HOLLY SPRINGS MAYOR (One seat)

Sean Mayefskie, 60.69%

Christine Kelly, 39.18% (RNO, 11/4/21)

**2022**

**APR 2022 Indy Week Questionnaire**

Name as it appears on the ballot: Christine Kelly

Age: 59

Party affiliation: Democrat

Campaign website: [www.christinekellyfornc.com](http://www.christinekellyfornc.com)

Occupation & employer: Sr. Marketing Digital Manager, SAS Institute

Years lived in North Carolina: 30 years

1. What in your background qualifies you to represent the people of North Carolina effectively? What would you cite as your three biggest career accomplishments?

I believe I can represent the people of North Carolina effectively because of my four years of service on the Holly Springs Town Council alongside my decades of community service in Southern Wake County—including my membership in the Holly Springs Rotary, Holly Springs MLK Jr. Committee, NC State Oaks Leadership Scholars Program Steering Committee, League of Women Voters of Wake County, NAACP Raleigh-Apex Branch, Holly Springs Volunteer Coordinator for Western Regional Food Security Action Group, NC Free Moms Hugs, and NC Moms Demand Action. I have a history of tackling community issues, such as my efforts to work with Wake County to address odor issues from the South Wake Landfill in Holly Springs. My passion for my community and my knowledge of Southern Wake, make me qualified to represent North Carolinians in District 37.

Three of the highlights of my time on the Holly Springs Town Council are:

- 1). I was instrumental in making Holly Springs a Tree City USA community. Along with achieving that designation, I also helped to put in place Tree Preservation Ordinances and a Tree Advisory Board.
- 2). I fought for funding to ensure everyone serving on our police force wears body cameras. To increase transparency further, I helped to launch a web portal to demonstrate to our community that our public safety teams are dedicated to serving all residents.
- 3). I helped to approve key economic development deals with FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies and Amgen Inc., which will result in over 1,000 quality jobs in our community. An even further-reaching impact will be that these deals will change our commercial tax base. Meaning, it will help the area by giving us more opportunities for funding future infrastructure needs and extending town services.

2. What do you believe to be the three most pressing issues facing the next General Assembly? What steps do you believe the state should take to address them?



The three most pressing issues facing the NCGA are: fully funding and bolstering our public education system, protecting and preserving our environment, and making healthcare accessible and affordable for everyone.

The steps are already laid out by the Leandro case on how to fund our schools. We need to fight to make sure those promises are fulfilled. As a priority we need to increase teacher pay, and diversify our workforce so that teachers are a better representation of our students. With our environment, we need a two-prong approach: mitigate the current damage from climate change, and buffer the area for future damage. This makes sense from both a scientific perspective as well as an economic one since ecological disasters and ever-worsening weather disasters are extremely costly. In order to ensure that all North Carolinians have access to healthcare they can afford, we need to start by closing Medicaid gaps. This area needs significant attention. With NC having so many resources and being the 9th largest state for population, being ranked 41st for healthcare quality is inexcusable, and needs to be addressed by the North Carolina General Assembly.

3. To what extent do you support municipalities exerting local control over issues such as regulating greenhouse gas emissions, criminal justice reforms and police oversight, and passing development-regulating ordinances?

Municipal governments should have an opportunity to set regional goals and policies to support the issues mentioned above. I believe such local bills would augment or extend beyond policies set at the State level to reflect the unique needs of each particular community.

4. Do you support raising North Carolina's minimum wage, and if so by how much? If not, what other initiatives would you take to support low-income families in North Carolina?

Yes, I support raising North Carolina's minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour. Bills like NC House Bill 289 (2017) & NC Senate Bill 673 (2021)—which have phased-approaches for increasing the minimum wage of \$7.25 to \$15—need to be brought to the floor for a vote, instead of being stalled in committees. Another initiative I support that would benefit all North Carolinians, including low-income families, would be to expand our state broadband internet coverage. We need to make broadband fully accessible and affordable for all households, businesses, and schools.

5. With rent, property taxes, and home sale prices all rising, what, if anything, should the state legislature do to address this growing affordability crisis?

I pushed to have Holly Springs fund an affordable housing study in the fall 2021 when I was on Town Council because I recognize we need to face this crisis with innovative solutions. We must focus on coordinating with municipalities, as well as county and state governing bodies in order to find solutions. One possibility is expanding zoning to allow for more housing diversity. Another way to address the situation is to increase the minimum wage so that North Carolinians could more easily afford their rent or mortgages.

6. Do you believe that the state government has an obligation to prevent the impacts of climate change? If so, please state three specific policies you support to address climate change.

Yes, I believe the state government has an obligation to prevent impacts of climate change. Here are some policies I support to address climate change in North Carolina:

- I support legislation to bring a reduction in the emission of carbon dioxide and work towards carbon neutrality. I applaud Governor Cooper's Executive Orders No. 246 detailing next steps on the path to a clean energy and equitable economy for North Carolina. I also am excited about his Executive Order No. 80, which allows for North Carolina to address climate change, and transition to a clean energy economy.
- I support legislation that supports clean water—protecting and cleaning ground and surface water, as well as passing policies to hold polluters accountable for the clean-up. I also believe there should be fines in proportion to the damage caused by their actions.
- I support legislation to expand green building programs. Having more structures LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified is a step in the right direction. We need to incentivize this for both new construction and existing buildings in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

7. Would you support an independent process for drawing new legislative and congressional districts?

Yes, independent commissions should be the ones involved in drawing maps instead of politicians, in order to ensure neither party can influence the way districts are drawn.

8. Does the General Assembly have a constitutional obligation to comply with the state Supreme Court order in the Leandro case to fully fund public schools and give every child in North Carolina a sound basic education?

Yes, the Supreme Court of North Carolina's decision in *Leandro v. The State of North Carolina* (1997) affirmed that the state has a constitutional responsibility to provide every student with an equal opportunity for a sound basic education and that the state was failing to meet that responsibility. As documented in this action plan, the challenges of meeting this responsibility have increased since the original decision, and North Carolina needs to significantly increase its commitment and efforts to provide for the education of every student. In order to do so, we will need to strategically improve and transform multiple components of our education system—from ensuring an adequate supply of qualified teachers and principals, to improving curriculum, instruction and assessment, to more effectively addressing the needs of at-risk students, and addressing the persistent gaps in achievement among groups of students.

9. The U.S. Supreme Court may issue a ruling this summer that guts, or even overturns, *Roe v. Wade*. As a state lawmaker, would you support legislation that limits or prohibits abortion in North Carolina, or punishes/criminalizes abortion providers or patients?

No, I do not believe there should be any restrictions for people in our state to gain access to abortion services, access to prenatal and postnatal care, or access to family planning services.

10. Should North Carolina expand Medicaid? Where do you stand on increasing the number of slots for the Innovations Waiver for special needs individuals?

I support expanding Medicaid in North Carolina. We need to focus on healthcare priorities so that we close the current coverage gap for those who are not eligible for Medicaid, help small businesses with programs for them to have cost-effective health insurance plans for their employees, and work with prescription drug companies to lower the costs of drug prices. I fully support the work that the 'Joint Legislative Committee on Access to Healthcare and Medicaid Expansion' is doing as they search for ways to expand healthcare access to North Carolinians most in need.

I support expanding the Innovations Waivers. There are 12,000 IDD (intellectually and developmentally disabled) patients on innovation waivers, with an equal amount on the waitlist. The current expansion for Innovation Waivers does not address the long and growing waitlist. We must increase the number of slots available because disability rights are human rights.

11. Do you support reforming North Carolina's marijuana laws? Do you support full legalization? Please explain your position.

I support passing the North Carolina Compassionate Care Act which has bipartisan support in the NC Senate. It sets a list of conditions by which patients with certain conditions, or in hospice, would be allowed to use marijuana as treatment. I would support that legislation when it comes before the NC House. I am open to learning more about how legalizing recreational marijuana would benefit our State economically, as it has in other states.

(<https://indyweek.com/news/elections/candidate-questionnaire-christine-kelly-nc-house-37/>) (4/28/22)

## **APR 2022 RNO Questionnaire**

Name: Christine Kelly

Political Party: Democratic

Age on election night: 60

Website: [www.christinekellyfornc.com](http://www.christinekellyfornc.com)

Occupation: Senior Marketing Manager, SAS Institute

Education: Bachelor of Mathematics, Master of Trust and Wealth Management

Have you run for elected office before? (Please list previous offices sought): I was elected to Holly Springs Town Council 2017-2021. I ran for Holly Springs mayor 2021 but was not elected.

Civic involvement: I'm involved in Holly Springs Rotary, Holly Springs MLK, Jr. Committee, NC State Oaks Leadership Scholars Program Steering Committee, Wake County League of Women Voters Wake, Raleigh-Apex NAACP, Western Regional Food Security Action Group, NC Moms Demand Action, and NC Free Moms Hugs.

School test scores dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic. What should North Carolina do to improve student performance?

Unfortunately, most students suffered learning loss, especially among low-income students, and those with learning disabilities. Per Leandro, it's time to fully fund our public education system from early childhood education through K-12 in order to provide an equitable, sound, and basic education.

What do you want to happen in North Carolina if Roe v. Wade is overturned?

Reproductive rights should be considered health care. An individual's decisions regarding their pregnancy should be up to themselves, their doctors, and not the government. I oppose legislation that would limit a person's right to make choices and decisions regarding their own bodies.

What should North Carolina do to reduce violent crime?

Violent crime is a symptom of systemic dysfunction, and is the responsibility of those in power to solve, instead of solely placing the blame on individuals. We need to investigate what support the communities that are most affected by violent crime need in order to repair and reduce harm.

Should medical marijuana be legalized in North Carolina?

I support passing the North Carolina Compassionate Care Act which has bipartisan support in the NC Senate. It set a list of conditions by which patients with certain conditions or in hospice would be allowed to use marijuana as treatment. I will support this bill when it comes before the NC House.

What should the state's minimum wage be? What policies would you support to help struggling North Carolinians?

I support a phased-approach to raising the minimum wage to a living wage of \$15 per hour.

Should North Carolina expand Medicaid, and how?

Medicaid should be expanded to provide health care coverage to some 500,000 North Carolinians. I support the work that the 'Joint Legislative Committee on Access to Healthcare and Medicaid Expansion' is doing as they search for ways to expand health care access to those most in need.

Is there an area where you disagree with your party? Why?

My values align with the Democratic Party, and I'm not aware of any areas where we disagree.

What are your top issues? Pick up to three.

Education; voting and elections; and pollution. (RNO, 4/24/22)

**APR 2022 RNO Endorsement**

## District 37

In District 37, the Democratic primary winner will face off against Erin Paré, a Republican small business owner with one term in the N.C. House. The three women vying for the spot are each qualified in their own unique ways, something they each said when being interviewed by the Editorial Board.

You have Mary Bethel, a former advocacy director for AARP with experience lobbying for legislation that would benefit elderly and disabled people. She has been named to the Order of the Long Leaf Pine for her work, and was recognized by the national AARP organization for her advocacy work. You also have Elizabeth Parent, a 28-year-old mother living in Fuquay-Varina running on a progressive platform, who speaks candidly of her experiences growing up in a conservative Christian household, as a survivor of child sexual abuse, and as a queer woman.

Our choice candidate, however, is Christine Kelly, a former member of the Holly Springs Town Council who works in marketing at SAS Institute. Kelly has spent years talking with people across the political spectrum, and sees the need to get our strongest written policy out of committee. She has been endorsed by NC AFL-CIO, and was also recognized as a “Progressive Candidate” by the North Carolina Democratic Party’s Progressive Caucus. We recommend Christine Kelly for District 37. (NRO, 4/27/22)

**MAY 2022 Narrowly Wins Primary**

## NC House District 37:

Democratic candidate Christine Kelly received 38% of the vote, followed by Elizabeth Parent with 37% and Mary Bethel with 24%. (Durham Herald-Sun, 5/19/22)

**JUN 2022 Opposing Parents Bill of Rights**

Dozens gathered at Bicentennial Plaza in Raleigh Monday evening and refused to be silent.

"They've created a problem that doesn't exist for political gain," Joshua Jacoby with El Pueblo, Inc. said.

Equality NC held the "We Won't Be Silent" Rally to continue to speak out against House Bill 755, the bill also known as the parents' bill of rights.

"Unless, and until decision makers take into account the realities of how families live today, their policies will fail to hit the mark," parent and teacher Lisa Mead said, during the rally.

Earlier this month, the state senate passed the bill.

It would block schools from including LGBTQ issues in the curriculum for kindergarten through 3rd grade. Critics have compared it to Florida's "Don't Say Gay Bill."

However, the John Locke Foundation, a conservative-based foundation, said the comparisons are not fair.

"The Locke Foundation did propose a parents' bill of rights. It is not quite this legislation," Mitch Kokai with the foundation said. "But that said, people who are complaining about this bill, most of them I suspect have not read the legislation."

He said the focus should be on the bill guaranteeing that parents can access textbooks and other educational materials.

The bill also states that schools must inform them about health care services given to children and if they change what pronouns they use.

"I think the people who actually look at the legislation, read through it, almost everyone who gives the bill a fair reading is going to come away with it saying this is something that makes sense," Kokai said.

Activists continue to maintain it is harmful legislation.

Some suggested that the resources and attention be dedicated elsewhere.

"Why don't they spend more time actually working to get our teachers more pay. To give them money for resources?" Christine Kelly, who is in opposition, asked.

Right now, HB 755 sits in the house. (WNCN, 6/14/22)

### **JUN 2022     Pushing Council to Support Gay Resolution**

The Holly Springs Town Council took no action Tuesday on a non-discrimination ordinance, which would include more protections for LGBTQ people, despite pressure from residents who rallied outside of the meeting.

The council's regularly scheduled work session came a week after Holly Springs Mayor Sean Mayefskie refused to sign a proclamation declaring June as Pride Month. He said then that the town already has "diverse and inclusive" policies.

The decision last week sparked outrage from residents who asked for a Pride Month proclamation and for the Town Council to adopt the non-discrimination ordinance. The ordinance, which already has been adopted by 19 municipalities in North Carolina, would protect against discrimination based on ethnicity, race, natural hair and hairstyles, pregnancy, veteran status and disability.

About 20 people gathered outside of the Holly Springs Law Enforcement Center, where the meeting was held, to show their support for the non-discrimination ordinance and a Pride Month declaration.

Chuck Tryon, a Holly Springs resident, said rally participants wanted council members can see them and hear their concerns since the work session didn't have a public comment period. Tryon said he hoped

council members would recognize the importance of the proclamation and the non-discrimination ordinance, not just for LGBTQ people but for other marginalized groups.

"This is an all-encompassing policy so it's extremely disappointing for us that (Town Council) didn't see fit to pass that," Tryon said.

After nearly two hours of discussion, the Town Council did not make any further plans to keep discussions about joining the county's non-discrimination ordinance or adopting one of their own.

Wake County, Raleigh, Apex, Knightdale, Morrisville and Wendell have adopted the non-discrimination ordinance. Other municipalities in the Triangle that have adopted LGBTQ protections include Chatham and Durham counties, Durham, Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Hillsborough, according to a list on the Equality North Carolina website.

Council members talk logistics of the NDO

Under the county ordinance, if an individual felt discriminated against by a business or organization, they are able to file a complaint to the Wake County manager, who would refer it to the county attorney's office. This would lead to mediation out of court to find a solution, Town Attorney John Schifano said.

Wake County has a contract with Campbell University Law School through their Restorative Justice Clinic, which assists people in discrimination claims for free.

Schifano said if mediation doesn't work, the next step individuals could take would be a civil lawsuit with the county obtaining an injunction against a business or organization with discriminatory misconduct.

"The mechanics of everything works without cost to the town through the end of the next fiscal year," Schifano said.

He compiled a list of gaps between the state and federal protections and protections in the county ordinance against different forms of discrimination, including race, gender, color, hair, ethnicity, pregnancy, marital status, age, disability, sex, veteran status and creed.

There is no state law that provides protections for people in places of public accommodations, such as restaurants, hotels, theaters, doctor's offices, museums, retail stores, private schools, libraries and amusement parks.

Schifano said the non-discrimination ordinance would provide this protection. He suggested that the Town Council consider this aspect of the NDO, despite his own hesitation for them to adopt the full order.

Holly Springs council member Aaron Wolff disagreed last week with the mayor's refusal to sign the Pride proclamation and join the county's ordinance. Tuesday, he was the only Town Council member to suggest the town continue looking at ways to adopt the ordinance, including considering Schifano's information about the public accommodation protections.

Wolff reminded the group that businesses in Holly Springs with fewer than 15 employees have no federal protections against discrimination for employees. The town is covered by federal protections but also has internal protections for hiring and promotion practices, according to Town Manager Randy Harrington.

In October, Wolff was joined by Mayefskie, mayor pro tem Daniel Berry and council member Shaun McGrath to pass a resolution for the council to adopt the non-discrimination ordinance.

McGrath, who joined Tuesday's meeting virtually, said the council would need to consult with the town staff on whether the town can join a portion of the county's ordinance or if the council should draft its own ordinance. He said the town is not an "outlier" in that it is already inclusive and attracts large businesses.

Fujifilm Diosynth is building a \$1.5 billion plant in Holly Springs that could employ more than 700 people, The N&O previously reported. Biotech company Amgen is building a manufacturing facility nearby for over 350 people.

Berry, who also joined virtually, said there is a gap at the state level to cover some discrimination issues and said he took seriously the possible legal risks of adopting the ordinance.

Timothy Forrest, who was elected to the council last fall, said the county's non-discrimination ordinance is "not right" for Holly Springs, even though he acknowledged there needed to be room for "tough" conversations.

Harrington said since Wake County adopted the ordinance in October, 10 cases have been filed. Forrest said since the public does not know the status of the cases, it is hard to tell if the non-discrimination ordinance is the right move for the town.

Kristi Bennett, who was elected in the fall, said her hesitation for joining the county's ordinance is due to her lack understanding of it and wanting to do the right thing for the residents of Holly Springs.

"It's not an issue for me of wanting to be inclusive, it's just an issue for me of making sure that we are saying the right thing," Bennett said. "And having it be exactly what we need for the 40,000 people who live here."

Wolff, visibly frustrated, asked for the council members to provide specific issues they had with the non-discrimination ordinance, even though they say they recognize gaps.

"I've heard it's not right for Holly Springs, but why?" said Wolff. "How can we make one better?"

Schifano confirmed that the council could withdraw from the ordinance after joining if they decided it was not working for residents.

'We have to do more'

At the June 8 council meeting, Mayefskie told residents that "actions as a town speak louder than the words" as he explained why he denied the Pride Month proclamation.



Even though the mayor emphasized actions, Tryon said Mayefskie was still "unable" to put forth the action to support Pride Month.

Donna Friend, who has been with her partner for 41 years, said they are worried that the tide of public opinion is changing about LGBTQ people and that their marriage would no longer be valid.

"There's no business benefit to not sign on to the nondiscrimination ordinance," Friend told The N&O. "You've got all these high-tech companies coming into this area that value diversity and inclusivity and now you're slapping them in the face."

Zara Collier, 16, was at the rally with her friends and as a member of the Holly Springs High School Gay-Straight Alliance. She said she didn't believe the mayor when he said the town's action's speak louder than words.

"I haven't seen much action from the mayor doing anything different - not just for the queer community," Collier said.

Christine Kelly, a former Holly Springs Town Council member, said there was no reason for the council to not accept the ordinance. She was one of the other members to support the council adopting the resolution in October.

"We tried hard when I was on council to do something," Kelly said. "Love is love is not enough anymore. We have to do more."

After the meeting, Chanel Wilkins, an organizer of Impact Holly Springs, said she could not understand why the council would not come to an agreement. In her opinion, she said they seemed to be more more concerned about the politics than they were about residents.

"This is about people's lives," Wilkins said. "It may be political to them but this is, for the rest of us, how we're going to be treated at work, how we're going to provide for our children. For us it's day to day living. That's what's so frustrating." (Durham Herald-Sun, 6/16/22)

## Part V October 2021 Podcast Interview Transcript

**Karen Shore:** [00:00:03] Welcome to the Holly Springs Deep Dive podcast. Here we are just three weeks until Election Day 2021 in Holly Springs. I'm releasing both my oral candidates episodes on the same day. That way, neither gets to make the first impression or has the last word. Neither candidate heard the other's interview before they had their own. Neither candidate got any questions beforehand or got any do overs. That's as fair as I know how to be. The show notes for each candidate include all of their campaign pages, as well as links to their campaign finance reports. Early voting starts this Thursday, October 14th and runs through Saturday, October 30th. Links to checking your registration status. Finding out where your polling place is and viewing your sample ballots are included in this episode's show notes. In this episode, you'll hear from mayoral candidate Christine Kelly. We talked on Friday, September 24th. Let's dive in. I am so lucky. I am talking today to Holly Springs town councilwoman Christine Kelley. She is running for mayor. Welcome to the show, Christine Kelley.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:01:10] Oh, thank you, Karen. I'm thrilled to be here. I've listened to some of your podcasts and I'm just really fortunate to have my turn.

**Karen Shore:** [00:01:17] Oh, yep. It's been your turn for a while, and I'm so glad that we finally got on your schedule. I know that campaigning is busy. Tough times.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:01:28] Well, it's. It's necessary work. Necessary work. And this is my second time, so it's all good. It's all good.

**Karen Shore:** [00:01:38] So what made you decide to run for mayor? My question is kind of based in the fact that town council members have votes and the mayor doesn't really have a vote. So what is the delineation between those two jobs and what made you decide to go for mayor?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:01:57] That's a great question. And I, I thought long and hard about transitioning, like, would I run again for town council? Would I let somebody else run? Should I run for mayor? And it came to me when I was learning more about, you know, I've lived through Darrell Holloman and Womble and Dick Sears being mayors and thinking about things that they've done for the town. And those three men have been there since 1983. So if you think about the knowledge that they had and, you know, Mayor Sears been here 20 years, a lot has

changed in that time. And I work for a digital a great digital company, software company, SAS, and I see opportunities. And you know, Mayor Sears has done a great job and is trying to, you know, does what he does. However, there's some modernization that can happen at the mayor level, and I see opportunities I'm very passionate about how do we reach residents better and make sure that we are where they are? And, you know, when I first got on town council, they said, oh, our door is always open. Anybody can come. Well, that's not the world we live in anymore. People we shouldn't expect people to come to us. We need to go to them. So I started thinking about what could I do running for mayor that will I have town council experience? I have almost three decades in town, so I know a lot about the history. I was a PTA president of several schools. I volunteered in many groups and still do. I just felt like I had these qualities that I could bring plus my business work. I know how to work with large international companies, and that's what Holly Springs is becoming now, a home for these great new companies. So I thought, you know, I should do this. I think I could help. I think that I'm pretty collaborative and council could use. I speak to a lot of other mayors around North Carolina and they talk about a mayor's role is really to make sure that the council functions well. And I see opportunities to do that as well. So putting that all in together, I thought, yes, this is the time with Mayor Sears retiring. It was we're going to have a new mayor anyway. So I just thought, well, why can't it be me? I want to serve?

**Karen Shore:** [00:04:20] Yeah, well, that's great. And thank you for the service you've already given us. And thank you for putting yourself on what could be like a chopping block, because running for running for elected office is not pretty. A lot of times. So it's a sacrifice, even just to put your name out there, I'm sure.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:04:40] Well, it's it's a necessary step. But the I just think about serving and making a difference is so rewarding when you know that you can make a difference for the community. It's enough for me to get through this this period. It really is. And I have the utmost respect for. Sean Mayefski when I found out that he he filed and I'm sure you'll be talking to him. I called him because I've known him for a long time. Our kids were in high school together and I wished him well. And I said, Sean, you know, the people of Holly Springs deserve a very clean, positive campaign. And if you hear anything, call me because I want Holly Springs to be better during the election and after the election. And and I think we can do that so that it's a great time to run when you're running against an opponent that, you know, like I said, I think Sean and I will make sure we do a good job for our residents.

**Karen Shore:** [00:05:35] Yeah. I mean, it's we're kind of in an enviable, enviable position where, you know, regardless of who wins, it's a good person. And, you know, everybody knows that. So it's not like, you know, you're running against somebody that you don't respect or who you have doubts if they'll run a clean race and all of that kind of stuff. So I'm glad that that you all have the relationship already.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:05:58] We do, yeah. As people respect each other now, we clearly have different opinions I think on on where we want Holly Springs to go and smart growth. But that's not personal. Right. And that's the thing. It's about policies and things that we want to do. So it's easier to run a campaign when you know that.

**Karen Shore:** [00:06:17] Yeah. So speaking of easy and tough campaigns, I can't figure out and you'll know this. Is it easier to run as someone who has never held elected office, which you did four years ago, or is it easier to run when you already have? So I would imagine that it's easier to run if you have never held office because you don't have a lot of decisions and things that you've said and votes that people can hold up to you and say, Why did you do this? But when you already have held an office, you kind of know how everything works. You know how it's going to go. So which do you think is harder?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:06:59] Oh, I think it's harder when you haven't done the job. And the reason I say that is in and there's there's only a handful of decisions that I think back going, oh, shoot, now that if I, you know, I'm this far in. If I would have known that in the first three months, I might have asked different questions. But I really think it's harder when you haven't done the job. And I am I research for the decisions that I look at. I do I have the saying, you know, there's what we we should do and what we need to do when there's something that comes before council for decisions. So if I know, for instance, there are some some neighborhoods where something's happening and I typically know somebody in that neighborhood, even though the signs are outside saying that there's going to be a public hearing, I'll reach out and say, Do you know there's a public hearing? Do you know why this is all public record? Here's the information. Because to be honest, when people show up at the meeting for that discussion, we really should have had conversations before. So we can hear the concerns, let the developers know. And that's really why running for mayor there is such a great opportunity for education to help residents know you are part of this process and there are places that you could be part of that would make it better.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:08:15] So if I go back and look at my decisions, I stand by the ones I've done and I talk to people beforehand and would be comfortable saying This is why I voted and I probably would vote the same now. So it far easier having the knowledge and and I'm just so proud of all the things we've done to with getting a new town manager and staff and we've really elevated the way that we run as a town. I tell people when I when I first got elected, great people, great passion, been there for a long time, but they really were running it more like a very small town where we're 42,000. So now with great hires, new reorganizations, new policies, I mean, I feel like we're running a will, a much more of a well-oiled machine with some work to do here and there. So I'm proud to talk about how I've supported different projects, and it's definitely easier to be in this role when you know what you're facing.

**Karen Shore:** [00:09:19] Yeah. So is there. There are no nothing that you feel like you regret or would have done differently in your time on the council?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:09:28] There are a few votes. I would have asked for more questions. I think the end result would have been the same anyway because of I'm only one of five a few times that I wish I would have been able to to do a little bit more talking to residents beforehand. But typically, I can't really think of any.

**Karen Shore:** [00:09:51] Mm hmm. So what are you. So the opposite of regret. What are you most proud of?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:09:59] Well, things that were important to me when I ran. And I think we've accomplished we we were in dire need of updating many of our plans. I would cringe. I went to meetings for a year before I was elected and I would see big decisions being made on plans that were ten years old, 12 years old. And then how can we do that and change major traffic, roads or infrastructure things? So we have a new strategic plan. We have a new comprehensive plan, our transportation plans, almost a new Parks and Rec master plan. So myself or if I don't get elected, the next council at least is working with current information. And that's that's was our, I believe, our duty to help future councils to do our job because you never know if you're going to come back. So we should leave it better than when we came in. So the plans are I'm very proud of Tree City, USA. It was, was a great thing that I, I remember talking to Chuck, the old town manager Simmons and say, why aren't we a Tree City? Like I don't know why we've never done that. We should look into that. I'm like, Yes. And we were meeting pretty much the criteria to be a Tree City. And so now we've been noted as doing that two years in a row, but it's not enough. Tree

City is is a is a label, but the tree advisory committee work and the tree ordinances are really what's important so that historical preservation I'm really proud of I'm really proud of of trying to influence things that are more inclusive for our community. If you listen to me on town council, if things are not done through a proclamation or resolution, you'll hear me say something at the end like This is Pride Month, or This is an important Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur. You know, like I want as as mayor, I want us to do a little bit more of that, because Holly Springs has a vast, vast array of residents with different interests and religions and passions, and everybody belongs here. We need to do more. And that's I look forward to that. So I think we're just becoming more of a la, you know, small town spirit, but larger town in operating in a better way. And a lot of the work we've done for planning has resulted in that, and I'm really proud of that. It's made a difference.

**Karen Shore:** [00:12:28] When you decided to run for town council, what did you think it was going to be like and was it pretty much did it meet your expectations or did it surprise you in any way?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:12:41] I was a little. It's hard to run in politics. I mean, I'll be honest. I've met a lot of new friends and people that are like minded. And there are some folks that I realize, you know. Weren't happy that I was running or happy that I won and. That's the nature of the beast. So. But you know what? That's. I kind of realize even when your children go through school, then you're friends with people when they're in school, and then you go to another school and things change. It's just a different chapter. And I just accepted that. So. Running is hard. I mean, running is hard. And you. My family totally supported me and still does and will be there when they need to be. My husband is the sweetest man as you've met. Most people don't miss chips. Sometimes that work goes through. Charles is like, Well, what do you want me to be at? Or How can I support you? And it's like, We're good. You just come to these things. But you know, it's Grace. I have a very supportive family and they that was always my thing. Does my family support me? Is it going to be okay? And we're good. So I'm family first. I mean, I'm a mom and a wife first.

**Karen Shore:** [00:13:55] But it must be hard for them to see, you know, you working so hard and, you know, the possibility that it won't work out the way you want it to. Or if people attack you on a Facebook group or something like that, it must be hard for them to see. You know.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:14:15] I tell them, don't look at that. I really do. And I actually try to stay away from some of that, too, one, because I'm pretty busy. But it's funny, Karen, you've known me for a long time. I mean, I've been hauling coolers at the concession stand in the high school because I was the concession manager for three glorious years and doing all these other volunteer things. I'm with milk, so they actually don't really notice me more busy because I've always been busy.

**Karen Shore:** [00:14:47] So busy with different things.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:14:49] I just I'm just busy and I've always done a lot at night. And they assume I won't be home unless I tell them I am once the kids are out of school. And that was the thing for me is more of an empty nester. So that that has not changed for them. Mom's always busy.

**Karen Shore:** [00:15:05] Yeah, well, that's good. That's good. I'm. I'm glad that you have a multifaceted existence, because at some points in my motherhood, I kind of felt like that was all I had. So it's good to branch out.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:15:20] Well, and I, you know, I've worked at SAS, it'll be 30 years this December. I manage a great team of people, great company. I've had multiple roles there, so I have a full time job and people have always said, You're PTA president, I can't help you because I work part time or something. I work full time if you want to be involved, you know, there are there's always an opportunity to be involved that suits your life, you know, in some way. And that's just how I've always been. But I grew up like that. My parents were also very involved in the community and in doing things. So I'm a new citizen, American citizen. It's been eight years now. But when I took my my oath, the person that was speaking talked about when you become a citizen, we're asking you to give back and be part of the community and do back because, you know, it's an honor to be accepted, but do something back. And I truly took that to heart and I thought, then I will give back. And people had asked me to run and I thought, okay, I will give back. That was my promise.

**Karen Shore:** [00:16:29] Is this the only place you've ever lived in America is Holly Springs?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:16:33] No. I lived in Culver City, LA. For a year. A while back. Yes.

**Karen Shore:** [00:16:40] Culture shock. Coming here.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:16:41] So I grew up in that in a small French-Canadian town of 5000, and then my high school years were the mining town of 500. And then I went to school in a town of about 100,000 outside of Toronto, lived in Toronto, lived in Calgary, lived in LA, came back to Toronto. So I've been in both worlds. And when my husband and I, you know what, what a gift. I can work at SAS, which is great, but I can live in Holly Springs as a small town. I That was the best thing, but just the best. And I've always loved that. I'm a small town girl.

**Karen Shore:** [00:17:19] Yeah, well, it's hard not to be in a place like Holly Springs.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:17:22] Yeah, I'm definitely a small town girl.

**Karen Shore:** [00:17:24] Yeah. So let's pretend that it is. When is the election? November 2nd. Is that the date?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:17:30] Yes. Yes.

**Karen Shore:** [00:17:31] Okay, let's pretend that it's November 3rd and you've won and you're making all of your plans and you are Mayor elect Christine Kelly. What what are going to be your priorities?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:17:45] Well, first to sit well to thank those that ran in and welcome those that won, because we will be building a new team and making sure that they all know my door's open and we're starting a new chapter. So where do we go from there? Maybe the town manager. I mean, I I'm a strong believer. Randy Harrington is is amazing. And I go through him through everything. And when I talked to Harold Weinberg and Kerry, you talked about how do you do it? Because he works at SAS, too, and is the mayor. And he says if you have a strong town manager, you let them do your their job and you help them. So that would be, you know, Randy, what do you need from me? Obviously, I would sit down and meet with with Mayor Sears and say, Mayor, there are things that I know you do that I don't know about. What are the things you would that are important? Do you think do the town what are the things you would like to see carry forward, you know, and transition? Because he's got a lot of knowledge that we we need to understand and he's got connections. And, you know, if there are introductions he can help



make that. I would certainly welcome that pick up all my signs because that's the first thing I would do after the election, right? Pick up all the signs, make sure they're out of the way.

**Karen Shore:** [00:19:03] All of the ones that have all of the ones that haven't been stolen, because I know that's always a big thing in Holly Springs.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:19:10] Yeah, I'm just not going to lose sleep over signs. I just it's just not I don't think that's really how people decide how to vote. So I'm not going to worry about that. So pick up the signs and call people and find out what's the best. We don't have a transition plan. I think I would write it all down because I'm not planning to be mayor one term two at the most. I really think that our town growing and where it is, I don't think that. I think the days of mayors for 20 years or 30 years are kind of over and it would be my duty to make sure I would write everything down that I would learn so that the next person could also benefit from that. I mean, we serve to know that at some point somebody else comes in. We we. We owe it to our residents to make sure that we do smooth transitions and we're only there for a short time.

**Karen Shore:** [00:20:06] Yeah. 20 years is a long time. I was talking to Mayor Sears for another project and I mentioned this on maybe one or two episodes ago on this podcast. But when we were talking, it occurred to me that when he was elected, we it was around the time of Y2K. Yes. When I mean, it was just after that. And that was back when everybody was like, what's going to happen, you know, on January 1st is that, you know, are the power grids going to shut down? And that seems like a lifetime ago. Well, but that's when he first became mayor.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:20:42] Well, and so funny, Karen. So I wrote COBOL programs in the eighties and nineties that have I love COBOL. I'm a I'm a I was a coder a long time ago thinking all of those programs were built where date fields were only weren't ready to handle the zero zero digits. And just to sort and I was thinking of all the SoCs seven COBOL programs that would bomb because the date would like it be like 1999, 98, 99, you sort the file and then zero zero, which is bomb. So I was like holding my breath when that happened because thinking there's COBOL programs everywhere that had to be looked at and not even source code. So, but yeah, that was such a long time ago, you know, and just think of, you know, our kids went through a flip phone and modernization and social media and you know, Mayor Sears still has a paper binder when he does his meetings. I would definitely use SharePoint lists and use more teams than I am and just the things I do every day in my job that, you know, it will be different. It will be different. And, you know, and my purpose would be how do I help Randy and the staff to make

sure they have what they need? How do I help council to have what they need? Reach out to the businesses, introduce myself. How do I help you in any way? Economic development, any of the networks? You know, it's a job. It's a job. And I hope I get to do it.

**Karen Shore:** [00:22:11] Yeah. So are you going to miss getting to work with the other town council members?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:22:16] Well, Pete and I have been because I know for sure he won't be back. Pete and I are are dance. I still dance at Holly Springs School of Dance. Bridget's my top teacher this year, so I still do stuff there. And and he has girls that are still dancing. So we've we've have lives outside of town council. And so I'll still see Pete. I'm still friends with Tom O'Brien and keep in touch with him. So it's a small town in that way. And you know, I spent time when things would happen in town, I'd call Hamm. Like Hamm. What do you think and what happened? How did it get here? And even Jeryl Holliman. So just just because you're not on council anymore doesn't mean that you won't see them or be part of the same community. Our kids could do stuff together, so I just think would be a different setting, that's all. But I still think I'll see them.

**Karen Shore:** [00:23:07] So how, what? What things have you done? Like working with other town council members to get things done?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:23:17] I think the transportation bond is a great example where town council decided that we it was important for us to take that to our residents. The initial plan that they had brought forward in terms of roads, we all had input to decide that we want to change maybe the the project so that every piece of town could have some benefit from the bond because it was a big investment. And then we asked, can can we start a committee? So the council approved and Pete and I were in a a marketing committee per se, and we could sit down. We had other people on staff and we had other organizations in town and residents and the chamber was involved and we. Oc If I'm a senior citizen, why does a transportation bond matter? If I live in Sunset Ridge, why does it matter? And that's how we came up with those pillars. And we're back to council. What do you think? So I felt that that was pretty collaborative because it reflects on all of us when we went out with the transportation bond, what are the right messages for our residents? And so we do go off and work in some committees or do some sort of work can't be three because that would be a quorum. But you know, so I think that was a great example because we worked hard to get that information.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:24:35] To be clear, all of us were out making sure that everybody knew what was options that for folks to vote, the purple projects and the green projects that all came out of that work to make sure that people could understand what was fully funded and what we would look for partnership. So that's kind of an example of, you know, we make a decision on council, but then there's work to be done. The landfill committee is another one that there was the formal land committee, landfill committee. And I'm a data nerd. So and I know this has been a problem for a long time. So I actually got all the data for since 2016, put in the SASS data sets, coded and stuff and had a committee to look. So they have data by month, but they didn't have it aggregated to see year over year. And then I went and geo coded the addresses so I could see by neighborhood, so I could see the impact. So that brought working with the president to say, okay, I know your neighborhood is suffering, you should have a voice this weekend. So there's more work that goes on behind the scenes that you don't see on council. And those are two probably two projects that I think were very collaborative and has brought us to some some movement forward.

**Karen Shore:** [00:25:52] Yeah. The the landfill was the hot topic at the candidates forum the other night, that's for sure.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:25:58] Oh, man. And I could have talked about that. I like I could show you graphs. I could show you what we've done.

**Karen Shore:** [00:26:06] You are a nerd. When you start talking about geolocation and COBOL coding, you just light up and your nerdery just shines through. I appreciate that. In a person I have a Bachelor of Math.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:26:20] I've always loved numbers and I tell people English is my second language, so I always worry. I put stuff out all the time and I can communicate, but I'm like, Oh shoot, that's not spelled right. And I'm like, okay, English is my second language and I'm mathematician.

**Karen Shore:** [00:26:36] So, so English is probably your third language after French and math, right?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:26:41] French and math. Yes. Yeah.

**Karen Shore:** [00:26:45] So how how very early in this interview, you talked about kind of shepherding the town into an era of new transparency and openness. How are you going to do that?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:26:59] Well, I. Passionate about the website and I'm constantly looking to see, okay, here's something going on and I see a post on social media. You can't assume everybody is following our posts because I think we're I think we're up to six or 7000, but it's not 42,000 or on different social networks. And I'm on some that say, hey, what's happening in this location? And that's a great question and I'll go to the website. I'm like, Oh, it's not always I know where to find things, but not that's what I do. How do you find things and make things searchable? So I would definitely the transparency portal was a great start for that. I think it's been wonderful. What is the rest of that that a mayor's voice could bring in terms of this is what's happening in you know, these are the things that are coming up or this is how you can engage with us and come out and see us here. So I think there's a whole communication angle that could be done that has not been done towards the residents voice. And then look at what is important for the business community. One Communication should not there's not just one way to communicate. You have to kind of know who's going to receive it and target for that. So I would definitely want to do more communication that way because there are 42,000 people that can Google and try to find something on a website versus them coming to an event. So that's really a passion of mine to to do.

**Karen Shore:** [00:28:29] Sometimes I just feel like my own grandfather and when I think these things. But sometimes I think we just need a newspaper for goodness sakes. That way we could get it and we could pick it up and read it when we felt like it.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:28:43] Oh, the Holly Springs Sun got that paper. I have a version of it. Or Bridget was in a Christmas parade with the School of Dads when they would pull the really young kids in wagons. She's dressed up as an angel. I'm like, Oh, I miss those.

**Karen Shore:** [00:28:59] And she's. And she's graduating from college tomorrow, right?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:29:03] Well, she's in second year of law school, but we're going to the walk in graduation from AB because of COVID. It was postponed, so we didn't think we'd ever see that.

**Karen Shore:** [00:29:12] So she's not that little she's not that little dance student anymore.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:29:17] No, it's so great. I admire the schools and the teachers and how they've had to try to figure this out for their kids. And you can tell that they just love kids and try to make these moments work. So, yeah, I'm taking day off campaign tomorrow. I'm going to be a mom all day and then I come back on Sunday morning.

**Karen Shore:** [00:29:36] Yep, yep. So when you were running for town council, it feels like a lifetime ago. So it was four years ago. You, if I remember correctly, you were pretty frustrated at the lack of openness and open door stuff with the town council. How has that informed how you have behaved as a town council member? Like with that, with that memory of your frustration, what how did that make you behave differently than what you were running against at that time?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:30:11] I. I'm thinking because I'm trying to think of how to answer this, to say this a long time ago, too. I know well, and I tell people all the time, you can always email us. And that's, you know, it's public record, but we can do something because that's easy to send things to staff. But then I'll also watch things. So for instance, I was noticing on one of the things is on the website is they'll put plans that are coming does not mean the word says are coming does not even mean that we've talked about it or it will actually happen. And there was a recent example of a gas station that might have been downtown. And because it's coming, another local paper picked it up and made it sound like it was a reality when it was not.

**Karen Shore:** [00:30:57] So when do you think it should be called what might be coming to town?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:31:00] Well, and I've talked to them about that. So there's kind of a layer between because I get their work, because in the development world, those words make sense. So developers know, but the rest of the residents don't. So there's an example where I do when I can, I do see if I find something and it's a thread. I'll let town manager know that. Hey, Randy, I think this is being talked about. Do you have and that was an example. Do you have a statement where it says that that the applicant is not moving forward? Because I prefer to actually send people back to the website to say, here, this is where we're at. So I do spend time trying to find where things are being talked about and trying to get the right information to people quicker because that just makes frustration less. So, again, trying to be more out there, I go to the

farmer's market a lot. I go to a lot of events. I mean, I just try to be seen and and support and go to visit schools that have been.

**Karen Shore:** [00:32:04] Well, the farmer's market is the closest grocery store to your house. Right. So, of course, you go to the farmer's market.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:32:09] The farmer's market, the music is great. And, you know.

**Karen Shore:** [00:32:12] Jessica does such a good job with that.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:32:14] Oh, she does. I love the farmer's market. So, yeah, just being out there. I mean, you're there to serve. You're there to serve. And like I said, when I started even like the landfill, I remember when I first got elected and I'm like, What are we going to do about the landfill? And it was like, Well, it's not ours. It belongs to what county? There's nothing we can do. But the residents are are living across the street, are in Holly Springs. We have to do something. So it's that kind of a mindset. If there's something that needs to be done, let's we've got to try. We got to try. So I'm proud that I'm doing that. Could I do more? Absolutely. Can we be better? For sure. But I see I told Randy, I see a lot less emails about people complaining and that is one measure. Just know that you're heading in the right direction, right? Yeah. You don't expect people to tell you doing a good job, but if they're not complaining as much, that's just as good.

**Karen Shore:** [00:33:15] I would take less. You're doing a horrible job over, you know, just one person saying you're doing a good job.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:33:22] Well, that's just I grew up in the service industry, so that's just how it is. So, yeah, not a lot of complaints is always a good a good thing. And if somebody complains and takes the time, then we should pay attention.

**Karen Shore:** [00:33:34] So have you had to make any decisions as a town council member where you just felt like, okay, I feel like we're being given a I'm not going to say the ugly word like a bleep sandwich. How do I you know where you have a bad choice and a worse choice? I mean, have you had anything like that that's come up? And how did you handle that if you did?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:33:58] There are I mean, there are things, projects that started before we were on council, but now they're happening now and the impact. So the median on Holly Springs Road that came in and it cut off the folks that couldn't take a left into the daycare and several businesses. And it was on the map a long time ago. And we weren't it wasn't even on our radars council that that was happening.

**Karen Shore:** [00:34:24] So is this the area between Main Street and the bypass where the new developments have been?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:34:30] Yes. Yeah. And so we had a problem to solve. And that's where it gets hard. It's like, well, why would you let that happen? It's on your watch. Well, because we didn't even know. And the reasons they put the median there. Right. And some of it is NC dot specifications. But in the real time we have to solve a problem. And there's an example where they put in that subdivision and this is where the hard decisions happen. They really should have had two entry points, one in and one out, and the median would have maybe been through a neighborhood. But that's for safety. I mean, those are the hard decisions. Like, I don't want roads and I don't want people to connect to my neighborhood. But if you think, but in 20 years that you got to make the decisions now that will be right in 20 years. And that decision would have been better to do like another exit to help. So there's those kind of things because we grew up so fast that there are some things that we should have. Should it could have. Well, now it's on our watch to see what can we do now to fix.

**Karen Shore:** [00:35:31] So and you always you sound like a jerk if you say, well, you know, this is the previous guy's fault, you know, or this is this bigger entity's fault because you know. Well, but, you know, you just don't want to you know, you don't want to put everything off on everybody else.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:35:46] But but you know what? I'm counsel who knew 20 years ago that we would be 42,000 this year. Exactly what was the we would grow this much nobody knew. So I mean when you're accounts, you do the best you can. So I'm not going to fault any prior council because they did the best decision they could at that time. A lot of it has to do with how staff guides you and the information you have. I think now with with Randy, we get a lot different type of packages forward. You know, like I even love the simplest things when we have some rezoning, they start with the map of the whole town and then they highlight This is where we're talking to Orient you. That's little, but it's impactful and it helps a lot of people. So some of the

work that needs to be done is not hard, is just a matter of put yourself in the shoes of a resident who this is happening in their backyard. How do we make sure that we give them the right information? So it's communication. It usually comes down to communication. Yeah. And we can always improve on that. Always.

**Karen Shore:** [00:36:47] Yeah, that's that's you've hit it on the head. There's always room for improvement on communication.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:36:53] Always, always. And what you say isn't what necessarily what people have heard. And that is another thing that, that I'm always aware of in even on websites. You know, we, we, my team, we work on internal and external websites and we'll do usability labs. So we watch people's eyes and we'll have a big red button or something as an example. Like surely they'll see it and, and the usability labs will be like, no, how could they miss that? No.

**Karen Shore:** [00:37:23] So what do you think you've learned? I mean, let's think back. I mean, four years ago, I think I don't I remember that you have filed a formal complaint. I mean, this you were really frustrated with the lack of transparency.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:37:41] I was. And I I think that the town with new plans and with kind of the different communication, it addressed pretty much the things that I was pretty frustrated with.

**Karen Shore:** [00:37:52] Well, good.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:37:53] Yeah. Yeah. I mean, there are still some projects, again, like the public notices and that's why I call people. If I know that there's a there's a hearing, I make sure people know about it because they only mail within a certain radius of where it's happening, but it could impact the people a little bit farther.

**Karen Shore:** [00:38:13] Well, in the signs, the writing is so small.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:38:16] Well, and I usually ask developers, have you met with the development across the street? I know you don't have to, but could you? Because you know what? They're going to be your neighbor and good neighbors means that you might do a little bit work. So, I mean, I just saw asked a developer to do that and I saw they only had two people show up, but they did it and they tried. So then when we make a decision, then like what you try



to reach out and that's the difference of before, you know, yeah, we've got to help residents. They want to be involved or it impacts them. We should do our best. Again, we're not perfect, but we're trying. And those, those are areas I focus on.

**Karen Shore:** [00:38:59] Well, that must feel good. I mean, you kind of got beat up four years ago for all of that, but it turned out good, right?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:39:06] Well, I got voted in and I just rolled up my sleeves and I said, I'm ready to help and and work with staff. And that's my job. I mean, you got to you've got to move forward and work. I mean, I, I love SAS has been a great company, but you know, we go through a lot of reforms at SAS. Well, not a lot, but the ones that been through, you have to know when things change or when it's an opportunity to have new ideas. And I think that's what our last council did is we challenged how things have been done for a long time and that's not always a bad thing. It really isn't. But change is hard and I think that some of the folks have just really done great, done great and are proud of where we're going. And you can tell the energy level has risen and there's just some great things happening around town. And I credit, you know, our council's worked hard and I think done some some planning, appropriate planning and building the path. And, you know, having that park getting that park across the town was so important because we need more amenities on that side. So we've really done some great things that I'm truly proud of and there's more we can do.

**Karen Shore:** [00:40:22] Yeah, always. Well, thank you so much for spending the last almost hour of your life with me. This has been a fun conversation. It's been enlightening and I'm so thankful. Is there anything else you want to say?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:40:38] I just appreciate I went out and listened to the webcast or the podcast about the lady at Target and stuff. Your yours are fun, I think. I think people should go in and listen to that. That was really a fun one to listen to. So I love it. So thank you for what you're doing. I think that's great.

**Karen Shore:** [00:40:56] And well, I tell you, I had all these grand plans for this podcast. I was going to get people engaged and, you know, and local issues and all of that kind of thing. And I swear to you, Christine, that episode easily tripled all my.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:41:14] It was all.

**Karen Shore:** [00:41:15] My other lessons. And I was like this this like National Enquirer type episode I did got so many more lessons than the ones about like, this one, you know?

**Christine Kelly:** [00:41:26] But you did it so funny. One of the ladies that lives in Holly Springs used to be in charge of our internal comms team, and she talked about how the story on the biggest snow bank and in the SAS got more stories than all the other good stuff that we were doing. So people like fun stuff. So that was a fun. That was definitely a fun one.

**Karen Shore:** [00:41:46] Fun for everybody but that woman and her son.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:41:49] Well, and I tell you what, I related to her, because that would have been me. Are you okay? Okay. I got to go. I got ten things to do. So I just thought she handled it so well, you know, it was awesome. So, anyway, thank you for what you do as well.

**Karen Shore:** [00:42:03] Yeah, she was. She was funny. Well, you have a good weekend at Bridgette's graduation. Thank you. And I will see you around.

**Christine Kelly:** [00:42:11] Yes, you will. Thanks, Karen.

**Karen Shore:** [00:42:13] Thanks again. Links to this candidate's website and social media accounts are listed in the show. No. This episode was recorded and produced by me, Karen Shore with Music by Doug Maxwell and Meteorite Productions. Be well friends until next time.