

Town of Elon leaders compete for office



Davis Montgomery (left) is up for re-election on the board and Emily Sharpe (right) is running for the first time. Opponent Chanas is not pictured.

Two of the three community members will be elected to the Board of Alderman Nov. 7

Maggie Brown

Assistant News Editor | @maggieabrown

Many major decisions are made through the Town of Elon's Board of Alderman, which is currently going through the election process to find new representatives for the board.

Davis Montgomery, Emily Sharpe and Jim Chanas are all running for the two positions that are open. The board holds two monthly meetings and oversees the town manager.

Of the three candidates, both Chanas and Montgomery are known faces in the Elon community. Chanas has run for office three times, while Montgomery has served on the Board of Alderman and led the Parks and Recreation Committee.

Sharpe, on the other hand, is the newest face in the Elon community and has been working tirelessly to make her name known.

"I would say I'm out there and doing a lot," Sharpe said. "I'm doing as much as I can, but it's hard with a family. It definitely takes my time away from other things."

While Sharpe is new to the scene, Montgomery is up for re-election after his 12th year on the board. Montgomery has said that he has admired seeing the town grow since he moved in 1992, but assured that this will be his last time running.

Following Montgomery's steps, Sharpe is now currently serving on the Parks and Recreation Committee. Sharpe's involvement has pushed her to be more engaged in the community by running the quinquennial festival and serving on the board.

"The aldermen made a joke about all of them starting on the Parks and Rec board," Sharpe said. "But now here I am, next election running."

While standing before the Parks and Recreation Committee nomination board, Sharpe noticed that no women served the committee.

"Women are about 56 percent of Elon, but they aren't represented," Sharpe said. "In addition to the board being all men, there aren't any current Board of Alderman with young children. There's a huge gap in what their priorities are for things like recreation, health, well-being and education."

Sharpe's passion for change and diversity paired with her love for the community of Elon is the reason why she is currently running for a position on the board. If elected, Sharpe hopes to start a town gown committee composed of university leaders, students, retirees and government leaders to make sure everyone's voice is heard, and that everyone stays informed about what is going on in the town. Sharpe's drive to build up her community is fueled by her love for

the town.

Her opponent, Chanas, also shares this love and passion for community. As a resident of the Town of Elon for 41 years, Chanas sees himself as a voice for the retired tax payers and those seeking a fresh perspective.

Chanas fears that Elon University will buy too much land, causing the Town of Elon to not receive enough tax revenue. With the lack of revenue, Chanas worries that businesses will be unable to operate.

Though not completely opposed to the university buying land, Chanas wants to prioritize local businesses starting in the Town of Elon, rather than trying to bring the university and town together.

"The university has purchased land that has decreased the amount of what I'll call ratables — or taxable income — from the town's purse," Chanas said.

Taxes are one of the biggest problems facing Elon voters today. For many, the issue goes back to the university's relationship with the town.

Mayor Pro-tempore Ron Klepcyk has served on the board for 18 years. Before that, he worked at Elon Univer-



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sity for 33 years in human resources and student affairs.

Klepcyk has seen how the university in the town has created division in the community. There have been instances where Klepcyk has had members of the Town of Elon tell him that they would not vote for him because of his previous affiliation with Elon University.

Like Chanas, Sharpe agrees that taxes are a difficult issue facing the community. She sees the public concern of having the university in the town.

"It is a small number paying taxes, we have to support these 6,000 people nine months out of the year; but 4,000 residents have to pay for 10,000 people worth of services," Sharpe said. "Overall, our biggest issue and asset is Elon University."

Currently, Elon University is engaged in a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement, paying the town \$135,000 yearly.

If elected, Sharpe hopes to encourage the university to partner with the town

BOARD OF ALDERMAN

1. Aldermen have four year terms
2. Aldermen have to be residents of the town of Elon and involved in the community
3. Decisions made by the board include how to use tax payers dollar

WHEN AND WHERE TO VOTE

When: Nov. 7

Where: Designated voting precincts. Voters can find where to vote by going to the Alamance Board of Elections website under the "polling places and districts" tab.

to pay more.

"I want to find better ways for us to work together," Sharpe said. "The relationship is really good. I would like to see it be more strategic."

As well as improving the relationship between the Town of Elon and Elon University, each candidate wants to improve the Town of Elon's downtown area.

Chanas says there are not as many local businesses in the town of Elon as there should be, and wants to encourage local businesses by decreasing taxes.

Montgomery has already been improving the downtown area through his Downtown Committee that is partnered with Elon University. He hopes to improve the downtown area in the next few years without having to raise the taxes.

"Moving forward for me is going to be downtown and economic development," Montgomery said. "We are at such a critical point where we need to transform the downtown. If we could create a destination-type place where if people could come into Elon because there is something here that they can't find anywhere else, to create niche retail and events, that would be great."

Since his time in the Town of Elon, Montgomery has seen the university and town benefit from a relationship together. By partnering together to better develop the downtown, the Downtown Committee will be no different.

"The university is a great partner for us. Almost every milestone we've come across is a benefit to the university," Montgomery said. "They are going to look at it strategically and say 'If it's good for the downtown, then it's probably going to be good for our students.'"

The university's growth and involvement in the town is a huge factor in the decisions that the board makes in the town, and how the voters choose candidates.

"The university is constantly growing," Klepcyk said. "These people see the potential of the university possibly changing the town. And I think the board members are committed to doing everything they can to maintaining that small-town feel and still allow for the growth of the town."

Elon students have front seats to Catalan's protests

Alex Hager

Web Producer | @awhager

The Spanish region of Catalonia has been embroiled in political turmoil for months in the midst of a growing separatist movement. On Friday, that turmoil came to head when Catalan lawmakers voted to declare independence. The Spanish government dismissed the region's president, and dissolved its parliament.

As protests have overwhelmed the city's streets, a number of Elon University students found themselves caught in the chaos. Elon junior Ashley Follenweider, who began her study abroad in Barcelona this semester, has a firsthand experience to the outcries.

"There are always protests up and down my street," Follenweider said. "The whole entire street for as far as I could see was full of people. They all had candles. I ended up walking through it coming home from the gym. I had no idea what was going on."

Pushes for Catalan independence have gained momentum in recent years, but political action by the regional and national government has picked up in importance this September.

"Over the summer, when I read an article saying, 'Catalonia is going to break free from Spain,' I was like, that's the most stupid, pointless thing I've ever heard," Follenweider said. "I was very ignorant about it, but once I got here ... I learned the reasons they wanted to be independent, I saw the passion behind it, I talked with my Spanish friend and [she explained] how they've always felt that they're a different nation."

Many visitors to Barcelona have encountered protests, parades and vocal support out in the city's streets. Follenweider felt it was not enough to just watch.

Inspired by the pro-independence fervor, she bought herself an "independentista" flag and joined a parade of separatist protestors clad in the region's striking yellow and red colors.

Any Elon student who has studied abroad might notice that Follenweider is defying the Global Education Center's strong suggestion to "avoid participating in demonstrations and other political activities."

Follenweider said she knows the risks and has taken steps to avoid putting herself in harm's way even while being a part of multiple demonstrations.

"I've never felt unsafe," Follenweider said. "But I also haven't put myself in



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JUNIOR

hostile situations. I haven't partaken in any of the protests since Catalonia voted to be free because I just don't know what they're going to turn into."

Follenweider said police have been brutal at protests, citing videos of police shooting protestors with rubber bullets and "pushing old people down stairs."

To make sure she was removed from protestors' clashes with police, Follenweider stayed away from voting precincts because of the danger.

While Follenweider has participated in some protests and avoided others, she has made it a point to keep abreast of the region's political happenings during her stay in Barcelona.

Whether she is having conversations with her "homestay mom" or taking to the streets with her friend, Follenweider has been immersed in the maelstrom of separatist activity.

Despite Follenweider's passion, she says her level of interest and feelings toward the movement are not shared by all of her classmates.

"They don't really care," Follenweider said.

While some of the other Elon students in Barcelona have kept tabs on developments, Follenweider said more students see the protests as an "inconvenience" while on the way to go drink on the beach.

"It depends on who you talk to," Follenweider said. "but I really think the Elon kids haven't taken the time to immerse themselves in this."

Follenweider sees this fall as a chance to learn something new and make the most of her proximity to history-shaping political events.

"My perspective has changed because I took advantage of this historical moment going on," Follenweider said. "It's opened my eyes to different ways of thinking, and different ways of politics in other countries in general."